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Supply chain breaks, farmers in distress

Due to the lockdown in the country, Biradar could not transport his produce to either Latur or Kalaburagi. Frustrated, he ended his life.



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By Express News Service

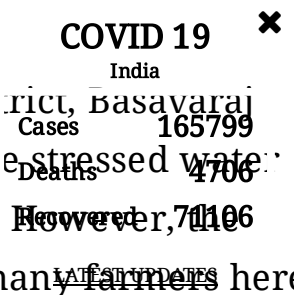
KALABURAGI: Chandrakant Biradar (47), who had grown watermelon on his farmland, measuring 1 acre and 31 guntas, at Lad-Chincholi village of Aland taluk, committed suicide on Monday evening. He hanged himself from a tree in his field.

Biradar, who used to sell watermelon to wholesale merchants of neighbouring Latur in Maharashtra and Kalaburagi, had borrowed Rs 5 lakh from Axis Bank and Rs 5 lakh from private moneylenders.

Due to the lockdown in the country, Biradar could not transport his produce to either Latur or Kalaburagi. Frustrated, he ended his life. A case of unnatural death was registered at Narona police station.

A number of organisations connected to farmers have urged the government to lift fruits and vegetables and make arrangements to sell them, as they are perishable commodities. This is the second suicide in Kalyan Karnataka region due to the lockdown. On Sunday, a person committed suicide at Bhalki town of Bidar district, allegedly because of non-availability of liquor.

In Alagondanahalli village of Challakere taluk, in Chitradurga district, Basavaraj has grown watermelon and muskmelon on 3 acres of land. Despite stressed water resources, he got a bumper crop and was hoping for a good profit. However, COVID-19 lockdown has dashed his dreams. This is the case with many farmers here



who have cultivated vegetables, watermelon, muskmelon, chikkoo, sweet lime and other fruits. The farmers, who fear imminent loss, are wary of harvesting their produce, and prefer to let them rot in the fields.

Though there is a great demand for vegetables and fruits in the market, the supply chain has been broken, leading to reduced supply and a sharp rise in prices. “I am requesting the government to help me transport my produce to Bengaluru so that I can earn a good price for my melons,” requested Basavaraj.

At Kaluvehalli, Thippeswamy had grown onions before the lockdown was announced. “I got the onions picked and packed and am waiting to be sent to Yeshwanthpur market, but the government has not issued passes for transportation. If I don’t get passes in another two days, the crop will start deteriorating,” said Thippeswamy. Dr Savitha, deputy director, horticulture department, told TNIE, “The department has decided to issue passes for transportation of fruits, vegetables and onions, considering their perishable nature. We have issued about 150 passes till now.”

The passes are being issued by tahsildars of taluks on the recommendation of the horticulture department. Farmers can transport vegetables, onion and fruits to markets in local areas, district headquarters, outside district and even inter-state, from Tuesday afternoon, she added. In Belagavi district, the lockdown forced Ramesh Mayannache of Kadoli village to run his tractor through his fields on Tuesday, crushing the cabbage crop.

Mayannache was expecting a good price for his crop, but when it was ready to be harvested, the government announced the lockdown, which had a cascading effect on the wholesale vegetable market. The export of vegetables from Belagavi market to Goa, Maharashtra and other places has stopped. “I realised there is no use harvesting and sending the cabbage to the market, so I decided to crush it in the fields, it will turn into a bio-fertiliser,”

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Why a river runs white

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It is a telling comment on the distress of dairy farmers of the region. The Ghataprabha, the lifeline of the region, runs white in Raibag taluk district. On Tuesday, Shivanand Madar, a milkman from Raibag, found out that

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of Belagavi

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dairies in Kudachi were closed, and transport had been suspended. He and his workers dumped about 1,500 litres of milk into the Ghataprabha left bank canal. “But I have to pay Rs 34 per litre to farmers who supplied it. It’s a loss of nearly Rs 1 lakh. If the situation remains grim, those in this business will suffer. The government should streamline this essential service,” he said. Madar collects about 2,000-2,500 litres of cow and buffalo milk from farmers in Palabhavi village daily, and sells them to dairies in Kudachi town. From there, the milk is supplied to Goa and some parts of Maharashtra to prepare paneer and other milk products.

Agriculture war rooms to help farmers

Bengaluru: The state government will issue green passes for vehicles which supply fertilisers and seeds, for vehicles which transport farm produce between states, except Kerala, said agriculture minister BC Patil. He also said the state government would set up an Agri war room at the agriculture department office in every district to help farmers resolve any issues that crop up. These offices will function between 8am and 8pm every day. “In the past two days I received more than 2,000 calls about farmer-related issues. We have therefore decided to set up Agri war rooms in each district, so that farmers can get their issues solved at their head quarters,” Patil said.

(Inputs from Ramkrishna Badseshi in Kalaburagi, G Subhash Chandra in Chitradurga/ Davanagere, Sunil Patil in Belagavi)

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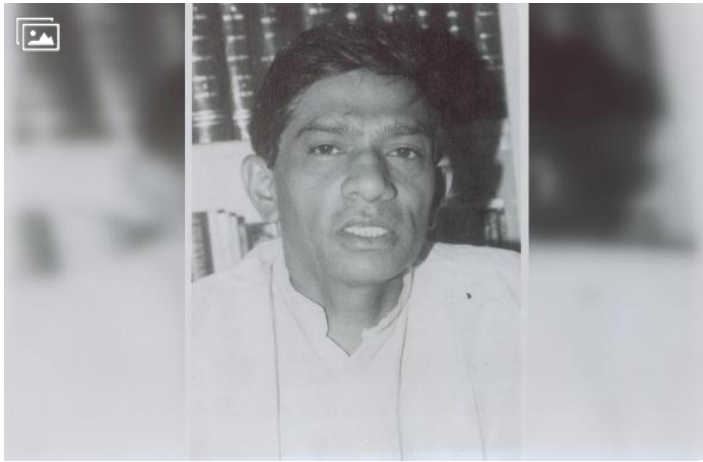
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