

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, Mr. Sengupta. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: We have requested State Governments to start a campaign to eliminate bogus ration cards. We are getting State-wise reports showing that they are eliminating a certain number of bogus ration cards every month. So, some work is going on, but I am not totally satisfied because the figure, which the Planning Commission has given about BPL families in this country, is something like six crores and fifty-two lakhs, while the State Governments have, actually, issued more than ten crore ration cards. So, even the State Governments have bypassed the guidelines issued by the Planning Commission and the figure which the Government of India has communicated, and they have allotted additional ration cards. We have taken up this matter with them and are requesting them to reduce that number or cancel the cards.

Credit policy for farm sector

*105. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:††

SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether incidence of suicides amongst farmers in Vidarbha region came down during 2008-09 when more than Rs. 60,000 crores debt relief package was implemented; and

(b) if so, to avoid elimination of such trends, whether Government would frame a holistic policy rather than piecemeal measures, as indebtedness has been caused not only by the conditions of agriculture market, but also from the farmers' inability to cope with increased privatization of basic services like healthcare and school education?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Yes, Madam. The State Government has reported decline in incidence of suicides amongst farmers in Vidarbha region during 2008-09 as compared to previous years since 2006. The Government has initiated several measures for mitigation of farmers' distress. The major steps taken by the Government are as follows:

- (i) Effective implementation of the rehabilitation package for mitigation of agrarian distress in 31 identified farmer's suicide prone districts of Andhra Pradesh Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra.
- (ii) Other schemes, such as, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Macro management of Agriculture, National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Agriculture Extension, National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS) are also being implemented through the State Governments. Further, the Union Budget 2009-2010 has also proposed, *inter-alia*, the following initiatives:-

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Syeda Anwara Taimur

- Agriculture credit shall be increased from Rs.2.87 lakh crore in 2008-09 to Rs.3.25 lakh crore in 2009-2010.
- Crop loans upto Rs.3 lakh will be provided at 7% by giving 3% interest subvention to banks.
- Additional subvention of 1 % will be paid from this year, as incentive to those farmers who repay short term crop loans on schedule. Thus, the interest rate for these farmers will come down to 6 % per annum.
- Under the Agricultural Debt Waiver & Debt Relief (ADWDR) Scheme, 2008, other farmers *i.e.*, farmers having more than two hectares of land can pay 75% of their overdues by 31st December, 2009 instead of 30th June, 2009.
- In some regions of Maharashtra, a large number of farmers had taken loans from private money lenders and the loan waiver scheme did not cover them. The Government in the Union Budget 2009-10 has announced constitution of a Task Force to address this issue.
- For National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA), the outlay has been increased by 144% in 2009-10 *i.e.* Rs.39,100 crores.
- In the Union Budget 2009-10, the areas of health care and education have also been given adequate emphasis. Outlay for National Rural Health Mission during 2009-10 has been increased by Rs.2,057 crores to Rs.14,127 crores. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has already shown significant results in the field of school education. Besides this, it has been decided to launch a National Mission for Female Literacy with focus on minorities, SC, ST and other marginalised groups. These measures are expected to benefit the farmers and enhance their access to basic services like health care and school education in the public sector.

Maharashtra Government also has taken steps ameliorate the condition of farmers, which include:

- An Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2009 to cover those farmers who could not get benefit under the Government of India scheme and those who have repaid their regular and overdue loans.
- A Special Package *inter alia* covering various socio-economic aspects under implementation in 6 affected districts in Vidarbha for the last 3 years.

SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Sir, to prevent suicides among farmers, only the loan-waiving policy of the Government will not provide a permanent solution. As you are aware, farmers depend on the monsoons for harvesting their crops. But now, due to climatic changes, monsoons do not occur in time; sometimes there is drought and sometimes there are heavy rains. As a result, harvesting is affected. According to weather reports, the whole of India has received less rainfall.

This would affect the cultivation of crops by farmers. What is the Government planning to provide relief to these farmers, especially this year?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, it is true that the whole country is worried about monsoon recession as on today, particularly Vidarbha. As compared to last week, as per reports which we are getting, there is improvement in certain areas. The real and serious problem is essentially in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Western UP, part of Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. In these areas, there is more serious problem. Problem is serious throughout India, particularly in these regions it is more serious. We have prepared two plans. One is normally prepared prior to monsoon. Under this plan, we provide seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc., to all States which has been done. The second contingency plan is prepared when sowing operation is completed. Suppose there is no rain. Then the farmer has to sow second time. In such a situation, we require additional seeds. We have kept additional seeds with the State Government. The second plan is also ready. As on today, we are going with the first plan and I hope that the situation will definitely improve.

SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Sir, some farmers have taken loan from private moneylenders and the loan waiver scheme is not provided to them. Government in the Union Budget 2009 has announced the constitution of the Task Force to address the issue. How will this Task Force help farmers? Can you explain this?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, the hon. Finance Minister has made this statement in his Budget Speech. So, ultimately the Finance Minister is going to set up the Task Force. The terms of reference of this Task Force is not yet finalised. But the idea is how to protect those farmers from exorbitant interests who have taken loans from private moneylenders. It is one of the issues with them. When the Task Force will be set up with terms of reference, only then I will be able to give correct picture to hon. Members.

SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Sir, I am happy with the written reply by the hon. Minister. But I want to know about the schemes which they announced and their implementation. How many farmers have been benefited in Vidarbha? How much money is being spent? What is the result of these programmes in financial terms quarterly?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, there are number of programmes which have been taken up in package. First three hon. Members have given the reference of Vidarbha. More weightage was given in Vidarbha scheme for irrigation purpose. The total money of Rs.2177 is provided to six regions of Vidarbha. These regions are Amravati, Akola, Washim, Buldhama, Yavatmal and Wardha. Up to the end of March 9, the expenditure is Rs.2665 crores which is more than budgetary provision. The target area was 1,59,275 hectares, but the actual area which came under irrigation was 1,33,598 hectares. There are total eight projects like Upper Wardha, Arunawati, Vaan and so on. They are

completed. There are also nine medium-sized projects. They have completed. There are 65 small projects. Out of 65 projects, 51 have been completed. I have got exact figures about how many farmers benefited because of this. There are so many schemes which we have implemented. So, it will be difficult to give details. So, it will be difficult to give details. But, if the hon. Member wants, I can collect and send the figures to her. I can definitely give some of the figures. Now, if we see the benefit passed to Vidharba farmers under the debt waiver scheme, which the Government of Maharashtra has implemented, the total number of farmers benefit in six districts is 2,65,129 and the total amount which has been provided is...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Food reserve in the Country

*106. SHRI SHIVANAND TIWARI: †

SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the country is likely to have the food reserve upto 64.7 million tonnes;
- (b) if not, the volume of this food reserve by the end of April, 2009;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that this reserve is significantly higher than the annual requirement of the country;
- (d) if so, the extent by which, these reserves exceed the requirement; and
- (e) whether it is also a fact that the prices of foodgrains in the domestic market are higher than those of international market and if so, the facts thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) Stocks of foodgrains in the Central Pool by end of April 2009 were 214.07 lakh tons of rice and 298.26 lakh tons of wheat.

At present level of allocations, the annual requirement of food grains (rice and wheat) for TPDS and other welfare schemes, exports on diplomatic grounds and requirement for flood relief, etc. is estimated around 516 lakh tons.

Domestic and international prices of foodgrains such as rice, wheat and maize are not strictly comparable. From time to time domestic wholesale prices of foodgrains may be higher or lower in comparison with international prices.

Water Soluble Fertilizers

*107. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is formulating a new policy that seeks to promote the usage of water soluble fertilizers;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi