

(c) Debt relief is a State subject (vide entry 30 in the State List of Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India). The Government of India had, however, issued guidelines to all the State Governments and Union Territories in 1975 to enact appropriate legislation to liquidate non-institutional debts of rural poor comprising of marginal farmers, landless labourers and rural artisans; and also to scale down the non-institutional debts of small farmers. All the State Government and Union Territories have enacted suitable legislation giving relief to the weaker sections on the basis of the above guidelines. In January, 1984, the then Minister of Agriculture had again requested the Chief Ministers of all the State Governments and Union Territories to review the implementation of the debt relief measures in their States and also to tone up institutional agencies in order to minimise the dependence of weaker sections in rural areas on non-institutional sources of credit.

Fall in the Price of Agricultural Commodities

1092. SHRI SHANTIMOY GHOSH:

SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the steep fall in the prices of agricultural commodities like potatoes, oilseeds, tobacco and cotton recently throughout the country;

(b) whether Government are also aware that the real loss is being borne by the agriculturists of the lower category;

(c) whether Government are planning for paying adequate compensation to the agriculturists for the loss suffered by them due to fall in the prices; and

(d) if so, the details of the said scheme of paying compensation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI CHANDULAL CHANDRAKAR): (a) The index numbers of wholesale prices in respect of agricultural commodities including foodgrains, oilseeds, cotton, tobacco and potato during the period January to mid-April, 1985 reveal a mixed picture. While foodgrains have remained steady, oilseeds group showed some decline in the index in January, thereafter becoming steady for some time and firming up recently. However, the prices of rapeseed and mustard have declined recently in some markets. Cotton prices declined in the early part of this year but have firmed up from mid-March, 1985. Tobacco prices have ruled steady to firm during the period. Potato prices had the normal seasonal dip in prices because of the peak marketing season, but lately these prices also have started firming up from the beginning of April, 1985.

(b) to (d) It is a declared policy of the Government that the interests of all classes of farmers are protected and, as is well known, the Government have been fixing support prices of various agricultural commodities and have also been organising market support operations in order to ensure that the prices do not fall below the support levels. The prices so fixed by the Government cover cost of production and also provide a reasonable margin of profit to give incentive to farmers for investment and adoption of improved technology. The Food Corporation of India, the Cotton Corporation of India, the Jute Corporation of India, the Tobacco Board, NAFED and State level cooperative marketing federations organise market support operations in the interest of the growers of foodgrains, cotton, tobacco, potato, etc. Thus, appropriate and effective steps are being continuously taken by the Government to protect the interest of the farmers of all classes and ensure them remunerative prices. In view of recent decline in prices of rapeseed and mustard in some markets, NAFED and State cooperative agencies have been asked to intervene and make purchases at support prices announced by the Government.