

free No. from anywhere and avail information and knowledge about any issue relating to agriculture. To popularize this facility among the farmers a publicity campaign has been launched through Doordarshan and All India Radio by releasing video spots/audio spots and also by releasing the advertisements in selected newspapers throughout the country.

Scheme for Mass Media Support for Agriculture Extension—

Kisan T.V. Channel and Kisanvani programmes have been launched through Doordarshan and All India Radio respectively to provide up-to-date know-how to the farmers on agricultural practices and technology in a locality specific manner.

Exhibition and Krishi Melas—The Government has been showcasing latest developments in the field of agriculture in various parts of the country through National level/State level Krishi melas for the benefit of the farmers.

Special Schemes are being implemented to motivate women farmers in adopting latest technology and forming Self-Help groups to avail microcredit facility etc. This is expected to further boost Rabi production this season in the country.

Drought relief to Andhra Pradesh

1611. DR.T.SUBBARAMIREDDY:
SHRIJESUDASU SEELAM:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government have in month of July, sanctioned Rs. 100 crores as a drought relief to Andhra Pradesh and other States;
- (b) if so, the total amount provided to Andhra Pradesh;
- (c) the total demand made by that State;
- (d) to what extent that State has urged Government to provide more; and
- (e) the Centre's reaction thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
(SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (e) The Government of Andhra Pradesh submitted a Memorandum in the month of September, 2004, seeking

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RAJYA SABHA

assistance of Rs. 1199.68 crores from National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) and 22.50 lakh MTs of foodgrains for relief employment. This was considered by the High Level Committee (HLC), in its meeting held on 6th December, 2004, and the HLC approved Rs. 141.47 crores (subject to adjustment of balances in the CRF of the State, as determined by the Ministry of Home Affairs) and 2.20 lakh MTs of foodgrains for relief employment. The entire Central share of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for 2004-05 amounting to Rs. 180.56 crores has been released to the States.

Decline in prices of Cotton and Potato in Punjab

1612. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a huge decline in the prices of cotton and potato in Punjab;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) what steps Government have taken so far, to increase the price when the quality of these commodities are better in international market; and

(d) whether Government are intending to allow export of these commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) The prices of kapas in Punjab excepting Bengal Desi variety have declined during Cotton season 2004-05. The fall in prices has been caused by relatively higher production both within the country and outside coupled with relatively low demand for cotton in domestic and international markets. In order to protect the farmers, the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has already started procurement operation in all the cotton growing States, including Punjab. 1.20 lakh quintals of kapas were procured by CCI upto 13.12.2004.

As regards potato the prices for Punjab variety are currently ruling in