

declared 338 districts as affected by drought/scarcity/drought like situation. The Government took a number of steps which include "Diesel Subsidy" Scheme for providing supplementary irrigation to save the standing crops, allocation of additional power from Central Pool and steps to ensure availability of fertilizers and seeds, to reduce the impact of drought/deficit rainfall on various sectors including Agriculture. As per the 2nd Advance Estimates for 2009-10 as compared to the Final Estimates for 2008-09, the foodgrains production is likely to be less in a number of States like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Loss of cultivable area of Assam

2297. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the permanent loss of cultivable land area of Assam during last 10 years by way of erosion, unfertile silt deposition and diversion of river channel;

(b) whether an assessment has been made as to the extent of annual loss and damage caused and steps have been taken to prevent such permanent loss to the national economy;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS):

(a) to (d) Yes, Sir. As per available estimates, the cultivable land has marginally decreased from 3.257 million ha. in 1997-98 to million ha. in 2006-07 leading to decrease in cultivable land by 0.033 million ha. in last 10 years in the State of Assam. As reported by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the soil loss in agriculture land in the Assam Valley Region is at the rate of 2850 tonnes per square kilometer.

With a view to prevent soil erosion, land degradation and to maintain balance in different types of land uses, Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture is implementing various watershed development programmes namely National Watershed Development Project in Rainfed Areas (NWDPA), Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Project and Flood Prone River (RVP&FPR) and Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDPSCA) in the State of Assam. Under these programmes upto 2008-09, an area of 1.93 lakh ha. has been developed in the State of Assam.

Untimely rains in Maharashtra

2298. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that 20,240 villages in Maharashtra State are facing water scarcity and many crops have been damaged due to untimely rains during 2009-10;

(b) if so, Government's response thereto; and

(c) the details of financial assistance provided or proposed to be provided by the Central Government to the farmers of Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS):
(a) to (c) As reported by India Meteorological Department (IMD), during South-West Monsoon 2009 (June-September), Maharashtra received -20% rainfall against normal average rainfall, which is deficient. The State Government declared 28 districts covering 221 taluks as drought affected.

It is primarily the responsibility of the State Government for taking necessary measures in the wake of natural calamities including drought from the funds available in its Calamity Relief Fund (CRF). For 2009-10, the State had an allocation of Rs. 270.94 crores under CRF, comprising Rs. 203.21 crores as Central share and Rs. 67.74 crores as State share. Entire Central share was released to the State. In addition, the memorandum submitted by the State Government for assistance from National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) for drought relief was considered in accordance with the established procedure and the Government of India approved Rs. 671.88 crores from NCCF, subject to adjustment of available balance in the CRF of the State as determined by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The assistance approved from NCCF, *inter-alia*, includes assistance to farmers towards input subsidy for crop loss of 50% and above.

Swaminathan Commission's recommendation for remunerative prices

2299. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has accepted recommendations of Swaminathan Commission regarding calculation of remunerative prices to be paid to farmers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS):
(a) to (c) The National Commission on Farmers under the Chairmanship of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan has recommended that the Minimum Support Price (MSP) should be at least 50% more than the weighted average cost of production. This recommendation, however, has not been accepted by the Government because MSP is recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) based on objective criteria and considering variety of relevant factors. Hence, prescribing an increase of at least 50% on cost may distort the market. A mechanical linkage between MSP and cost of production may be counter-productive in some cases.

Pre-requisite for framing research agenda

2300. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering to have comprehensive assessment of crops and