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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:

### **Neerbogam Potato Prices to Increase**

Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) is one of the most important crops of the world, ranking next only to rice, wheat and maize. Potato assumes greater significance for its ability to provide food security to millions of people across the globe, as it provides more dry-matter content, proteins and calories from per unit area of land and time. Potato is a wholesome food which is rich in carbohydrates, proteins, minerals and vitamins. Grading is essential to get uniformity of size in order to fetch good prices in market and to achieve uniform emergence of crop. The world's total production of potato was around 374.38 million tonnes from 19.24 million hectares during 2011. India produced 414 lakh tonnes of potato from an area of 19.06 lakh hectares in 2011-12. In India, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar and Gujarat account for more than 80 per cent share in total production. The area and production of potato were 4,910 hectares and 1,04,890 tonnes respectively in Tamil Nadu during 2011-12 according to the statistics given by National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF). So far, India has exported about 74,635 tonnes of potato in 2012-2013 which is 26 per cent less than that of 2011-12.

It is grown only in the hilly regions of Dindigul, Nilgiris, Krishnagiri and Erode districts. In Neerbogam season it is sown in February and harvested during May to June. There are two major varieties, viz., Kufri Jyoti and Kufri Giriraj grown in Nilgiri district. Nilgiri potato is traded to Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy, Salem and Vellore and also to other States (Kerala). The Nilgiris Co-operative

Marketing Society (NCMS), Mettupalayam is one of the major trading centres in India. At the auction centre at Mettupalayam, potato is currently auctioned at the price range of Rs. 2000 to Rs. 2100 per quintal. Reduction in planting area coupled with drought conditions may result in lesser arrivals and higher price of potato in Mettupalayam market.

Nilgiris Potato is priced based on quality, size, color and shelf-life period. Potatoes are graded manually and then sold at Mettupalayam market. It is graded as thala rasi (size of 40 - 60 MM), rasi (20 - 40 MM), podi (10-20 MM) and thallu kilangu (below 10 MM). The yellow skin potatoes are of good quality. Nilgiris potatoes are considered as the best ones because of its taste, hardness and higher shelf-life. Hence it fetches higher price. Other State potatoes are of lower quality i.e. not hard, less in taste and shorter shelf-life and hence fetch lower prices. Because of its lower prices other states' potatoes are used in 80 percent for food and seed purpose as well as 20 percent for chips making. Nilgiris potatoes are used up to 95 percent for food purpose and 5 percent for chips making.

Potatoes can be stored in cold storage for about five to six months. In Mettupalayam, cold storage facilities are available. Potatoes coming from other states like Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh are mainly stored for seed purpose. The storage cost is Rs.0.30 per kg per month. Peak period of storage takes place during January to May and is released during June-July. 40% to 50% of stored produce is used for seed purpose. Potatoes grown in Nilgiri district are stored to a lesser extent only because of heavy arrivals from Hassan region of Karnataka commencing August thereby reduction in price.

The NAIP – Domestic Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) functioning in Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies (CARDS), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University analyzed the 10 years (2004-2013) prices of potato that prevailed in Nilgiris Co-Operative Marketing Society (NCMS) functioning in Mettupalayam. As per the results of the analysis, the prices of potato will hover around Rs.24-25 per kg in May and June 2013. In July 2013, the prices are expected

to be around Rs.27-28 per kg. Hence, farmers are recommended to store the potato harvested and sell in July 2013.

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