

schemes/programmes being implemented by different Ministries/Departments are as per the provisions of National Policy for Farmers, 2007. Besides, the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of major pulses, oilseeds, coarse cereals and sugarcane have also been increased significantly during 2008-09.

**Suicide pact by farmers of Palamu district**

1498. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:

SHRI N.K. SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that farmers of drought prone Palamu district in Jharkhand have signed a suicide pact;

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

(c) whether the failure of monsoon and burden of debt are the main factors forcing farmers to take a decision to commit suicide;

(d) if so, whether Union Government proposes to take any effective step to help the farmers who are under severe burden of debt; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Government of India is not aware of any such pact. However, when such a report was published in a newspaper, the Government of Jharkhand got the matter enquired into, through the Deputy Commissioner, Palamu. While the people were disturbed due to successive failures of 3 monsoons, there was no such suicide pact despite instigation by an individual.

(d) and (e) In order to address the problem of indebtedness of farmers, a scheme of Debt Waiver and Debt Relief for Farmers has been implemented in all districts of the country. As per provisional figures, a total of 3.01 crores small and marginal farmers and 0.67 crores other farmers have benefited from the scheme involving debt waiver and debt relief of Rs.65,318.33 crores. Under the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008, farmers with more than 2 hectares of land holding, can now pay 75% of their overdues by 31.12.2009 instead of 30.06.2009. Besides this, in the Union Budget 2009-10, there is a proposal to set up a Task Force to look into the issue of loans to taken by the farmers from private money lenders.

**Agriculture becoming unremunerative**

1499. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:

SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that day by day agriculture is becoming unremunerative and farmers are falling into debt trap;

(b) if so, what has been done by Government to provide better returns for their crops;