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Jai Kisan

ಕೃಷಿ ಪರಿಕರಗಳಿಗೆ ಬಾರ್ ಕೋಡ್

ಕಚೇರಿಗಳು ಕಾಗದರಹಿತ | ಏ.1ರಿಂದ ಜಾರಿಗೆ ಸಚಿವ ಬಿ.ಸಿ.ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ಸೂಚನೆ

■ ವಿಜಯವಾಣಿ ಸುದ್ದಿಜಾಲ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು

ಕೃಷಿ ಇಲಾಖೆಯಿಂದ ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿ ದರದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೊಡುವ ಎಲ್ಲ ಕೃಷಿ ಪರಿಕರಗಳಿಗೆ 2023ರ ಏ.1ರಿಂದ ಬಾರ್ ಕೋಡಿಂಗ್/ಕ್ಯೂಆರ್ ಕೋಡ್/ಯೂನಿಕ್ ಕೋಡ್ ಅಳವಡಿಸಲು ಕೃಷಿ ಸಚಿವ ಬಿ.ಸಿ.ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸೂಚಿಸಿದರು.

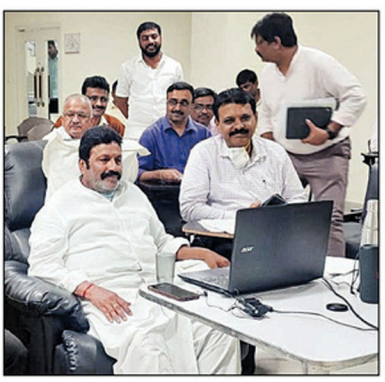
ಮಣಿಪಾಲ ಆಸ್ಪತ್ರೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮಂಡಿನೋವಿನ ಹಿನ್ನೆಲೆ ಶಸ್ತ್ರಚಿಕಿತ್ಸೆ ಪಡೆದು ವಿಶ್ರಾಂತಿಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಬಿಸಿಪಿ, ಇಲಾಖೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಆಡಳಿತ ಸುಧಾರಣೆಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಕೈಗೊಂಡ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ, ಬಿತ್ತನೆ, ರಸಗೊಬ್ಬರ ದಾಸ್ತಾನು ಮತ್ತು ವಿತರಣೆ, ಮಳೆಹಾನಿ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಧನ ವಿತರಣೆ ಮತ್ತಿತರ ವಿಷಯಗಳ ಕುರಿತು ವರ್ಚುವಲ್ ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಸಿದರು.

ಕೃಷಿ ಕಚೇರಿಗಳು ಕಾಗದರಹಿತ: ಮುಂಬರುವ ಏ.1ರಿಂದ ಕೃಷಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಎಲ್ಲ ಕಚೇರಿಗಳು ಕಾಗದ ರಹಿತ ಆಡಳಿತ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಅಳವಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬೇಕು. ಸಹಾಯಕ ಕೃಷಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕ ಕಚೇರಿ, ರೈತ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಕಚೇರಿ ದಾಸ್ತಾನು ವಹಿ, ವಿತರಣಾ ವಹಿ, ಆಳತೆ ತಪಾಸಣಾ ವರದಿ, ಸಭಾ ನಡಾವಳಿಗಳು, ಜಲಾನಯನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಇಲಾಖೆಯಿಂದ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಗೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿರುವ ಎಲ್ಲ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ಛಾಯಾಚಿತ್ರ, ಕೃಷಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಜಲಾನಯನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ಎಲ್ಲ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕೆ.ಕಿಸಾನ್ ತಂತ್ರಾಂಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಳವಡಿಸಿಕೊಂಡು ನಂತರ ಈ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯನ್ನು ರೈತ ಮಿತ್ರ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ಗೆ ಲಿಂಕ್ ಮಾಡಬೇಕು ಎಂದು ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ತಿಳಿಸಿದರು.

ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರಿ ಬದಲು: ಸಹಾಯಕ ಕೃಷಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಣಾ ವರದಿ ಮರು ಅವಲೋಕನ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯಾಗಿ ಹಾಲಿ ಇದ್ದ ಜಿಪಂ ಸಿಇಒ ಬದಲು ಜಂಟಿ ಕೃಷಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರಿಗೆ ಪುನರ್ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯಾಗಿ ಮಾರ್ಪಡಿಸಿದೆ ಎಂದರು.

ಜ.1ರಿಂದ ಇ-ಆಫೀಸ್ ವ್ಯವಹಾರ

2023 ಜ.1ರಿಂದ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯವಾಗಿ ಕೃಷಿ ಮತ್ತು ಜಲಾನಯನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಇಲಾಖೆಗಳ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಹಾಗೂ ಅಧೀನ ಕಚೇರಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಇ-ಆಫೀಸ್ ಮೂಲಕ ವ್ಯವಹರಿಸಬೇಕು. ಇಲಾಖೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹಲವಾರು ಯೋಜನೆಗಳ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನ ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಗಳು ಕಾಲಕಾಲಕ್ಕೆ ಬದಲಾಗುವುದರಿಂದ ಹಾಗೂ ಆಡಳಿತ ತಂತ್ರಜ್ಞಾನ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಬಳಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿರುವುದರಿಂದ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ಷಮತೆ ಉತ್ತಮಗೊಳಿಸಲು ಹಾಗೂ ಹಾಲಿ ಲಭ್ಯವಿರುವ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ/ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿ ಸದ್ಬಳಕೆ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಹಾಲಿ ಇರುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಭಾರ ಪಟ್ಟಿ ಬದಲಿಸಿ ಜ.1, 2023ರಿಂದ ನೂತನ ಕಾರ್ಯಭಾರ ಪಟ್ಟಿ ಹೊರಡಿಸುವಂತೆ ಉನ್ನತಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಚಿವ ಬಿ.ಸಿ.ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ನಿರ್ದೇಶನ ನೀಡಿದರು.



ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನ ಖಾಸಗಿ ಆಸ್ಪತ್ರೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿಶ್ರಾಂತಿಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಬಿ.ಸಿ.ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ಶುಕ್ರವಾರ ವರ್ಚುವಲ್ ಸಭೆ ನಡೆಸಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಪ್ರಗತಿ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ನಡೆಸಿದರು.

ಜಾಗೃತ ಕೋಶಕ್ಕೆ ಬಲ

ಜಾಗೃತ ಕೋಶವನ್ನು ಇನ್ನು ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಬಲವರ್ಧನೆ ಮಾಡಲು ಹಾಲಿ ಇರುವ ಸಹಾಯಕ ಕೃಷಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರ ವೃಂದದ ಜತೆಗೆ ಮೈಸೂರು, ಕಲಬುರಗಿ, ರಾಯಚೂರು, ತುಮಕೂರು, ಚಿತ್ರದುರ್ಗ, ಹಾಸನ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚುವರಿಯಾಗಿ ಸಹಾಯಕ ಕೃಷಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರ ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳನ್ನು ಮರು ಹೊಂದಾಣಿಕೆ ಮಾಡಿ ನಿಯೋಜಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು ಎಂದು ಬಿ.ಸಿ.ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ವಿವರಿಸಿದರು.

ಪುಣ್ಯಕೋಟಿ ದತ್ತು ವಂತಿಗೆಗೆ 80ಜಿ ವಿನಾಯ್ತಿ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ಪುಣ್ಯಕೋಟಿ ದತ್ತು ಯೋಜನೆಗೆ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ/ನೌಕರರು ನೀಡುವ ವಂತಿಗೆ ಮೊತ್ತಕ್ಕೆ ಆದಾಯ ತೆರಿಗೆ ಕಾಯ್ದೆ 1961ರ ಸೆಕ್ಷನ್ 80ಜಿ ಅನ್ವಯ ವಿನಾಯಿತಿ ನೀಡಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಆದೇಶ ಹೊರಡಿಸಿದೆ. ಪುಣ್ಯಕೋಟಿ ದತ್ತು ಯೋಜನೆ ಸುಗಮ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ವಿವಿಧ ವೃಂದದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ನೌಕರರು ಹಾಗೂ ನಿಗಮ/ಮಂಡಳಿ/ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರ/ ವಿವಿ/ಸ್ವಾಯತ್ತ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ನೌಕರರ 2022ರ ನವೆಂಬರ್ ಮಾಹೆಯ ವೇತನದಿಂದ ಒಂದು ಬಾರಿಗೆ ಸೀಮಿತವಾಗಿ 'ಎ' ವೃಂದದ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು 11,000 ರೂ., 'ಬಿ' ವೃಂದದ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು 4000 ರೂ., 'ಸಿ' ವೃಂದದ ನೌಕರರು 400 ರೂ. ಹಾಗೂ 'ಡಿ' ವೃಂದದ ನೌಕರರಿಗೆ ವಿನಾಯಿತಿ ನೀಡಿ ನಿರ್ದಿಷ್ಟಪಡಿಸಿದ ಮೊತ್ತದ ವಂತಿಗೆ ಕಟಾಯಿಸಲು ಹಾಗೂ ನಿಗದಿತ ಯೋಜನೆಗೆ ಬಳಕೆ ಮಾಡಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಮಂಜೂರಾತಿ ನೀಡಿ ಆದೇಶಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಹಿನ್ನೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪ್ರಾಣಿ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಮಂಡಳಿಯು ಆದಾಯ ತೆರಿಗೆ ಇಲಾಖೆಯಿಂದ ಪಡೆದಿರುವ ಫಾರಂ ನಂ.10ಎಸಿ ಪ್ರಕಾರ, ಯೋಜನೆಗೆ ದೇಣಿಗೆ ನೀಡುವವರು ಆದಾಯ ತೆರಿಗೆ ಕಾಯ್ದೆ 1961ರ ಸೆಕ್ಷನ್ 80ಜಿ ಅನ್ವಯ ತೆರಿಗೆ ವಿನಾಯಿತಿ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಅವಕಾಶವಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಪಶು ಸಂಗೋಪನೆ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಅಧೀನ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿ ಆದೇಶ ಹೊರಡಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

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ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರಿಗೆ ಸಿಹಿ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆ

ಕಬ್ಬು ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರಿಗೆ ಶೀಘ್ರದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಸಿಹಿ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಚಿಗುರೊಡೆದಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬಿನ ಉಪ ಉತ್ಪನ್ನಗಳ ಲಾಭದಲ್ಲಿ ರೈತರಿಗೂ ಪಾಲು ಸಿಗಬೇಕೆಂಬ ಬೇಡಿಕೆಗೆ ಮನ್ನಣೆ ದೊರೆಯುವಂತಹ ವಾತಾವರಣ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬು ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಸಚಿವ ಶಂಕರ ಪಾಟೀಲ ಮುನೇನಕೊಪ್ಪ ಅವರು ತಜ್ಞರು ನೀಡಿರುವ ವರದಿ ಕುರಿತಂತೆ ನಡೆಸಿದ ಚರ್ಚೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಸಾಧ್ಯತೆ ಗೋಚರಿಸಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬು ಉಪಉತ್ಪನ್ನಗಳ ಲಾಭವನ್ನು ರೈತರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಹಂಚಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬೇಕು ಎಂಬುದರ ಕುರಿತು ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆಗಳ ಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಗಳು ಸಕಾರಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿ ಸ್ಪಂದಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಇನ್ನು ಐದು ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ನಿರ್ಧಾರ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸುವುದಾಗಿ ತಿಳಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಕಬ್ಬು ಬೆಳೆಯುವಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕವು ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಉತ್ತರಪ್ರದೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಮಹಾರಾಷ್ಟ್ರದ ನಂತರ ಮೂರನೇ ಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬು ಒಂದು ಪ್ರಮುಖ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ಬೆಳೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಇತ್ತೀಚಿನ ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರಿಗೆ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಆದಾಯ ತಂದುಕೊಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬು ಬೆಳೆಯುವಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಮೊದಲು ಮಂಡ್ಯ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಂಚೂಣಿ ಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿತ್ತು. ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಆತಿದೊಡ್ಡ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯಾದ ಬೆಳಗಾವಿಯು ಈಗ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮೊದಲ ಸ್ಥಾನ ಗಳಿಸಿದೆ. ಆದರೆ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರ ನಡುವೆ



ಕಬ್ಬು ಉಪ ಉತ್ಪನ್ನ ಲಾಭದಲ್ಲಿ ರೈತರಿಗೂ ಪಾಲು ಬೇಡಿಕೆ

ಅನೇಕ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳು ಹಾಗೆಯೇ ಮುಂದುವರಿದಿವೆ. ಕಬ್ಬಿಗೆ ಯೋಗ್ಯ ಬೆಲೆ ನೀಡುತ್ತಿಲ್ಲ ಎಂಬ ಆಸಮಾಧಾನ ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರಲ್ಲಿ ಇದೆ. ಎಫ್‌ಆರ್‌ಪಿ (ನ್ಯಾಯಯುತ ಮತ್ತು ಲಾಭದಾಯಕ ಬೆಲೆ) ದರಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ದರವನ್ನು ಕೊಡಬೇಕೆಂದು ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರು ಆಗ್ರಹಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರೆ, ಎಫ್ ಆರ್‌ಪಿ ದರಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಬೆಲೆ ನೀಡಬೇಕೆಂದು ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸೂಚನೆ ನೀಡಲಾಗದು ಎಂದು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಹೇಳಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬಿನ ತೂಕ ಹಾಗೂ ಇಳುವರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮೋಸ ಆಗುತ್ತಿದೆ ಎಂದು ರೈತರು ಆಪಾದಿಸುತ್ತಿದು, ಇದನ್ನು ತಡೆಯಲು ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ಮಾಡುವ ಭರವಸೆಯನ್ನು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ನೀಡಿದೆ.

ಜಗತ್ತಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ತಯಾರಿಸುವ ಮತ್ತು ಬಳಸುವ ದೇಶವಾಗಿ ಭಾರತ ಹೊರಹೊಮ್ಮಿದೆ. ಆಲ್ಲದೆ, ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ರಫ್ತು ಮಾಡುವಲ್ಲಿ ಎರಡನೇ ಸ್ಥಾನವನ್ನು ಗಳಿಸಿದೆ. 2021-22ರಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾರತವು 3.58 ಕೋಟಿ ಟನ್ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಉತ್ಪಾದಿಸಿದ್ದು, 2022-23ರಲ್ಲಿ ಇದು 3.65 ಕೋಟಿ ಟನ್‌ಗೆ ತಲುಪುವ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಇದೆ. ವಿಶ್ವದ ಒಟ್ಟಾರೆ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಬಳಕೆ ಪ್ರಮಾಣ 1700 ಲಕ್ಷ ಟನ್‌ಗಳಷ್ಟಿದ್ದು, ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ ಶೇ. 15ರಷ್ಟು ಸಕ್ಕರೆಯನ್ನು ಭಾರತೀಯರೇ ಬಳಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಬಳಕೆ ಪ್ರಮಾಣ ಮುಂದಿನ ಐದು ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 300 ಲಕ್ಷ ಟನ್‌ಗಳಿಗಿಂತಲೂ ಅಧಿಕವಾಗಲಿದೆ ಎಂದು ಭಾರತೀಯ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯೋದ್ಯಮ ಮಹಾಸಂಘ ಅಂದಾಜು ಮಾಡಿದೆ. ಕಬ್ಬಿನ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಉಪಉತ್ಪನ್ನವೆಂದರೆ ಎಥೆನಾಲ್. ಕೇಂದ್ರದಿಂದ ಎಥೆನಾಲ್ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆಗೆ ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹ ದೊರೆಯುತ್ತಿದ್ದು, ಪೆಟ್ರೋಲ್‌ಗೆ ಮಿಶ್ರಣ ಮಾಡಲು ಇದನ್ನು ಬಳಸುವುದರಿಂದ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ ಇದೆ. ಮದ್ಯ ತಯಾರಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬಳಸಲಾಗುವ ಕಾಕಂಬಿಯೂ ಇನ್ನೊಂದು ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಉಪಉತ್ಪನ್ನವಾಗಿದೆ. 'ರೈತರು ಉಳಿಯಬೇಕು, ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆಯೂ ಉಳಿಯಬೇಕು' ಎಂಬ ನೀತಿ ನಮ್ಮದಾಗಿದೆ ಸಚಿವ ಮುನೇನಕೊಪ್ಪ ಹೇಳಿರುವುದು ಸೂಕ್ತವೇ ಆಗಿದೆ. ಸಕ್ಕರೆ ಬೇಡಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಪೂರೈಸುವ ನಿಟ್ಟಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಇನ್ನೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಅಧಿಕ ಇಳುವರಿಯ ಕಬ್ಬು ಬೆಳೆಯಲು ಗಮನ ನೀಡಿದರೆ ಬೆಳೆಗಾರರಿಗೂ-ಕಾರ್ಖಾನೆಗಳಿಗೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಲಾಭ ದೊರೆಯಲಿದೆ.

Something new is brewing: Farmer grows coffee in Huvina Hadagali

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

When someone says coffee from Karnataka, three names immediately come to mind: Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, and Sakleshpur in Hassan district. But something new is brewing in an unexpected corner of the State: farmers in North Karnataka are now trying to grow coffee and if proven to be of good quality, it will be a game changer for the region.

Gaddi Guddappa, a farmer from Huvina Hadagali in the Vijayanagar district, has cultivated coffee on eight acres of land successfully. Mr. Guddappa told *The Hindu*, "I bought the plants from Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga four years back and this year, I have got the yield of 1,600 kg of coffee from my eight acres of plantation."

According to him, the coffee which he had grown is the first in the district and also in the North Karnataka region. Many farmers in his district are visiting his plantation every day to learn about and see the coffee beans grown. "For me, it was a very new crop and I didn't know the outcome of it. I learnt how to grow coffee by visiting Chikkamagaluru. Many people from my area who were working in the coffee estates there had told me about it. I bought Arabica-Chandragiri variety coffee from Shivamogga nursery and started to grow it," Mr. Guddappa added.

Initially, Mr. Guddappa was growing arecanut on his land. He then started to grow coffee in the middle of the arecanut farm, as traditionally, all coffee is shade grown. He is using arecanut palms and a few other kinds of trees as shade for coffee plants while growing pepper as intercrop. "I am the first person to cultivate coffee in this region. This year, a few farmers in Lingsugur in Raichur district and Bagalkot district have also started growing coffee," he said.



The farmer is using arecanut palms and a few other kinds of trees as shade for coffee plants..

If the coffee is proven to be of good quality, it will be a game changer for North Karnataka

Coffee Board testing it

Coffee Board officials recently visited Huvina Hadagali and collected samples of the coffee for quality testing. K.G. Jagadeesha, Chief Executive Officer and Secretary of the Coffee Board, told *The Hindu*, "Testing is going on and it will take time to give our scientific analysis of the crop."

According to Mr. Jagadeesha, coffee plants can be grown anywhere. However, the quality has to be met to the proper standard for the coffee to be marketable and drinkable. "We don't want to recommend anything based on physical observation. We want to go by extensive testing of the coffee beans. As a responsible agency, we have to see everything, including long-term sustainability, but we are exploring," he added.

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DID YOU KNOW?

They're not monkeys, but orchids!

At first glance, they look like a troop of monkeys hanging by their tails, looking into your eyes with a smile on their face. A closer look reveals they are in fact flowers. You begin to wonder how nature cleverly tricks the eyes. These are the monkey orchids, native to the cloud forests of Ecuador and Peru, that grow at an altitude of 1,000-2,000 metres. Like many orchids, they are epiphytes—they grow on other plants and absorb nutrients and water from the air, rain and other debris that accumulate around.

The monkey orchid (*Dracula simia*) has petals with white lips and tail-like purple appendages. It belongs to the genus Dracula—a moniker coined by the American botanist and orchid specialist Carlyle Luer, intrigued by the looks of these flowers. The genus, which consists of around 90 species, has many fascinating names. *D. simia* is named after the Linnaean primate group, *D. vampira* is called so because the flower looks like a hooded vampire, *D. bella* is the 'beautiful dracula', and *D. chimaera* is named after a mythical Greek monster.



These rare orchids are only found in the moist forests in Central America, stretching from southern Mexico to Peru—a region also occupied by many New World monkeys. While there is no way to confirm, some scientists speculate that the monkey-like resemblance may have evolved as a means to deter primates from munching on these orchids for a snack.

The unique beauty of the monkey orchids and their close cousins means that they are in great demand to adorn the window sills of orchid collectors and hobbyists. Some species are also sought for their purported medicinal properties. Unfortunately, that also spells a threat to the survival of these orchids. Vanilla, which flavours our ice cream, is also an orchid native to Mexico.

The international trade of 70% of the orchids is regulated by the inter-governmental Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species agreement. However, there's a thriving illegal trafficking of orchids, especially in countries where regulations are lax. As a result, many species are on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. Some, like the Spectacular Grammangis (*Grammangis spectabilis*) endemic to Madagascar, and the Vietnamese Paphiopedilum (*Paphiopedilum vietnamese*) are already on the verge of extinction. But the world's forests need orchids—not only to trick our eyes—but to act as indicators of the ecosystem's health.

– Spoorthy Raman

26-11-2022
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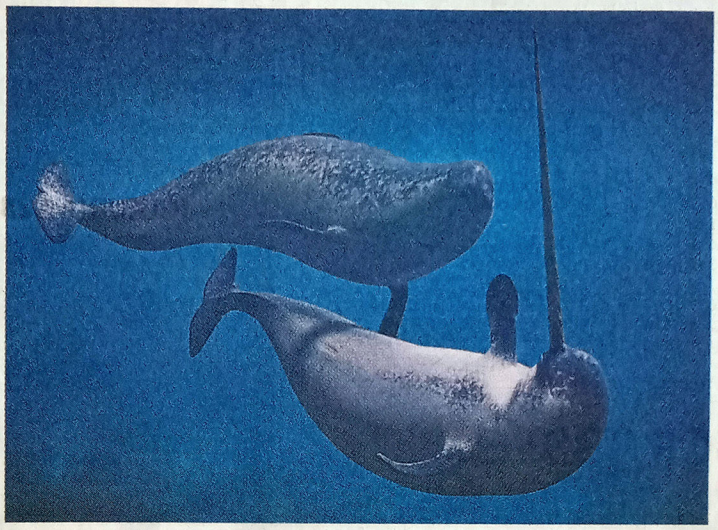
SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

When climate change alters migration patterns of whales

Whales and other animals may be able to change their behaviour to avoid some impacts of rising temperatures, writes Todd Woody



Scientists have found that narwhals are altering their steadfast migration patterns in response to climate change, offering some hope that the tusked whales and other species may be able to adapt to a rapidly warming Arctic.

Researchers analysed satellite tracking data from 40 narwhals that had been tagged between 1997 and 2018. They determined that with sea ice forming later in the year due to rising temperatures, the ice-dependent whales have delayed migrating to their deep-ocean winter feeding grounds by 10 days per decade. The marine mammals are also taking longer to make the 900-mile (1,500-kilometer) journey from the coastal areas of the Canadian Arctic where they spend the summer.

"The fact that narwhals are changing their behavior over what we assume are individual lifetimes could be an indicator that potentially these other animals might be able to leverage behavioral changes to bolster themselves against the effects of climate change," said Courtney Shuert, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia and lead author of the peer-reviewed study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences last month.

The long-term success of this kind of adaptation may depend on how fast humans reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are melting the Arctic.

"The rate of climate change is almost impossible for species to adapt to through mechanisms of evolution," said Shuert.

Extinction-level threat

For narwhals, climate change poses an extinction-level threat due to the loss of sea ice on which they depend for food and protection. As ice disappears, predatory orcas have expanded their range further into the Arctic while huge ships ply now-open Arctic waters. Warming seas also endanger narwhal's preferred prey—polar cod, Arctic cod and halibut—which thrive in a narrow temperature range.

Known as the unicorns of the sea for their single, long spiraled tusk, narwhals are estimated to live as long as 100 years or more. But they're very particular about where they live and where they travel. Researchers demonstrated in a 2020 paper published in the journal Scientific Reports that narwhals have a "narrow thermal preference," with a small rise in ocean temperature reducing their abundance.

Research has shown that narwhals in the past resolutely stuck to the same migratory routes and schedules throughout their lives, according to scientists. The whales, which can dive to depths of more than a mile hunting for prey, spend their winters in the deep ocean. They prefer areas where ice covers more than 95% of the sea but contains fissures that allow them to surface to breathe.

When that ice cover breaks up in the spring and exposes narwhals to predators, they migrate to coastal areas because, scientists believe, shallower bays and fjords there give them refuge while rearing young.

When the weather starts to turn colder in September, narwhals depart before "fast ice" can form in their summer grounds. Fast ice is attached to land and can block their migratory routes, suffocating them under a frozen expanse with no openings to the surface.

But as the Arctic Ocean warms and delays ice formation, narwhals are lingering longer in the summer and taking more time to reach their winter habitat, according to the satellite tracking data analyzed by Shuert and her colleagues. How the whales know to postpone their journey and what they're doing during their extended summer sojourn remains largely unknown.

Sensing the environment

"We can't really say for sure exactly what they're sensing on a day-to-day basis," said Shuert. "They're very intelligent animals, and some of the data suggests that they're probably sensing the environment that they're in currently plus have a memory of past events, such as if the spring ice breakup was really early that year."

She said it's possible that narwhals spend the extra time exploring new areas for prey.

Determining the impact of a decline in winter ice on narwhals remains difficult due to the limits of satellite tag technology. Narwhals are captured and tagged in shallower areas but by the time they reach their winter grounds, the tags' batteries typically have died, according to Shuert.

If narwhals overstay their summer break, the paper states, they could risk being entombed by a sudden formation of ice triggered by climate-driven temperature swings. A 2011 study published in the journal Polar Biology documented four instances between 2008 and 2010 where hundreds of narwhals died after being trapped by ice when temperatures quickly plunged.

Mads Peter Heide-Jørgensen, a co-author of the 2011 paper and a professor at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, said no entrapments, which typically are discovered in remote areas by Inuit hunters, have been found over the past decade.

"If the ice is generally disappearing (not just less predictable), then there should be less ice entrapments," Heide-Jørgensen, a veteran narwhal researcher who is also an author of the new migration paper, said in an email.

Ship collisions pose a mortal danger to whales worldwide but Heide-Jørgensen said narwhals are at less at risk than other species. "There is generally more ship traffic all over the Arctic but the risk for collisions with narwhals is small as narwhals react at long distance to ship noise," he said.

BLOOMBERG

26-11-2022
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An uphill struggle in Sri Lanka's tea country

While business chambers and affluent citizens are seeing a return to normalcy, most others in Sri Lanka are acutely feeling the impact of the economic crisis. For the Malaiyaha Tamils, who already face structural deprivation, the soaring inflation and joblessness have made everyday life a battle for survival, reports **Meera Srinivasan**

Sri Lanka
Kandy

Sathish Sumithra's son, barely two years old, is too young to make sense of Sri Lanka's unrelenting economic crisis, but not to escape it. He must cope with the drastic dietary and lifestyle changes it has brought about. His formula milk intake has halved, he is fed an occasional egg – his parents cannot afford fish or meat – and he wears old, washed diapers at night.

"An egg costs 70 rupees (₹16) now," says Sumithra, breaking down what the country's 70% inflation and over 80% food inflation means in her working-class household. "A formula milk tin was 800 rupees (₹177) some months ago; it is now 1,400 (₹310). Diaper packs are more than 4,000 rupees (₹886). We just can't afford to eat and live like we did before. Surviving each day is a struggle."

Sumithra lives in a poky line room in a tea estate in Kandy district of the Central Province. Several thousand families across Sri Lanka's plantation districts still live in the colonial-era accommodation. Her husband is employed at a bar in a nearby town and makes 35,000 rupees a month (roughly ₹7,760) – that too only during a good sales month. Tracking the ever-changing prices of essentials is now a mandatory and daunting exercise for families, especially those who are rationing even the most basic items to survive. Everyone talks prices.

"A pack of 10 sanitary pads costs more than 400 rupees (₹88) now; it used to be 110 (₹24). Many girls can't afford that, so they are using cloth [napkins]. They end up missing school when they get their period," Sumithra notes. Children walk up to two hours to get to their secondary school in this estate. The roads are not motorable, and buses do not run here.

In the last three months alone, a dozen students have dropped out of schools in Atabage, barely 30 km from the bustling city of Kandy, the centre of Sri Lanka's last kingdom and now a popular tourist spot showcasing the island nation's Buddhist heritage. The rising cost of sanitary products is not the only reason girls are dropping out. Families are pulling their children out of school to save on education-related expenses. "A notebook costs 410 rupees (₹90); one pencil is 40 (₹9)," says an estate worker whose daughter stopped going to school this year.

Besides, as families are eating fewer meals, packing lunch for school is not an option. Jesudasan Nikalasmary, a pre-school teacher, maintains a flower-shaped, colour-coded diagram in her small classroom to record the weight of children. "See the red petal," she points out. "The names written on it are of children who are underweight for their age. In the last few months, more children in our class have moved to the red zone."

According to the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP), more than six million people (about 30% of the country's population) face food insecurity and require humanitarian assistance. The WFP recently found that 86% of families are "buying cheaper, less nutritious food, eating less and in some cases skipping meals altogether".

> We just can't afford to eat and live like we did before. Surviving each day is a struggle.
>
> **SATHISH SUMITHRA**
> Home-maker

Waning protests

How Sri Lanka got here is now a well-known story. Earlier this year, the island nation found itself in a dire balance of payments problem, consequent to mega development-fuelled borrowing and a chronic shortfall of foreign exchange revenue as against expenditure over the years. The dollar crunch resulted in acute shortages of imported food items, fuel and medicines, and forced the government to default on its $51 billion foreign debt in April. The shortages made daily life precarious in the estates where infrastructure is abysmal and connectivity is usually poor. "I walked 18 km a day in these mountains to deliver letters," says a postman in Atabage, recalling the days of severe fuel shortages.

The painful economic crash brought people to the streets across the island – first to line up for essentials and then to protest the government's poor response to their misery. The historic street protests in Colombo forced the Rajapaksa administration out of power and led to the election of President Ranil Wickremesinghe through a parliamentary vote. The new government's provisional agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the prospect of a bailout offered a semblance of stability for observers outside the country and relief to many, mostly affluent, Sri Lankans. The government introduced a fuel rationing system using QR codes, restricted imports and tried to save scarce dollars. With India pledging close to $4 billion assistance this year and some repurposed funds, Sri Lanka was able to import fuel and energy, fertilizer, and pharma goods. "No more queues. No more street protests," government interlocutors were quick to boast.

The queues did disappear. The protests have splintered and visibly waned. Many middle-class citizens who were regulars at protests not long ago do not wish to resist any more as life is returning to normal for them. Their petrol tanks are full. They drive their children to school every day. Price rise does not strain their pockets as much as it does their poorer compatriots'. They criticise the residual agitations and are silent about the recent crackdown on protesters. The business chambers, which were supportive of the popular uprising at the height of the crisis, are now asking protesters not to "destabilise" the country. They are desperate to put the crisis behind them and are pinning their hopes on an economic revival in 2023.

But the crisis, in its most excruciating form, is not over for many Sri Lankans. The World Bank estimates that national poverty levels doubled from 13.1% in 2021 to 25.6% in 2022. Urban poverty rates have tripled, to 15%. In effect, about 2.7 million additional people have fallen into poverty in the last year alone. The Bank highlighted an "immense setback" in its update this October, noting that "more than half the population living in estate areas is now below the poverty line".



Many children in the hill country are losing weight as families are unable to afford nutritious food amid soaring inflation. Children at an estate in Atabage, Kandy district. MEERA SRINIVASAN

The past is present

The economic crisis is trapping millions of Sri Lankans in joblessness and poverty, but Malaiyaha Tamils are not among the "newly poor". Their economic distress predates this slump and will likely outlast it. Deprivation has been a running theme for this community, whose south Indian ancestors were brought across the Palk Strait two centuries ago as labourers to clear land, build roads and railways, grow and pluck coffee, and later tea, on the British-run plantations. They have since faced structural oppression and exploitation by the colonial rulers, the post-colonial state, and the private plantation companies. Following their long struggle for citizenship until 2003, the Malaiyaha Tamils continue to fight for land, housing rights, and decent wages.

Some of the Malaiyaha Tamils who are bilingual and speak Sinhala also point to rampant, modern-day racism in the predominantly Sinhalese-employed government offices. "You are made to feel like an outsider in your own area," says S. Bhuvaneshwari, a young home-maker who lives on a tea estate. The everyday discrimination faced by the community, which is distinct from the Tamils of Sri Lanka's north and east, is less known though it has drawn more attention in recent times. In his visit to Sri Lanka in December 2021, United Nations Special Rapporteur Tomoya Obokata noted that "contemporary forms of slavery have an ethnic dimension" and that Malaiyaha Tamils continue to face "multiple forms of discrimination based on their origin".

> I thought our country was about to change for the better. But we are left with the same political class. They are all protecting each other. They don't care about people like us.
>
> **G. LIEGENDIRAN**
> Unemployed youth

An estimated 1.5 lakh workers are employed in the tea estates. About twice as many Malaiyaha Tamils, who live in the estates, work outside the plantation economy – on vegetable farms, tea smallholdings, in small shops, eateries, and as domestic workers. Scores from the million-strong community also work as professionals or run businesses across the island and abroad.

After a determined struggle for three years, estate workers won a daily wage of 1,000 rupees (about ₹225) last year. The profit-making plantation companies grudgingly agreed to the rate, only after tying it to unrealistic targets of productivity and the number of days of labour. Workers have little control over these, for monsoons and the year-long maintenance of the estates determine the quantity and quality of produce – that too if leaders do not resort to rash decisions such as the abrupt chemical fertilizer ban imposed by then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last year that led to a 40% drop in yield.

The hard-won wage of 1,000 rupees is not only difficult to earn, but also grossly inadequate, argues a 2022 study by the Kandy-based NGO Institute of Social Development. Factoring in prevailing costs of living, the study led by University of Peradeniya economist S. Vijesandiran showed that a worker needs at least 2,577.91 rupees (about ₹571) a day, with assured work for 21 days, to support a family of four.

The predominantly female workforce in the estates knows that even their best effort, braving blood-sucking leeches and exhaustion from endless housework, can only fetch them less than half of that. "I couldn't cope. I stopped working as a tea plucker," says Agnes, who has four daughters. She is now trying to find a job in West Asia, a common recourse for many workers, to make both ends meet. In opting for domestic work far away, the women often face the risk of continued exploitation. Back home, they are blamed for abandoning their families.

Everyone is seeking a coping mechanism. Some are converting to a different religion for relief. Some are taking high-interest loans from microfinance companies that are notorious for targeting poor women. Some, like Agnes, cannot wait to fly out for a new job. "I have no other option. My husband does not work any more. I cannot feed my family if I continue working here. I have already stopped sending two of my daughters to school," she says. Like most others, she would find it hard to say which part of her family's suffering is induced by the downturn.

Eroding hope

In fact, many families living in the estates are yet to recover from the joblessness of the COVID-19 years. Thousands of domestic workers returned from West Asia, while scores of young people lost their jobs in Colombo and returned to their villages. Two years and a debilitating crisis later, finding a new job is proving to be nearly impossible.

"I have been trying to get a job that pays a decent salary, and that will let me live in Colombo and send some money to my family here. But the wages are too low. I can't save even a few thousands," says G. Liegendiran, 20, who used to work in Colombo and is now back in the estates.

Economic hardships are not new for him, but there is a new sense of hopelessness. "Seeing all that happened this year, I thought our country was about to change for the better. But here we are, left with the same political class. They are all protecting each other. They don't care about people like us," he says. Like many other young people on the plantations, Liegendiran is exploring job opportunities abroad as "it is hard to imagine a future here."

If the young are giving up, it is not for the want of trying. From the time she cleared her advance-level, school-leaving examination a couple of years ago, Danushiya Ramkumar has been desperately applying for jobs and training programmes. "Some employers say our line room address is invalid without a door number and street name. It is almost like we don't have an identity. It is frustrating," she says. The courses she wanted to attend were not available in Tamil. "The vocational institutes offer classes only in Sinhala. When I asked them if they could at least translate key sections to English, they refused. I don't know if those who were protesting in the Aragalaya (struggle) against the crisis know how some of us have lived and continue to live. This is our reality."

Last month, President Wickremesinghe announced that the government will appoint a committee to study "how best to integrate the Tamils of Hill Country Origin" further into Sri Lankan society. It was seen as an admission that the community had been left behind. It is one of many committees set up by the Wickremesinghe administration that faces a serious challenge in the coming year.

The Sri Lankan economy is expected to contract by 9.2% this year and a further 4.2% in 2023. The government hoped to receive a $2.9 billion IMF package by the end of the year. But the Fund has only conditionally agreed to provide the facility, depending on assurances from Sri Lanka's diverse creditors. While the government is talking to its lenders on restructuring its loans, it has some distance to go before securing IMF support.

Meanwhile, as the cost of living soars and discontent grows among the people, especially the poor, all eyes are on the government for urgent relief. The last time the economic pain of ordinary citizens was ignored, it did not end well for those in power. Sections of the population who were already vulnerable, like the Malaiyaha Tamils, have been pushed to the edge with this crisis. "An entire generation's health, education and future is in question," says Nikalasmary. "For years and years, we have been talking about how bad things are for our community. Can we not break free from this reality?"