

(b) how many proposals for electrification of railway tracks were recommended by the Government of Punjab as well as by the Government of Maharashtra during the period 2004-06, State-wise;

(c) whether electrification of any projects has been examined and a final decision taken thereon after evaluation of the project reports, till date; and

(d) if so, the present status thereof, indicating the time limit fixed for completion of each project, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Electrification projects are considered primarily on economic considerations excepting projects justified as operational necessity. The criterion/guidelines being followed in this regard are as under:

- (i) Each electrification project will be justified on Rate of Return, which should exceed 14% with the Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) method.
- (ii) In certain specific cases, electrification will be justified on considerations of operational flexibility.
- (iii) While proposing electrification of a route, the rail network in the region in totality should be considered to include, if necessary, short route lengths, which would otherwise remain non-electrified and reduce operational flexibility.

(b) No proposal has been received from Punjab and Maharashtra Government during 2004-06.

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of reply to part (b) above.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Development of botanical and biofertilizer units

†1. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by Government to develop botanical and bio-fertilizer units indicating of their capacity during the last three years, year-wise;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

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(b) whether the farmers are using these fertilizers in the same quantities as in case of the chemical fertilizers;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the steps taken by Government to create awareness among the farmers for using these fertilizers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURJA): (a) The Government provided financial assistance for setting up of bio-fertilizer units under "National Project on Development and Use of Bio-fertilizers" during 9th Plan, where Rs. 20.00 lakh per unit were provided.

The Government has taken up a new scheme "National project on Organic Farming" from October, 2004, under this scheme financial assistance is being provided for setting up of bio-fertilizer production units @25% of the project cost up to a maximum of Rs. 20.00 lakhs per unit.

As present, there are 151 bio-fertilizer production units in the country with installed capacity of about 18,200 MT per annum. The bio-fertilizer production was 9,064.79 MT, 9,753.98 MT and 10,594.90 MT during 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 respectively.

(b) to (d) Bio-fertilizers are used as a cost effective supplementary source of plant nutrients and applied in a smaller dose than the chemical fertilizers.

In order to create awareness among the farmers, the Government is providing assistance under the "National Project on Organic Farming" for training of farmers, organization of field demonstrations on organic inputs including bio-fertilizers, organization of seminars, workshops and publicity through print and electronic media.

Use of organic manures

2. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the efforts being made to increase use of organic manures;

(b) whether Government propose to give subsidy on organic manures;

(c) if so, by when;