

RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 16th December, 1994/25th
Agrahayana 1916 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr.
Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Impact of Restrictive Legislation on Tobacco Cultivators

*141. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR : Will
the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased
to state :

(a) whether any survey has been conducted
by the Ministry on the impact of the restric-
tive legislation on the crop of Tobacco growers
of Karnataka ;

(b) if so, the details thereof ; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken in
this matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE— (SHRI
S. KRISHNA KUMAR) :

(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Question does not arise.

श्री गुंडप्पा कोरवार : सर, जो लीजस्लेशन
लाया जा रहा है एण्टी तम्बाकू का, उसका असर
जो किसान तम्बाकू पैदा करता है उस पर
क्या होता है ? यह सवाल मेरा है । कर्नाटक
का पूरा मुल्क में तम्बाकू पैदा करने में दूसरा
नंबर है । इसमें किसान अपना धन लगाता
है, मेहनत करता है और आमदनी के लिए यह
तम्बाकू पैदा करने में दिलचस्पी रखता है ।
यह तम्बाकू एक्सपोर्ट होता है और यह तम्बाकू
पैदा करने में न सिर्फ किसान बल्कि हजारों
कृषि कार्मिक भी इससे पलते हैं । अगर यह
लीजस्लेशन लाया जाता है तो मेरा सवाल यह
है कि इन किसानों के साथ जो हजारों लोग
मजदूरी करते हैं और जो यह तम्बाकू
एक्सपोर्ट होता है, उसके ऊपर क्या इसका
कोई असर होगा ? यह मैं जानना चाहता हूँ ।

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, we
have not brought any legislation so far. It
was only under formulation and as such there
is no case. Because of the legislation the
farmers would have been adversely affected.
We did not take any step which would have
adversely affected the livelihood of the
farmers or employment. The figures of

production as well as export show that from
1991-92 to 1992-93 the production has in-
creased almost by 40%. Productivity has also
increased and exports have risen.

In spite of the movement against the
use of tobacco all over the world, the world
production and consumption also is increasing
at the rate of 2 per cent per annum. At the
same time, I would like to mention, Sir, If I
may say so, the hon. Prime Minister has also
said in Parliament that from the long-term
point of view the tobacco farmers have to
think in terms of diversification and also
alternate crops in view of the global movement
to restrict the use of tobacco for health and
environmental reasons.

श्री गुंडप्पा कोरवार : सर, मैं इस लीजस्लेशन
के खिलाफ नहीं हूँ लेकिन मैं यह कहना चाहता
हूँ कि जो आमदनी किसान की है, जो मजदूर
उससे पलते हैं, जिनकी रोजी उससे चलती
है, उन पर कोई बुरा असर न हो । मेरा दूसरा
क्वेश्चन यह है कि यह लीजस्लेशन लाने के
पहले सरकार के पास कोई ऐसा प्रस्ताव है कि
इसके बारे में थोरो स्टडी करें, कोई इसके
लिए एक एक्सपर्ट कमेटी बनाई जाए, ऐसा
कोई प्रस्ताव सरकार के पास है ? अगर है तो
उसके बारे में सरकार क्या स्टैप लेने जा रही
है ?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, the
draft legislation to restrict the use of tobacco is
dealt with by the Ministry of Health and
Family Welfare. The draft has been under dis-
cussion and consideration for almost 9 years.
Consultations and deliberations have been
taking place across the entire spectrum of
public opinion and those who are likely to be
affected by the legislation, including the toba-
co growers and the tobacco industry
There will be further discussions. The
recent meeting of the Secretaries has held that
the farmers have nothing to fear from the pro-
posed legislation, at least in the short-term.

SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI : Mr.
Chairman, Sir, the Government is taking
many measures in the agricultural sector, as
in the case of tobacco. Some of them are
changing the cropping pattern in India. The
change in the cropping pattern has very serious
implications with regard to food security,
employment potential and also foodgrain prices.
I would like to know from the Minister whether

he Government is considering the importance of prior studies as to the effect of the new measures in order to minimise the adverse effects of the new measures that the Government takes ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR) : We cannot.... *(Interruptions)* undertake without first *(Interruptions)*.....

श्री जनार्दन यादव : कृपया माइक ऑन कीजिए, कुछ समझ नहीं आ रहा ।

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Sorry, Sir. We always have a far-reaching requirement. We must look forward and see what we are going to do. The farmers are to go ahead and not look back. They also want to have some money in their pockets and they want to raise their standard of living. So, naturally, we have to think in those terms and we are not going to jeopardise the safety or the food security of this country. We are going to produce much more than what we are producing today. Steps are being taken in that direction to revitalise the irrigation potential, the other techniques and formulae which are going to be developed, seed production and also improvement in seeds, high-yielding seeds; all these things are to be taken into consideration; never mind other things because the farmers must get their share in the income and which they deserve.

SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI : Would the Government undertake prior studies before taking such measures ?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : How can we do that ? *(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI : Let the country suffer. I feel that the Government would not undertake any such studies before venturing.... *(Interruptions)* into new measures. So, let the country suffer.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : The country has gained.... *(Interruptions)* and if the food security has gained, everything has gained.

SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY : Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, the Minister for Agriculture has said the interests of the tobacco growers in Andhra Pradesh would be safeguarded.

Will the Minister of Agriculture give financial assistance to tobacco farmers for their infrastructure like tobacco barns and other infrastructure there ? Is the Government going to give compensation to the farmers switching on to other crops ? Has the Minister of Agriculture invited any group of tobacco farmers to discuss this proposed legislation banning tobacco ? Sir, another supplementary is whether the Government will set up an Experts Committee to study the impact on tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh ?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Sir, no harm has come so far nor will it come in Andhra Pradesh. We have taken into consideration the viewpoint of the farmers. They have come and met us, the Prime Minister and me also. We have had discussions and we know what to do, and also we are trying to diversify according to the needs of the times so that the income of the farmers is safeguarded. You must see a circus. In the trapeze, you leave one cross-bar if there is another one hanging there before you. Naturally, we are trying to do that. And I will not let the interests of my farmers suffer, and we will cross the bridge when it comes. And about that legislation, the less said the better at this time.

श्री एस एस अहलुवालिया : अध्यक्ष जी, इसी हफ्ते इस सवाल का स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय ने भी जवाब दिया । उन्होंने अपनी रैस्पॉन्सिबिलिटी कृषि मंत्रालय पर डाली और कृषि मंत्रालय स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय पर डालने की कोशिश करता है । मैं सिर्फ इतना ही जानना चाहता था कि तम्बाकू के सेवन पर रोक लगाने के जो नियम बनाए जा रहे हैं, सारे विश्व में बन रहे हैं और इसके सेवन को रोकने से कृषकों पर इसका प्रभाव पड़ेगा, क्योंकि तम्बाकू की यह एक ऐसी खेती है जिसको कॅश क्रॉप कहा जाता है और इस पर नकद पैसा मिलता है और इसमें एम्प्लॉयमेंट भी काफी है । सरकार ने अभी तक इसके लिए कोई कंटीजेंसी प्लान नहीं बनाया है कि उन कृषकों को जो तम्बाकू की खेती करते हैं, वह कौन सी नई उपज लेकर आएँ कि उनके गांव में बेरोजगारी भी नहीं आए और किसान का खेत खाली भी न पड़ा रहे । महाशय, मैं जानना चाहता था कि सारे विश्व में एज ए पीस्टसाईड निकोटिन सल्फेट का प्रयोग करना शुरू किया है और उन्होंने सारे

विश्व में कहा है कि कॉमकल पीस्टसाईड्स को बंद करके निकोटिन सल्फेट जो कि बहुत कम हानिकारक है साग-सब्जियों पर और खाद्यान्न उपजों पर, लगाने के लिए किया गया है। क्या हम अपनी तम्बाकू की खेती को निकोटिन सल्फेट बनाने के लिए प्रयोग कर सकते हैं जो कि यहां के तम्बाकू में हाई पैटेंसी है निकोटिन की और इसका काफी एक्सपोर्ट पोटेंशियल भी है? तो क्या एग्जिक्यूटिव मिनिस्ट्री इस पर गौर फरमाएगी और इससे ज्यादा से ज्यादा निकोटिन सल्फेट हम पैदा कर सकें और उसके लिए ही सिर्फ तम्बाकू का उत्पादन हो, उसके लिए कोई नया फार्मूला लेकर सामने आएगी?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, introduction of anti-smoking measures is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and protection of the interests of the tobacco farmers is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. There is no conflict. Any conflict will be resolved at the Cabinet level, at the appropriate time. The legislation (Interruption). The legislation is under contemplation only. Sir, we have determined that even if the legislation comes, the interests of the farmers will not be adversely affected in the short-term. The Ministry is giving remunerative prices for Virginia tobacco. These remunerative prices are going to be extended at the instance of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture to non-Virginia tobacco. We are giving a whole series of incentives and financial packages including subsidised inputs, for tobacco.

The Tobacco Board is also giving incentives. The production is rising. The productivity is also increasing. The area under tobacco has not diminished.

Also, Sir, we have launched a programme for diversification of cultivation to other crops like oilseeds, vegetables, horticultural crops and so on. We are giving a thrust to this area of operation also.

As regards pesticides, this Ministry has given a great deal of thrust in the last one or two years to the promotion of biological pesticides through integrated pest control. We are promoting not only tobacco, but also biological pesticides such as neem in a very

big way. This area of activity of the Ministry would increase by leaps and bounds. We have emphasised this. We shall explore the possibilities of using tobacco other than for making cigarettes. We shall utilise it in fields such as pesticides, insecticides and medicine.

SHRI S.S. SURJEWALA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the policy of liberalisation has been adopted both in trade and industry. Apart from this, it has been announced time and again that agriculture was also covered by liberalisation. It was also announced recently that agriculture was being equated with industry. It means that all the benefits which the industry has been provided with would also accrue to the agriculturists. This is on one side. On the other hand, the Government is also imposing restrictive conditions on agriculturists. In this connection, I would like to know whether the Ministry of Agriculture would remove these restrictions on the various commodities. For instance, recently, the Textiles Ministry had issued a notification by which the stocking of cotton in the country was banned. This has led to a fall in cotton prices.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Talk about tobacco.

SHRI S.S. SURJEWALA : Similarly, the Railways are not providing wagons for the movement of foodgrains like wheat and paddy.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please ask your question.

SHRI S.S. SURJEWALA : This has indirectly led to putting restrictive conditions on agriculturists. There fore, my question is, would the Ministry of Agriculture ensure that these restrictions are not put and see that agriculture also enjoys the benefits of liberalisation?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, The Ministry of Agriculture is totally wedded to protecting the interests of the farmers. But from the point of view of the indigenous price situation, the necessity for exports and various other parameters, the Government, as a whole, has to take certain decisions. For instance, we have to protect the interests of the consumer, check price rise and so on. These decisions are taken on a balanced basis, from time to time.

As far as tobacco is concerned, there are no restrictions, whatsoever, placed on the cultivation of tobacco. But the Indian Tobacco

Board—this is an organisation working under the auspices of the Commerce Ministry—sometimes places restrictions in the interest of the tobacco farmers themselves. This is because this crop is demand-based and unless the production of some varieties is curbed, the prices would fall dramatically. For this reason, sometimes, some targets are fixed by the Indian Tobacco Board. Other than this, no other restrictions are placed on tobacco in respect of cultivation, production and manufacture.

Financial Condition of SAIL

*142. SHRI SOM PAL : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the financial condition of SAIL is in a bad shape even though the company has been showing profits ;

(b) If so, what is the factual position with regard to its equity capital since 1990-91, the

reserves and surplus and the loan position of the company ;

(c) whether Government propose the further disinvestment in SAIL; and

(d) if so, what is the likely bearing on the prices of shares with the financial position of the company ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL—(SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(a) No, Sir.

(b) The factual position with regard to equity capital, reserves and surplus and loans of the company since 1990-91 is given below :

Statement

Rs. Crores

Year	Equity Capital	Reserves & Surplus (net of misc. expenditure to be written off)	Total Loans (excluding interest accrued and due thereon)
1990-91	3,986	690	5,492
1991-92	3,986	957	7,212
1992-93	3,986	1,286	9,521
1993-94	3,986	1,677	11,271

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The planned disinvestment by Government of its share-holdings in SAIL during the current year will not affect the financial position of the company. The equity structure will undergo a change as a result of disinvestment but Government will retain the majority share holding. Furthermore, it is not possible to state the likely bearing on the prices of shares at this stage as share prices are governed by many factors.

श्री सोमपाल : सभापति महोदय, माननीय इस्पात मंत्री जी ने जो उत्तर दिया है कि स्टील अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया की वित्तीय स्थिति बहुत मजबूत है, उनके उत्तर की भाषा से उनका

आत्मविश्वास और उनका विनिवेश का इरादा लगता है, काफी इस्पाती है पर वास्तविकता ऐसी नहीं है। मेरे पास आंकड़े हैं जो ये दर्शाते हैं कि 1989-90 तक ऋण और साम्या (इंक्विटी) पूंजी का अनुपात 1 : 1 से भी कुछ कम था। जो अकस्मात उसके बाद बढ़कर एक के मुकाबले में 2.39 हो गया। जो चालू वर्ष की कुल बिक्री की राशि है, उसके मुकाबले में 29 प्रतिशत के करीब उसके पास स्टॉक पड़े हैं और मुनाफा केवल 8 प्रतिशत है। फिर भी मंत्री जी कहते हैं कि उनकी वित्तीय स्थिति बहुत अच्छी है। जहां तक मेरी जानकारी है, इस वित्तीय स्थिति में खराबी आने के कारण यह है कि सरकार न उसमें सीधे-सीधे पूंजी लगाने से हाथ खींच लिया