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To
The Editor,

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Sir,

I request that the following matter may kindly be published in your esteemed daily:

Sell Sunflower upon Harvest

Sunflower is one of the important oilseed crops in India. India occupies fourth place among oilseed crops in terms of both acreage and production. Total world production of sunflower seeds in 2011-2012 was approximately 37.07 million tonnes and it was 40.20 million tonnes during 2010 – 2011. Ukraine, Russia, Argentina, China, France, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey, and USA are the major producers of sunflower seeds globally.

According to Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA), the imports into India consist of 9.11 lakh tonnes of edible oils and 36,500 tons of non-edible oils during June – July, 2013. The overall import of vegetable oils during November 2012 to June 2013 is reported as 7.11 million tonnes. The import forecast during 2013 – 2014, includes 8.4 million tonnes of palm oil, 1.3 million tonnes of soybean oil, 1.2 million tonnes of sunflower oil and 10,000 tons of other edible oils. India imports vegetable oils mainly from Indonesia, Malaysia and Argentina.

In India, sunflower seed production during 2012-13 was 6.15 lakh tonnes and the same was 6.20 lakh tonnes during 2011-12. The major producers of sunflower are Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. In Tamil Nadu the sunflower seed production was around 10,039 tonnes from an area of 8,718 hectares during 2010-11. Karur, Thoothukudi, Tiruchirapalli, Dharmapuri and Virudhunagar districts contribute about 67.81 percent of area and 60.55 per cent of the total sunflower production in the State.

Sunflower is raised in two seasons' viz. Karthigai pattam (October - November) and Chitrai pattam (April - May). The sunflower seed trading is prominent in the peak seasons viz. March-May and June-August. Now, Chithirai (April - May) sown sunflower crop started flowing into the markets of Tamil Nadu. The major market centres of the state are Vellakoil, Moolanur and Kodimudi. Major hybrids grown in Tamil Nadu are Sunbred and Gangakaveri. Sunflower farmers normally get 1000-1200 kg of sunflower seed/acre under irrigated condition. But in this season, the yield obtained was only around 500-600 kg per acre due to non-availability of quality seeds,

pest attack, irregular power supply, rainfall failure and labour shortage. Reduction in the area and decline in productivity of crop resulted in below normal flow of the seeds into the market.

To facilitate farmers in taking a better marketing decision about the sale or stocking of Chithirai sown sunflower seeds, the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC), functioning in the Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies (CARDS) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University analysed the past 13 years price data of sunflower seed prevailed in Vellakoil Regulated market. The econometric analysis confirmed that the price of sunflower seed will hover around Rs 38 per kg from mid September to November 2013. Since there are limited chances for the prices to increase, farmers are recommended to sell sunflower upon harvest.

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