

Rs. 12-8-0 and Rs. 15 per maund. Government, however, are issuing wheat from Central Sales Depots at Rs. 13-8-0 per maund.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: May I know whether the reduction in price is due to the purchase policy of the Government?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: That is true, Sir.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: Have they any further plans to purchase wheat?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: Now a-days we are placing orders for new stocks of wheat every day and I think in the course of the last two months we have purchased more than 4 lakh tons.

DR. P. C. MITRA: What is the retail sale price of wheat in Delhi?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: I do not know.

DR. P. C. MITRA: And wholesale price?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: That I am not in a position to quote offhand but if anybody purchases direct from us, we will deliver it in Delhi at the same price at which we are supplying it at the ports where the imported wheat comes, that is, Rs. 13-8-0 a maund.

PROF. G. RANGA: Have the Government made any purchases in Madhya Bharat where the price has gone down very low?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: I do not think in Madhya Bharat, except in one or two places, where the price is Rs. 9 per maund, the price is very low.

PROF. G. RANGA: Is it not the policy of the Government to make purchases in those areas where the prices have gone down to uneconomic levels in order to help the local producers and see that they get a remunerative price?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: The hon. Member has for once correctly stated the Government's policy.

SHRI KANHAIYALAL D. VAIDYA: May I know whether the stocks which are with the Government are of Indian wheat or foreign wheat?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: The stocks with the Government are always foreign wheat stocks.

LOCUST INVASIONS

♦386. SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Will the Minister for FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) which parts of the country have been affected by locust invasions during the current year;

(b) what is the estimated loss due to those invasions; and

(c) what steps have been taken to combat this menace?

THE MINISTER FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI): (a) Swarms of locusts have visited all the States in Northern India up to Jammu and Kashmir, Bombay in the south and Bihar in the east.

Breeding on an extensive scale took place in Rajasthan, Punjab, Pepsu and Uttar Pradesh, it also occurred in Delhi, Ajmer and Kutch States and Banaskantha district of Bombay State.

(b) The damage caused by locusts this year is reported to be not serious. Precise figures are not available yet.

(c) A statement showing the steps taken to combat this menace is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The Central Locust Organisation which is responsible for control operations in the scheduled desert areas in Rajasthan, Pepsu, Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch has been divided into three circles; each in charge of an experienced Entomologist with Headquarters at

Bikaner, Jodhpur and Palanpur. At other places which are important from the point of view of locust strategy, particularly along the Indo-Pakistan border, there are out-posts which are equipped with insecticides, hand and power dusting machines and motor transport. The strength of the Organisation has been increased temporarily to meet the locust invasion. Additional insecticides and equipment have been obtained. Many of the places have been equipped with radio transmitting facilities for quick and timely action. More vehicles as also dusters and sprayers and wireless sets are being obtained

Arrangements were made with the Hind Provincial Flying Club Ltd. for the use of 3 and if necessary 4, small fixed wing aeroplanes for locust control chiefly in desert areas. In addition a request was made to the T.C.M. authorities for the loan of 2 piper cubs with pilots for use against locusts in the desert areas for 3 months.

As regards the cultivated areas in other States preparations have been made on the above lines, according to the requirements of the State concerned. It is, however, primarily the responsibility of the State Government concerned to carry out any locust operations in the cultivated areas.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Are there any international plans to destroy locusts at their very source?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: There are international arrangements and only a few months back there was an International conference in Egypt and there was some international action taken to fight this in Iran and I think they have under consideration further steps to fight it at the source.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: What are those international obligations and may I know whether those international obligations have been fulfilled to the satisfaction of our Government?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: Not only to the satisfaction of our Government but also to the satisfaction of the international organisation.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: May I know how the responsibilities are shared between the Central Government and the State Governments in combating locusts in India?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: Whenever any State Government requires our help we freely give it with men and material.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Is it not a fact that the Central Government has a special responsibility in certain particular areas and that the State Government has got to combat it in other areas? For instance, the desert areas will be looked after by the Centre and so on? I do not know; what is the definite position? May I know if there is any demarcation or if there is any specific and definite policy regarding the sharing of responsibilities between the Centre and the States?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: I am not aware of any definite demarcation but if the hon. Member so desires I shall look into it.

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN: May I know whether there has been a very serious attack of rats in Gulbarga and the crop has been affected very badly and if so whether there is any remedy for that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with locusts, not rats.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Is the Government aware that many of the State Governments lack the resources and equipment necessary to combat this pest which is of very frequent occurrence?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: As I said, the Government of India has got an organisation to fight this locust menace wherever it occurs and it has also jointed in the international

arrangements that are made. Only last week we had 3 conference with Pakistan and as I said we always participate in the international conferences and do more than our part in the matter.

SHRI KANHAIYALAL D. VAIDYA: Is it not a fact that Madhya Bharat was invaded by locusts recently? Unfortunately I do not find any mention in the statement about Madhya Bharat.

(JVo reply)

SCARCITY CONDITIONS IN RAJASTHAN

•387. SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Will the Minister for FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the serious scarcity conditions prevailing in Rajasthan;

(b) whether the Government of Rajasthan have approached the Government of India for any assistance to meet the situation; and

(c) if the answer to part (b) above be in the affirmative, what action has been taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI): (a) Yes.

(b) No.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: May I know, Sir, if the hon. Minister is receiving regularly periodical returns from the State concerned in respect of scarcity conditions prevailing there?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: We are aware of scarcity conditions if they exist, because we read sometimes in the papers and when hon. Members put questions we make enquiries. As I have said, in reply to part (b) of the question, the Rajas-

than Government have not asked for any help from us.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: I am afraid the hon. Minister has not followed my question—whether he has any information from the States about the prevailing scarcity conditions, if any?

SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI: I believe the hon. Member is perfectly aware of the procedure. We receive regular reports, weather reports and crop conditions reports, and when this question was put we got a special report.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: Sir, on a point of order, whenever this side of the House refers to any newspaper report, it is dismissed with "wise men do not read newspapers". Now, in reply to this question, the hon. Minister is referring to newspaper reports. Sir, I want a ruling.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is not always: wisdom to be wise.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM U. S. A. FOR DETERMINATION OF SOIL FERTILITY

♦388. SHRI S. PANIGRAHI: Will the Minister for FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any assistance has so far been received by India under the project for determination of soil fertility for which an agreement was entered into between the Government of India and the Government of the United States of America under the Technical Co-operation Programme; and

fb) the progress so far made in the work connected with the project?

THE MINISTER FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI): (a) Most of the equipment indented under the Project has been received. An American Soil Scientist is