



BASAI News Updates

Sept. 8, 2022

Apples sell at ₹491 in Delhi, HP growers getting ₹60/kg

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TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, SEPTEMBER 7

The news of 1 kg of apple selling for Rs 491 in a Delhi mall has rubbed salt in the wounds of apple growers who have been enduring a major market slump and have been selling even the premium quality apple at a measly Rs 60 per kg.

The revelation has left the orchardists suspicious about the crashing of the wholesale market. They have been questioning that when consumers were willing to pay nearly Rs 500 per kg for average-quality apple, why had the markets crashed?



HIGH RATES AT MALLS

- The news of 1 kg of apple selling for ₹491 at a Delhi mall has triggered debate
- Growers are struggling to sell premium quality apple for ₹60/kg in wholesale market
- They allege market forces had created the artificial slump

“Why does wholesale market crash when retail rates continue to be high? If there’s lack of demand, the retail

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Source T 8.09.2022 Delhi Edition

Apples sell...

price too should go down,” said orchardist Ashutosh Chauhan, terming it a “conspiracy by the market forces”.

The news of apple selling for Rs 491 a kg in a Delhi mall was published in the ‘Readers Say’ column of the September 7 edition of *The Tribune*. The clip has been shared widely on social media, triggering a debate on the crashing apple prices.

“Apart from private CA stores, arhtiyas and buyers also store the apple and sell it at a premium when the procurement season gets over,” said Lokinder Bisht, president of the Progressive Growers Association.

Deepak Singha, an apple grower from Kotgarh, said small growers were the most hit. Harish Chauhan, Sanyukt Kisan Manch convener, slammed the HPMC for failing to put in place an efficient marketing system.

The
Hindustan Times
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

[OUR TAKE]

What about farm stubble burning?

The early decision on crackers is welcome but curb the menace of farm fires to clean the air

Delhi announced a complete ban on the manufacture, storage, sale and use of firecrackers in the Capital till January 1, 2023, keeping in line with the practice in recent years where the Supreme Court and the city administration have clamped restrictions on the celebratory usage of crackers as part of efforts to check spiralling air pollution. The announcement, which has come earlier than usual this year, may give the civic administration more time to fine-tune its implementation, which has been patchy and unsatisfactory in the past few years, allowing illegal shops to sell crackers. It might also help avert the financial losses suffered by manufacturers who find it difficult to deal with inventory with a late ban announcement.

When burst in large quantity simultaneously — as happens during a number of festivals, including Diwali — crackers lead to a spike in pollution levels, with gases, pollutants and heavy metals such as arsenic, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen being released, alongside dust. The combustion process leads to a spike in both PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations, often reaching 20-30 times the safe standard. The impact is transient, but it doesn’t help that this spike happens at a time of the year when farmers in Punjab and Haryana burn stubble, wind speeds are low, rainfall non-existent and temperatures dip, creating a noxious vortex of pollutants shrouding the Capital.

Last year, for instance, Delhi woke up to one of its most polluted post-Diwali mornings. This was not because the ban was unsatisfactorily implemented, but due to farm fires that had spiked in the run-up to the festival (and had contributed as much as a quarter of the pollution load on Diwali) and sluggish wind speeds that were inadequate to disperse the pollutants.

Another report by the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (Safar) found that if no firecrackers were to go off, air quality in Delhi would still stay in the poor range, but that widespread bursting would likely push air quality into the severe range (if only temporarily). This underlines the importance of announcing the ban early, promoting awareness among the people, creating robust mechanisms to implement it and prevent violations, and looking at the restrictions as part of a holistic plan to clean the city’s air and not as an isolated policy response. It will be interesting to see if Punjab, which, like Delhi, is governed by the Aam Aadmi Party, is equally proactive in dealing with stubble burning — a bigger problem than firecrackers when it comes to bad air.

Source HT 8.09.2022 Delhi Edition

Ukraine war shows that food is foremost



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for eastern India.

Before the 1962 starving of the Indian soldiers, there took place, 150 years ago in 1812, another savage slaughter of the hungry and starving soldiers of the Napoleonic regiment owing to a food shortage caused by a monumental logistics failure, signalling the fall of the mighty Parisians at the hands of the Romanov Czar's unsung and underrated humans and their horses which kept the logistics line alive. Hence, the firing fusillade by the emaciated French fighters was of no use, except facing an inevitable rout as their stomach was without food. The 1812 French disaster was a historical inevitability.

Contextually, today's Russia-Ukraine conflict, too, has created an unprecedented global panic pertaining to food production, consumption and distribution. From Tokyo to Chicago, Delhi to Dhaka, Canada to Argentina, every major grain-producing country is worried despite being far from the war zone. Indeed, what potentially compounds the complications of combat is its unpredictable duration and endurance. Despite the six-month bloodshed, there's no sign of any peace. Far from it. The increased flow of lethal weapons from the West to the armoury of Ukraine and the resultant Russian retaliation make the peace prospect a mirage.

Nevertheless, a realisation is dawning that it's got to be a food-world beyond a fighting-world, first and foremost. Thus, Delhi's neighbour Dhaka, despite being the world's third biggest rice producer — 3.60 crore tonnes annually — is finalising deals with India and Vietnam to import 3,30,000 tonnes to replenish its reserves and cool the soaring domes-



Farmer, fertiliser, food, famine collectively constitute the biggest takeaway from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Not fire-power or bombs, missiles or guns. The fallout is so alarming that even Canada, the world's sixth biggest wheat producer, is going all out to produce more. The basics are simple: produce more, expand storage.

OMINOUS: The Ukraine war has created global panic over food production and distribution. REUTERS

self-sufficient in food production.

Indeed, farmer, fertiliser, food and famine collectively constitute the biggest takeaway from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Not fire-power or bombs, missiles or long-range artillery guns. Thus, the fallout is so alarming that even Canada, the world's sixth biggest wheat producer (3.46 crore tonnes), is going all out to produce more than expected. The basics are simple: produce more, expand storage to face long-term crisis in the food supply and distribution system. Feed own people first. Then help the needy neighbours because well-fed people cannot remain in peace with a starving neighbour breathing down their neck for the minimum calories for sustenance. Distress spill-over is inevitable.

Coming back to India, there's no doubt that food self-sufficiency is one marvellous achievement attained by the farmers and supported by successive rulers from the 1960s, notwithstanding several fault-lines resulting in agrarian-distressed suicides and poor debt reduction mechanism.

Nevertheless, just as the Japanese are reacting about agriculture and food being ignored for the sake of non-agriculture "economic efficiency", India must remember that feeding 1.3 billion heads is her foremost duty and responsibility. Neither a glitzy metro building nor an increased number of stock market multi-billionaires can assume the role of a rescuer in case food and agriculture distress lead to en masse hunger, resulting in famine, born out of a war in a distant land. The signs are ominous.

Eternal vigilance and agility are the need of the critical times because to a man with an empty stomach, food is god, as Gandhiji rightly said.

tic prices owing to the war effects.

India is today the second ranked rice (12 crore tonnes) and third biggest wheat (10.04 crore tonnes) producer and also an exporter thereof. Yet, alarm bells ring as her current rice production is under threat from a weak monsoon in the two major growing areas of Bengal and Uttar Pradesh which account for a quarter of the national output. The Indian government, therefore, has to tread a thin line, balancing between the domestic price rise, profitable export mart and tight supply line as plantings have reportedly declined by eight per cent.

In the USA, too, the government is prodding farmers to plant two crops (double-cropping) instead of one. Being the fifth biggest wheat producer (5.5 crore tonnes) and exporter, the Europe war worried a helpless Washington as wheat remained stuck in the blockaded ports, thereby disrupting the distribution-consumer axis across

the globe. In fact, "double cropping" would be the way for the USA to play a bigger role in the world grain market with a larger share of export to hitherto untapped consumers who were used to the Asian and European products. The Ukraine war has, thus, opened profitable ways for the grain to new buyers from surplus wheat producers. Ukraine down has meant the USA up.

For Japan, however, food has always been an area of concern owing to its island geography. The concern aggravates when the war is long-drawn and protracted. Thus Japan, despite being the ninth biggest rice producer (77 lakh tonnes) of the world, remains an importer. The remote Russia-Ukraine conflict "spooked" Japan into boosting its defence spending. But the proximate Taiwan Strait tension is the real security challenge with "shrivelling rice paddies". What's ominous is the alleged "abandonment of rice paddies/agricultural land, leaving the

country more vulnerable than ever." Retired Vice-Admiral Toshiyuki Ito is angry: "They don't do anything for national security...They think only about economic efficiency."

How pointed and piercing is that? Agriculture relegated in the overall scheme of things by a vulnerable island-nation which hugely depends on import through the sea? Japan's suffering is bound to be colossal in case of a major blockade or disruption to the sea lanes around the China/Taiwan strait. The Japanese have learnt the importance of self-sufficiency. "Through the Ukraine situation, we've realised that what you can do domestically, you should. You have to produce as much as you can at home, including fertilisers and seeds."

In fact, gone are the days of the Japanese being the sole unchallenged navy of Asia to protect its sea lanes. Today, any direct involvement in a war will only make the food situation dire. Not only for Japan, but all, as most nations aren't