

under the NDRF has approved higher assistance to the States than in the previous years.

Further, the norms under NDRF have also been revised comprehensively with relief in the form of input subsidy which is now admissible for 33% or more crop loss, as against 50% loss earlier; financial assistance admissible up to 2 hectare against earlier limit of 1 hectare; in assured irrigated areas, the financial assistance has been increased from ₹ 9,000 per hectare to ₹ 13,500 per hectare. In case of perennial crops, the quantum of input subsidy has been increased from ₹ 12,000/- to ₹ 18,000/- per hectare.

Farmers suicide

1004. SHRI K.T.S. TULSI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state the steps taken to boost agricultural productivity and income of farmers to prevent farmers' suicide epidemic in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (SHRI MOHANBHAI KALYANJIBHAI KUNDARIYA): The Government has taken several new initiatives to promote agricultural activities. The strategy is to focus on farmers' welfare by making farming viable. Farm viability is possible, when cost of cultivation is reduced, yields per unit of farm are increased and farmers get remunerative prices on their produce. The Department is implementing various schemes to meet this objective, viz.

- (i) Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme by which the farmers can know the major and minor nutrients available in their soils which will ensure judicious use of fertiliser application and thus save money of farmers. The balanced use of fertiliser will also enhance productivity and ensure higher returns to the farmers.
- (ii) Neem Coated Urea is being promoted to regulate urea use, enhance its availability to the crop and reduce cost of fertilizer application. The entire quantity of domestically manufactured urea is now neem coated.
- (iii) Parampragat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is being implemented with a view to promote organic farming in the country. This will improve soil health and organic matter content and increase net income of the farmer so as to realise premium prices.
- (iv) The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) is being implemented to expand cultivated area with assured irrigation, reduce wastage of water and improve water use efficiency.

- (v) Government has also recently approved a new crop Insurance scheme namely Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to replace National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified NAIS (MNAIS) from Kharif 2016 season. PMFBY has addressed all the shortcomings in the earlier schemes and would be available to the farmers at very low rates of premium. This scheme would provide insurance cover for all stages of the crop cycle including post-harvest risks in specified instances.

Reforms in agricultural marketing

1005. SHRI D. KUPENDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether agricultural markets in the country are not keeping pace with the changes in production and demands of the country if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(b) whether Government is contemplating to bring in urgent reforms in agricultural marketing of the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof and current status thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor and the steps taken/being taken to enable farmers to receive a large proportion of the price paid by the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (SHRI MOHANBHAI KALYANJIBHAI KUNDARIYA): (a) To address the demands for marketing of increased and diversified agricultural marketable surplus there is a need to strengthen the network of regulated markets and augment it with alternative marketing channels. As per the recommendation of the National Farmers Commission (2004), that a regulated market should be available to farmers within a radius of 5 Km. (corresponding market area of about 80 square km.). However, presently all-India average area served by a regulated market is 487.40 square km. The number of commodity specific markets with requisite infrastructure are also limited.

Agriculture Marketing is governed by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Acts, which are administered by respective State Governments. Some State Governments have ushered reforms in their marketing sector to meet the challenges.

(b) to (d) In order to keep pace with the changing production pattern and growing