

(c) whether Government has conducted/ would conduct any survey about unremunerative agriculture particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) fixed by the Government provides remunerative prices to farmers. The Government's price policy for agricultural commodities seeks to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce with a view to encourage higher investment and production, and to safeguard the interest of consumers by making available supplies at reasonable prices.

The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP), while formulating its recommendations on price policy considers a number of important factors which include cost of production. The cost of production taken into account includes all paid out costs, besides cash and kind expenses on use of material inputs, irrigation charges including cost of diesel/electricity for operation of pump sets, etc. Besides, cost of production includes imputed value of wages of family labour and rent for owned land. The cost also covers depreciation of farm machinery and buildings. As such, the cost of production covers not only actual expenses in cash and kind but also imputed value of owned assets including land and family labour.

During 2008-09, MSP's of Kharif crops were raised substantially over their 2007-08 level. The increase ranged between 29 percent in case of Arhar (Tur) and 94 per cent in case of Nigerseed. To be remunerative, the MSPs fixed for 2008-09 season cover the all-India cost of production as projected by CACP for the respective crops. MSP is in the nature of a minimum guaranteed price for the farmers offered by the Government for their produce in case the market prices fall below that level. If the market offers higher price than MSP, the farmers are free to sell at that price. In order to improve availability of credit to farmers, the Government in June, 2004 announced measures for doubling of flow of credit to agriculture sector within a period of three years. During 2007-08, the Banks disbursed Rs.2,54,657 crore against the target of Rs.2,25,000 crore.

(c) and (d) No specific study has been conducted by the Government and, at present is there no proposal for the same.

Steps to protect fishermen in coastal areas

1500. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the new coastal security measures taken by Government has directly affected the livelihood of fishermen;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether Government has since taken any steps to protect the fishermen in coastal areas; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

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

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Government of India under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) 'Development of Marine Fisheries, Infrastructure and Post Harvest Operations' provides financial assistance to the tune of 75% of the unit cost of a kit consisting of Global Positioning System (GPS), communication equipment, echo-sounder and search & rescue beacon to ensure the safety of fishermen at sea. Besides, Indian Coast Guard regularly conducts community interaction programmes and provides assistance the fishermen while, in distress at sea.

Indigenous variety of Bt. cotton seeds

1501. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:

SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR) has released an indigenous variety of Bt. Cotton seeds;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the difference between the Bt. Cotton seeds available in the market and the new one developed by the CICR;

(d) whether any bio-safety concerns have been expressed;

(e) if so, whether those concerns have been redressed;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The 'BN Bt' variety was developed by the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dhanwad, the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur and the National Research Center on Plant Biotechnology (NRCPB), New Delhi. The genetically modified variety was subjected to bio-safety tests and finally approved for commercial cultivation in India in 2008 in the 84th meeting of Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) held on 2nd May, 2008.

(c) The difference in the commercially available Bt cotton hybrids and the newly developed variety (BN Bt) is that the farmers can reuse the seeds of this variety without having to buy seeds from the market every year, as in the case of commercial Bt cotton hybrids.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise, Sir.