

to promote the Brand image of Virginia tobaccos, its cost competitiveness among the similar tobaccos produced elsewhere and building trust among the overseas customers for product integrity and consistent supply of the same of future requirements.

(b) No Sir. However, the Tobacco Board (an autonomous body under the Government) has participated in various exhibitions and trade fairs across the world and led trade delegations.

(c) Tobacco Board is acting as a facilitator to improve the exports of unmanufactured tobacco and the tobacco products to various countries.

(d) Government has sent many trade delegations to various countries (including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Thailand, South Korea and Tanzania) under the aegis of Tobacco Board to promote the exports of unmanufactured tobacco and the tobacco products. Beside this, the Tobacco Board has also invited delegations from various countries for promotion of export of tobacco.

Chinese restriction on import of Basmati rice from India

784. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that China is imposing restrictions on import of Basmati rice, fruits and vegetables from India;

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether the same are allowed under the WTO;

(c) what efforts the Ministry is taking to see that restrictions are lifted on the above items;

(d) whether any consultations have been held in this regard during the recent Joint Group on Economic Relations; and

(e) if so, the outcome of the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) China does not allow imports of Basmati rice from India. A Protocol was finalised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India with the Chinese authorities in November 2006 on phyto sanitary requirements for exporting Basmati rice from India to China. However, the export of Basmati Rice from India to China could not commence because of the issues of pest control and monitoring of quarantine pests in processing and storage houses in India.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to ensure that processing and storage

houses are free from pests as requested by China, has already been submitted to the Chinese side in January, 2010 which is yet to be accepted by the Chinese Quarantine Authorities.

India had made request for selected 17 fruits and vegetables (9 fruits & 8 vegetables) in September 2000 for granting approval for exports from India to China. The Chinese Authorities provided market access for mangoes in the year 2004 and for grapes and bitter gourds in the year 2005. The market access for remaining 14 fruits and vegetables is pending with Chinese side.

The issue of providing approval for Indian export of Basmati rice, fruits and vegetables to China has been raised in various fora, including meeting between the leadership of the two countries, 7th Joint Economic Group (JEG) Meeting in March 2006 and 8th JEG Meeting in January 2010 and the recently concluded 5th India-China Joint Working Group Meeting in Beijing. The issue is being consistently followed up by the Government of India/Embassy of India Beijing with the relevant Chinese department.

Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary (SPS) Aggrement Under the WTO provides that—

- i. Members have the right to take sanitary and phytosanitary measures necessary for the protection of human, animal or plant life or health, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with the provision of this Agreement.
- ii. Members shall ensure that any sanitary or phytosanitary measure is applied only to the extent necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health, is based on scientific principles and is not maintained without sufficient scientific evidence.
- iii. Members may provisionally adopt sanitary or phytosanitary measures on the bases of available pertinent information. Members shall seek to obtain the additional information necessary for a more objective assessment of risk and review the sanitary and phyto sanitary measures accordingly within a reasonable period of time.

In this case, China has not provided sufficient scientific evidence but have delayed the response inspite of several dialogues.

(d) and (e) The issue of market access for Indian agricultural products was taken up with the Chinese side during the 8th JEG Meeting in January 2010 as well as recently concluded 5th India-China Joint Working Group Meeting in Beijing. However the Chinese authorities repeatedly requested lifting India's ban on import of milk and milk products from China which was extended for six months on 26th December, 2011.