

(b) whether provision of excise duty and VAT exemption for agriculture machinery and equipment purchased by farmers' cooperatives and village level panchayats would reduce cost of such implements;

(c) whether, according to experts, farm mechanism should be carried on an urgent basis to increase foodgrain production and double agriculture growth from current two per cent; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HARISH RAWAT): (a) The Ministry is not aware of any specific empirical data or research findings indicating direct linkage between low interest loans and tax sops for agricultural mechanization and boosting of food grains production and productivity.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Farm mechanization does help in boosting agricultural productivity. However, the Ministry is not aware of any specific study or expert opinion to indicate that farm mechanization alone would double agricultural growth from current level of two per cent.

(d) Notwithstanding any specific study or expert opinion as mentioned above, Ministry of Agriculture has been promoting farm mechanization through various central sector schemes namely Macro Management of Agriculture, National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna etc. These schemes besides creating awareness among stakeholders about farm mechanization; provide financial assistance to farmers and other beneficiaries' for procurement of appropriate agriculture machinery and equipment.

Action plan to make barren land fertile

†2039. SHRI MOHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of land area in crore acres under farming in the country and out of this, the area upon which one crop is sown and the area where two crops are sown and the area of land being used as fruit gardens; and

(b) the details of additional land likely to be needed to produce sufficient foodgrain to feed the country in coming 20 years and the land which is still barren, unfertile and marshy and the details of action plan to make them fertile?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HARISH RAWAT): (a) As per available estimates (2008-09), Net Area Sown is about 141.364 million ha. whereas total cropped area is 195.104 million ha. across the country. During this period area sown more than once is 53.739 million ha. whereas area under fruit gardens is 6.101 million ha.

(b) There are no assessments to correlate requirement of land for production of foodgrains to feed the country in future. Besides, barren and unculturable land includes all land covered by mountains, deserts, etc. which cannot be brought under cultivation except at an exorbitant cost. In view of this there is no comprehensive scheme/programme to develop barren and unculturable land. Ministry of Agriculture however, is implementing various development programmes; namely, National Food Security Mission (NFSM), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), National Mission on Micro-Irrigation (NMMI), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Macro Management of Agriculture (MMA), etc. with a view to increase productivity of agricultural land and to sustain enhanced foodgrain production.

Lack of cold storage network

2040. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that distress sale remains a common phenomenon given the farmers' inability to store or transport products at will;

(b) whether it is also a fact that there is lack of adequate cold storage network in the country due to which perishable vegetables and fruits cannot be stored; and

(c) if so, the details of action taken by Government to increase the cold storage facility and provide transport facilities to farmers to carry their produce to remunerative markets?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HARISH RAWAT): (a) No, Sir. No such incidence, due to lack of store or transport facility has been reported by any State Government.

(b) The total cold storage capacity in the country is 24.45 million tones. Requirements projected in National Spot Exchange (NSE) study of 2010 on the basis of peak season production and highest arrival/harvesting of storable fruit and vegetables in a month is 63.00 million tones. There is a gap between demand and supply in excess of 38 million tones of cold storage in the country.