

(b) The procurement of wheat during current Rabi Marketing Seasons (RMS) 2006-07 was 92.23 lakh tonnes as compared to 147.71 lakh tonnes during Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2005-06. Due to decline in procurement by 55.48 lakh tonnes buffer norms have not been met.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Steps taken by Government to manage the dwindling stocks of wheat in the Central Pool are as follows:—

- (i) The allocation of wheat under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) has been streamlined for all the States/UTs. on the basis of past offtake, without reducing the overall entitlement of foodgrains @ 35 kg. per household per month
- (ii) In order to cater to the local tastes as well as to help the farmers in production of foodgrains other than wheat and rice, a higher allocation of coarse-grains (e.g. Jowar, Bajra, Maize, Ragi, etc.) at highly subsidized rate is being made to various State Government who have demanded for the same.
- (iii) A decision has been taken to stop the sale of wheat under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS-D) during the year 2006-07.
- (iv) A decision has been taken to import 35 lakh MTs of wheat.

(e) The reasons for less procurement:—

- (i) Lower than targeted production of wheat in Crop year 2005-06.
- (ii) High ruling market prices.
- (iii) Negative market sentiments due to low level of wheat stocks in the Central Pool.
- (iv) Low market arrivals of wheat in RMS 2006-07.

Liberalization of marketing operations

446. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

- (a) whether Government are under pressure to liberalize marketing

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operations in agriculture and allowing private traders a free hand by withdrawing public agencies in procurement;

(b) whether Government are aware that between 2001-02 and 2005-06, there was a 10 percentage point decline in procurement relatives to the Indian wheat crop;

(c) whether Government are also aware that even as the current crisis was brewing between February and April, 2006, the FCI sold seven lakh tonnes of wheat in open market operation, essentially to private traders; and

(d) if so, whether it has worsened the problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) 2.46 lakh tonnes and 1.84 lakh tonnes of wheat under Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) (OMSS (D) was released in the month of February, 2006 and March, 2006 respectively to increase availability and stabilize the prices of wheat in open market. No release of wheat has been made under the OMSS (D) from April, 2006 keeping in view the low stock position of wheat in the Central Pool.

Effectiveness of Consumer Protection Act

447. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a survey conducted by an organization had revealed that the Consumer Protection Act is not effective;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a major percentage of population is not aware of the Consumer Protection Act and consumer rights; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government to popularises the above Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN):