

Outbreak of bird flu

1487. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that no precautionary measures were taken by the authorities for the recurrence of third H5N1 bird flu, timely;
- (b) whether it is also a fact that the WHO warned for the outbreak well in advance;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that culling operations were handled in such a way that compounded the risk of further spreading of this virus;
- (d) why the effective ceiling of borders and immunization of birds were not done by Government; and
- (e) the economic fall out of this outbreak on poultry industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) No, Sir.

(d) In order to check ingress of the disease from across the border, the Border Security Force was alerted. The concerned State Governments also took necessary steps to check the movement of poultry and poultry products from infected areas. Immunization is one of the options for control of Bird Flu, which needs to be exercised in circumstances that warrant such recourse. The basic policy of the Government is to control and contain the disease at source, i.e. at the level of the bird. Accordingly, the infection is being controlled by culling of poultry in and around infected areas.

(e) The poultry industry suffers economically on account of decline in the volumes and prices of poultry products. Losses are also sustained due to culling of poultry in and around infected areas.

Automatic weather stations in Tamil Nadu

1488. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that automatic weather stations under National Agriculture Development Programme could not be set up in some districts of Tamil Nadu even though it was proposed by Government;
- (b) if so, the details of the reasons studied by Government for not being able to set up these stations; and
- (c) the number of automatic weather stations established under the National Agriculture Development Programme in Tamil Nadu and financial implication for the last three years alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) RKVY scheme was launched in August, 2007. Fund under this scheme is allocated for the projects approved by the State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC) meeting, which is chaired by the Chief Secretary of the State concerned.

During 2007-08 the State Government of Tamil Nadu approved the project 'Establishment of Automatic Weather Station' in its State Level Sanctioning Committee Meeting held on 15.12.2007. Out of the total allocation of Rs.188.21 crore a sum of Rs.153.60 crore was released to the State Government under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) which includes Rs.17.31 crore for Establishment of the proposed Automatic Weather Stations.

The State Government has not approved any project regarding Automatic weather stations in Tamil Nadu during 2008-09.

The State Government of Tamil Nadu has reported that upto March, 2009, they have established 224 Automatic Weather Stations in the State.

Agricultural growth

1489. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether agriculture growth during February to April 2009 nose-dived compared to that during corresponding period of last year 2008, inspite of several steps taken by Government; and

(b) if so, the comparative Agricultural growth figures during these quarters of 2009 and 2008 and the reasons for the fall?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Percentage growth in Agriculture and Allied sector during IVth quarter (January to March) in 2008-09 has increased to 2.7 from 2.2 during the same quarter in previous year. The quarterly growth rate in Agriculture and Allied sector at constant prices (1999-2000) according to data released in the month of May, 2009 by Central Statistical Organization are given below:

Year	Percentage growth rate			
	1st quarter	IInd quarter	IIIrd quarter	IVth quarter
	(April-June)	(July-September)	(October-December)	(January-March)
2007-08	4.3	3.9	8.1	2.2
2008-09	3.0	2.7	-0.8	2.7

However, the overall decline in growth rate from 4.9% in 2007-08 to 1.6% in 2008-09 is mainly due to decline in production of wheat, coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and sugarcane.

Adverse effect on sale of coconut oil due to subsidy and custom duty relaxation given to palm oil

1490. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN:

SHRI K.E. ISMAIL:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) how much customs duty relaxation was given to palm oil during the last three years;