



ಮಳೆ-ಬಿಸಿಲಿನಾಟಕ್ಕೆ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಇಳುವರಿ ಶೇ.40 ಕುಂತಿತ!

ಉತ್ತಮ ಫಸಲಿನ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿದ್ದ ರೈತರು ಕಂಗಾಲು | ಶೀತಬಾಧೆಯಿಂದ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ ಕಳೆದುಕೊಂಡ ಗಿಡಗಳ ಬೇರು

■ ಎಚ್.ಕೆ.ನಟರಾಜ

ಉದಯವಾಣಿ ಸಮಾಚಾರ

ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ: ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಉತ್ತಮ ಮಳೆ ಬಂದಿದೆ, ಬೆಳೆಗೆ ಉತ್ತಮ ಬೆಲೆಯೂ ಇದೆ ಎಂದು ಹರ್ಷದಲ್ಲಿದ್ದ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರಿಗೆ ಈಗ ಇಳುವರಿ ಕುಂತಿತ ಸಂಕಷ್ಟ ಎದುರಾಗಿದ್ದು ಆತಂಕಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಆತ್ಮದಿಕ ಬಿತ್ತನೆಯಾಗಿರುವ ಬೆಳೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮೊದಲ ಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಮಳೆ-ಬಿಸಿಲಿನಾಟಕ್ಕೆ ತತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಮುಂಗಾರು ಮಳೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲೆಡೆ ವಾಡಿಕೆಗಿಂತ ಅಧಿಕವಾಗಿ ಸುರಿದಿದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದಾಗಿಯೇ ಹಲವೆಡೆ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬೆಳೆ ಶೀತಬಾಧೆಗೆ ಒಳಗಾಗಿದೆ. ಶೀತಬಾಧೆ ಎದುರಿಸಿ ನಿಂತ ಬೆಳೆಗಳ ಬೇರುಗಳು ತಮ್ಮ ಹೀರುವ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ ಕಳೆದುಕೊಂಡಿವೆ. ಕಳೆದ 15-20 ದಿನಗಳಿಂದ ಬಿಸಿಲಿನ ತಾಪವೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿದ್ದರಿಂದ ಬೆಳೆಯ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಕುಂತಿತಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದು ಗಿಡ ಬಾಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಎರಡೂರು ವಾರಗಳಿಂದ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಸ್ಥಗಿತಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದನ್ನು ಗಮನಿಸಿದ ರೈತರು ಕಂಗಾಲಾಗಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಮುಖ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಕವುಮಣ್ಣಿನ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿನ ಬೆಳೆಯ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಮೇಲೆ ಗಂಭೀರ ಪರಿಣಾಮ ಬೀರಿದೆ. ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಹಲವೆಡೆ ಬೆಳೆ ಕಾಳು ಕಟ್ಟುವ ಹಂತ, ಕಾಳು ಗಟ್ಟಿಯಾಗುವ



ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ: ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಒಣಗುತ್ತಿರುವ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬೆಳೆ

ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಮಾಯಕೊಂಡ ಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬೆಳೆ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಮೇಲೆ ಪರಿಣಾಮ ಬೀರಿದೆ. ಕೃಷಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು, ವಿಜ್ಞಾನಿಗಳು ಸ್ಥಳ ಭೇಟಿ ನೀಡಿ, ಅದಕ್ಕೆ ನಿಖರ ಕಾರಣ ಕಂಡು ಹಿಡಿದು ರೈತರಿಗೆ ಸಲಹೆ, ಮಾರ್ಗದರ್ಶನ ನೀಡಬೇಕು.

● ಚಿನ್ನಸಮುದ್ರ ಶೇಖರ ನಾಯ್ಕ, ರೈತ

ಮಳೆಯೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು, ಬಿತ್ತನೆಯೂ ಅಧಿಕ

ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಮುಂಗಾರು ಹಂಗಾಮಿನಲ್ಲಿ ವಾಡಿಕೆ ಮಳೆಗಿಂತ 164 ಮಿಮೀ ಅಧಿಕ ಮಳೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ವಾಡಿಕೆ ಮಳೆ (ಜೂನ್‌ನಿಂದ ಸೆಪ್ಟೆಂಬರ್ 13ರವರೆಗೆ) ಸರಾಸರಿ 751 ಮಿಮೀ ಇದ್ದರೆ ವಾಸ್ತವದಲ್ಲಿ 915 ಮಿಮೀ ಮಳೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಉತ್ತಮ ಮಳೆ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಬಾರಿ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬಿತ್ತನೆ ಪ್ರದೇಶವೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿದೆ. ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬಿತ್ತನೆಯ ವಾಡಿಕೆ ಎಸ್ಟಿಮೇಟ್ 13.96 ಲಕ್ಷ ಹೆಕ್ಟೇರ್ ಇದ್ದರೆ, ಈ ಬಾರಿ ವಾಡಿಕೆಗೂ ಮೀರಿ ಅಂದರೆ 15.86 ಲಕ್ಷ ಹೆಕ್ಟೇರ್ ಎಸ್ಟಿಮೇಟ್ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬಿತ್ತನೆಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳಕ್ಕೆ ಪ್ರಸ್ತುತ ಸರಾಸರಿ 2500-3000 ರೂ.ವರೆಗೂ ಉತ್ತಮ ದರವಿದ್ದು ಉತ್ತಮ ಫಸಲಿನ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿದ್ದ ರೈತರಿಗೆ ಇಳುವರಿ ಕುಂತಿತ ಭೀತಿ ಎದುರಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿದ್ದು ಈ ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಕುಂತಿತ ಗೊಂಡಿರುವುದು ರೈತರಲ್ಲಿ ಭೀತಿ ಮೂಡಿಸಿದೆ. ಉತ್ತರ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಮಧ್ಯ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸೇರಿ ಹಲವೆಡೆ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಕುಂತಿತ ಕಂಡು ಬಂದಿದ್ದು ಅಂದಾಜು ಶೇ.40 ರಷ್ಟು ಇಳುವರಿ ಕುಸಿಯುವ ಭಯ ಎದುರಾಗಿದೆ. ಮಳೆ-ತಾಪ ಎರಡೂ ಅಧಿಕ: ಮೆಕ್ಕೆಜೋಳ ಬೆಳೆಗೆ ಅಧಿಕ ಮಳೆಯೂ ಇರಬಾರದು, ಅಧಿಕ ತಾಪಮಾನವೂ ಇರಬಾರದು. ಆದರೆ ಹಲವೆಡೆ ಇವೆರಡೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಾಗಿದೆ. ಆಗಸ್ಟ್‌ವರೆಗೂ ಅತಿವೃಷ್ಟಿ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆ ಎದು

ರಿಸಿದ ಬೆಳೆ, ಸೆಪ್ಟೆಂಬರ್‌ನಿಂದ ಅಧಿಕ ಬಿಸಿಲಿನ ತಾಪ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳಾಗಿದ್ದು ಇಳುವರಿ ಮೇಲೆ ಗಂಭೀರ ಪರಿಣಾಮ ಬೀರುವ ಲಕ್ಷಣ ಗೋಚರಿಸಿದೆ. ಅಧಿಕ ಮಳೆ, ತಾಪ ಇಲ್ಲದ ಕೆಲವೇ ಕೆಲವು ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾತ್ರ ಬಂಪರ್ ಎನ್ನುವ ರೀತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಳೆ ಬರುವ ಲಕ್ಷಣಗಳು ಗೋಚರಿಸಿವೆ. ಆದರೆ ಹಲವೆಡೆ ಅಧಿಕ ಮಳೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಸೆಪ್ಟೆಂಬರ್ ತಿಂಗಳಿಂದ ಶುರುವಾಗಿರುವ ಬಿಸಿಲಿನ ಪ್ರಖರತೆಯಿಂದಾಗಿ ಬೆಳೆ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆಗೆ ಭಾರೀ ತೊಂದರೆಯಾಗಿದೆ.



The Hindu Pg.08

Unique variety: Nanjangud rasabale, known for its thick pulp and distinct taste and aroma, got the Geographical Indication certification in 2006. By the end of 2023-24, the banana variety was being cultivated on 75 hectares of land by 200 farmers. PHOTOS: K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

Nanjangud rasabale: A tale of revival

The famed banana variety, which had become scarce because of a fungal disease, has begun to thrive again, thanks to enthusiastic farmers and the intervention of scientists. **Jahnvi T.R.** visits the villages where this GI-tagged fruit variety is grown to record both the success story and the challenges ahead.

lakh were given to 49 farmers to expand the cultivation area by 9.08 hectares. A total of ₹35.59 lakh has been earmarked for 2024-25.

Many farmers believe that the subsidy amount played a huge role in getting more cultivators for rasabale. "The department as well as veteran farmers around here created awareness among other growers about the benefits of growing rasabale. The subsidy of over ₹34,000, which is being provided even for half an acre of rasabale cultivation, has also incentivised them," Nanjundaswamy says.

Organic farming, growth promoters

Along with following the guidelines provided by experts, the farmers in Nanjangud have developed their own techniques to get better yield.

something of a paradox. The farmers *The Hindu* spoke to in the villages of Nanjangud expressed fear that they do not have a market outside of Mysuru district owing to lack of awareness about the variety, and excessive production might, in fact, leave them without a place to sell it. In the Nanjangud taluk itself, there are just two or three shops that sell the variety and even those are tough to identify.

On the other hand, the sellers say the demand outstrips supply. "We do not put up big boards or anything because we do not get as much supply as we need. A lot of tourists come looking for rasabale and during good seasons, the stock gets over by the afternoon. We need the production to increase," says Ramanna (name changed), one of the rasabale sellers in Nanjangud.

In a cloudy weekday afternoon, Nanjundaswamy was busy tending to his banana plants in his orchard at Kurahatti village in Nanjangud taluk, around 40 km from Mysuru in Karnataka. The farmer, in his 50s, is the proud owner of 850 plants of a particularly special variety of banana called Nanjangud rasabale that enjoys a Geographical Indication (GI) certification.

"The taste and pulp of our banana cannot be found in any other variety and anywhere else. The more organically we grow it, the better it tastes," Nanjundaswamy says, beaming with pride.

This variety of rasabale is unique to Nanjangud and was awarded the GI tag in 2006 for its thick pulp and distinct taste and aroma. While the tag was expected to boost the cultivation of this variety, the next few years saw the exact opposite happening – the crop almost got wiped out.



Shocking decline

According to the Horticulture Department data, a total of 180 farmers cultivated rasabale on 100 hectares of land in 2006-07. By 2019-20, the number came down to 15, who were cultivating it on a mere 10 hectares.

With the famed banana variety on the brink, the government started taking many steps for its revival. The department along with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-National Research Centre for Banana (NRCB), Tiruchirappalli, provided pesticides which would fight a deadly fungus that had infested the crop and guided growers on healthy cultivation habits.

The government also devised a six-year plan from 2023-24 to 2028-29 which included protection of the crop, expansion of cultivation area, post-harvest management, and marketing. With these plans, by the end of 2023-24, rasabale revived. It came to be cultivated on 75 hectares by 200 farmers. The department has plans to add 12 hectares of cultivation area this year, of which over 5 hectares has been added so far.

Farmers have repeatedly told us that they do not get a good price for rasabale. We want to promote it through our e-commerce site so that there can be more buyers.

R. SELVARAJAN, Director of the NRCB

scientific interventions to conserve the crop.

"Wilt is a soil-borne fungal disease which remains in the soil for a long time. To combat this, we came up with a product called 'No to Wilt' which we are supplying to the farmers in Nanjangud. This reduced the disease in the soil by 80% to 90%. While 70% of plants used to die earlier, this product has reduced it to 10% to 20%," explains R. Selvarajan, Director of the NRCB.

Kavery Microbial Consortium, a combination of five to six beneficial bacteria which provides good vigour to the plant and can resist pathogen attacks, was also distributed to the farmers to apply on the soil around their plants. The NRCB teamed up with Suttur Krishi Vijnan Kendra (KVK) to deploy this technology. "By growing near the roots, these bacteria help mobilise nutrients to the plants. Microbiomes also protect the roots from disease," Selvarajan says.



The scientists of the IIHR also brought out a disease-resistant variant of rasabale through tissue culturing protocol. "We brought flowers from Nanjangud and used tissue culturing to come up with a variety which will not be affected by diseases. We have already distributed it to many farmers, and we will continue to do so," says Usha Rani T.R., a scientist from the IIHR.

Apart from this, the State government also provides a subsidy of ₹56,093 for rasabale farmers (₹67,311 for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes) to incentivise them to expand the cultivation area. In 2023-24, subsidies totalling ₹16.83

"During my father's time, they used to prepare the land for two to three years before cultivating rasabale. They were using natural compost and manure. Now we do not have an intensive preparation process. We just level the land and use chemical manure. We also make use of growth promotion methods to ensure that the fruits are of a good size with thick pulp," Ramesh says.

Officials of the Horticulture Department say that scientifically backed growth promotion methods are used for good yield.

One such promoter is Banana Sakthi, a cost-effective nutrient mix developed by the NRCB. This spray increased the size of the bananas and thereby the yield by 20% to 25%.

There are, however, many growers who do not use them and rely wholly on organic farming. "Even before we prepare the land for rasabale, we sow 30 varieties of dicots and cultivate them for 45 days. Then, we use them for mulching and mix them with many other greens. Then, we have our own Jeevamrutha (a mix of natural products and animal waste) in which we dip the stems and plant them. That ensures that the plant grows disease-free, and the fruits retain their natural taste," Nanjundaswamy explains.

Irrespective of the methods used, farmers say the plants still get infected by disease, sometimes due to weather conditions, varying water quality and other factors. Maintenance is of utmost importance. "Even with the disease-resistant variant, it is absolutely important for farmers to manage the plants well," says Usha Rani.

But the revival of rasabale is not entirely a happy story. The marketing situation for rasabale is

something of a paradox. The farmers *The Hindu* spoke to in the villages of Nanjangud expressed fear that they do not have a market outside of Mysuru district owing to lack of awareness about the variety, and excessive production might, in fact, leave them without a place to sell it. In the Nanjangud taluk itself, there are just two or three shops that sell the variety and even those are tough to identify.

On the other hand, the sellers say the demand outstrips supply. "We do not put up big boards or anything because we do not get as much supply as we need. A lot of tourists come looking for rasabale and during good seasons, the stock gets over by the afternoon. We need the production to increase," says Ramanna (name changed), one of the rasabale sellers in Nanjangud.

A senior official from the Horticulture Department office in Mysuru says there are more shops in Mysuru market than in Nanjangud taluk where the rasabale variety can be sold. "We are in the process of educating farmers about where they can sell it," the official says.

In the second week of September, the variety was selling at around ₹100 a kg. The price ranges between ₹40 and ₹100 a kg throughout the year. The farmers are not happy with these prices as they spend a little over a lakh per acre to cultivate the crop.

The NRCB is also stepping in to help farmers with marketing after hearing complaints from them. "Farmers have repeatedly told us that they do not get a good price for rasabale. We want to promote it through our e-commerce site so that there can be more buyers. There are a total of eight GI variety bananas in India and we want to promote them. Scientists on our site. Along with getting them good prices, this will also encourage farmers to increase the cultivation of the variety," Selvarajan says.

Changing taste?

However, some long-time consumers of the fruit believe that the taste of rasabale has changed over the years. "Every time we take a trip to Nanjangud, we buy rasabale. We have been doing it for decades now. But in the last 10 years or so, I can clearly make out a difference in the taste," says Shivashankar M., a resident of Mysuru.

Scientists say that while there is no concrete proof for this, the taste could have been "slightly different" due to disease-ridden soil. "To say that the taste has changed or not with certainty we must analyse the sugar profile of the banana and compare it with the profile from 10 or 20 years ago," Usha Rani says.

However, with their signature crop back from the brink, the mood of farmers in Nanjangud is now upbeat. Scientists on their part say they will keep visiting the farmers in Nanjangud at least three or four times a year. "We will continue our partnership with them so that they can grow this variety confidently. We are aiming to see a 25% year-on-year growth in rasabale cultivation," Selvarajan says.



Ramesh is a second-generation cultivator of Nanjangud rasabale.



Nanjundaswamy says subsidy has helped in expanding cultivation area of the banana variety.



M&A STREET HOTS UP: DEALS NEARING FINISH LINE

Chrys Cap Has a Craving for Belgian Waffle & Theobroma

Looks to create investment platform combining brands; valuation: ₹3,500 cr

Ratna Bhushan & Arijit Barman

Mumbai: Chrys Capital is looking to create an investment platform as it closes in on at least two bakery-patisserie and dessert chains, Theobroma Foods and Belgian Waffle Co., at a combined valuation of around ₹3,200-3,500 crore, said people aware of the development.

It has a 60-day window to submit a binding offer for Theobroma and is aiming to finalise the terms of acquisition of Bloom-bay Enterprises, which owns and runs Belgian Waffle, for around ₹1,000 crore in the next 30 days, said the people cited above. Bloom-bay is owned by husband-and-wife founders Shrey and Alisha Aggarwal and investor Marathon

On The Plate

ChrysCapital has 60-day window to submit a binding offer for Theobroma

It is competing with EQT Partners for the buyout

Aiming to finalise terms of acquisition of Belgian Waffle for around ₹1,000 cr in next 30 days



THEOBROMA: Founded in 2005

Footprint: 220 stores in 27 cities

FY24 EBITDA: ₹60 cr, topline: ₹380-400 cr

THE BELGIAN WAFFLE CO: Founded in 2015

Footprint: 560 stores in 190 cities

FY23 Revenue: ₹150 cr, net profit: ₹21.3 cr



Edge Partners, which holds a 22% stake.

Chrys Capital, which is seeking to raise \$2-2.2 billion for its tenth fund—its largest till date—is competing with EQT Partners for the Theobroma buyout and is in the final rounds of diligence.

Chrys Capital returned over \$7 billion from 80 exits and deployed \$4.5 billion in

over 100 investments. Former Bain executive Nikhil Raghavan runs the technology and consumer focussed small and mid-market fund Marathon Edge Partners.

Theobroma's single largest shareholder, private equity fund ICICI Venture, had mandated Arpwood to find a buyer in January. It holds a 42% stake in the 20-year-old patisserie chain. A 51% bloc is



with the founding Messman family, divided equally among four members. Employees and senior management hold the remaining 6-7%. All are expected to exit, depending on the final valuation.

Both chains started out in Mumbai but expanded across India after roping in financial investors. Begun in 2004 as a single-store bakehouse on south Mumbai's Colaba Causeway by sisters Kainaz Messman Harchandrai and Tina Messman Wykes after borrowing Rs 1 crore from their father as seed capital, Theobroma ran as a family run enterprise till ICICI Venture made a \$20 million commitment in 2017. In 2015, it brought in an external CEO, Cyrus Shroff, a former top executive at KKR & Co.

It operates about 220 stores and delivery only outlets in 27 cities, including the top six metros. Its FY24 adjusted ebitda was ₹60 crore on a ₹380-400 crore topline and is aiming at ₹80-85 crore ebitda in this financial year.

Final Rounds of Diligence ►► 12

Second Major Deal to Have Fallen

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A spokesperson for 360 One declined to comment. In 2017, WeWork entered into a partnership with the Embassy Group to start its operations here.

With a new WeWork US management in place, there could be a change in strategy for the India market, said a person close to the matter. Softbank-backed WeWork Inc was cofounded by Adam Nuemann and Miguel McKelvey.

It filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the US last November and appointed John Santora as chief executive in June.

This is the second major deal in the new economy space that has fallen through in recent times having obtained CCI clearance after National Investment and Infrastructure Fund's planned investment in FirstCry.

The office-sharing sector has

seen a significant uptick in India over the past year, in contrast with most other markets. Apart from the Peak XV Partners-backed Awfis, other coworking platforms in the country include TableSpace, Indiqube, CoWorks, 91Springboard and Bhive.

For the first six months of FY24, WeWork India clocked a revenue of Rs 831 crore, up 40% on-year.

It has yet to file its audited FY24 financials with the Registrar of Companies. While Awfis saw operating revenue rise 37% to Rs 258 crore for the April-June period from Rs 188 crore in the same period a year ago, net profit was Rs 2.8 crore against a loss of Rs 8.3 crore a year ago.

In a recent research note, Crisil said Indiqube registered a revenue of Rs 841 crore in FY24, racking up 42% growth while profit more than tripled to Rs 67.7 crore.