

- (b) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. Financial assistance under National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP) is available to establish oil palm processing units in the country in North Eastern States/Left Wing (LW) extremism affected districts/hilly States. In Odisha, financial assistance to establish oil processing units is available in LW extremism affected districts.

- (b) Financial assistance for establishing oil palm processing units is included in the annual action plan under NMOOP by the State Government, as and when it deems fit.

**Protecting earthworm for sustainable development of farming**

†\*142. SHRI AMAR SHANKAR SABLE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that excessive use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and other toxic chemicals in the agricultural fields of the country, including Maharashtra, has brought the man's friend, earthworm, on the brink of extinction whereas these play a vital role in preserving the nutrients of the soil naturally;

- (b) if so, steps taken by Government to protect earthworms for sustainable development of farming; and

- (c) the scheme formulated by Government to encourage the farmers of the country, including Maharashtra, for adopting organic farming through adequate improvement in the soil quality, the details thereof, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH): (a) The Government is recommending soil test based balanced and integrated nutrient management through conjunctive use of both inorganic and organic sources such as vermi-compost, farm yard manure, bio-fertilizers, green manure, etc. of plant nutrients to ensure judicious use of chemical fertilizers to maintain soil health. Application of recommended doses of chemical fertilizers/pesticides is unlikely to cause harm to soil eco-system including earthworm activity.

The Government is conscious of the importance of regulated and balanced use of chemical fertilizers. Hence, it is implementing the Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme, which aims at providing all the farmers in the country with a SHC once in a period of

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

every 2 years. SHC is issued based on testing the soil sample for 12 parameters. It contains the soil nutrient status and recommendations on crop specific fertilizer dosage and soil amendments to be used.

The Government registers pesticides only after a detailed evaluation of safety and efficacy to human, animal and environmental health. Pesticides used in accordance with the label and leaflets are unlikely to cause any adverse effects.

(b) Technical reviews are carried out from time to time and continued use of pesticides is permitted only if found safe. Based on the reviews, the Government takes appropriate decisions on ban, withdrawal etc. of unsafe pesticides.

Various schemes/programmes of DAC&FW promotes on-farm production of vermi-compost as listed below:

- (i) Soil Health Management of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), financial assistance is being provided @ 50% of cost subject of a limit of ₹ 5000/ha. and ₹ 10,000 per beneficiary for promotion of organic inputs including vermin-compost on farmer's field.
- (ii) Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH): Assistance is provided for establishing vermi-compost units @ 50% of cost subject to a maximum of ₹ 50, 000/- per beneficiary for a unit having size of 30' x 8' x 2.5'. For smaller units, assistance is determined on pro-rata basis. For HDPE Vermi bed of 96 cft. size (12'x4'x2'), the assistance is @50% of cost subject to a maximum of ₹ 8,000/- per bed.
- (iii) Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana: Financial assistance is being provided to cluster members @ ₹ 5000/- per unit for procurement of earth worms, preparation of pits, construction of brick wall, labour charges and other raw materials required for construction of vermi-composting units of size 7'x3'x1'.
- (iv) Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth (PDKV), Akola, Maharashtra has established Vermi-compost production unit under 'Centre of Organic Agriculture Research and Training'. This centre makes available vermi-compost and vermi-culture for farmers along with advice and demonstration.

(c) Government is promoting organic farming across the country under various Central Sector Schemes viz. National Mission of Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), Network Project on Organic

Farming Under ICAR etc. to encourage the farmers of the country including Maharashtra for adopting organic farming through adequate improvement in the soil quality. The initiatives taken by the Government are as under:-

- (i) To encourage the farmers for adopting organic farming PDKV, Akola Maharashtra has started six monthly course entitled "Certificate Course on Organic Agriculture", since 2010.
- (ii) The Department has been focusing on creating awareness and educating the farmers about organic farming practices in the areas where clusters are formed, under PKVY. The scheme guidelines provide a sum of ₹ 80,000 per cluster to undertake mobilization of farmers through exposure visits and training. The National Centre of Organic Farming (NCOF), Ghaziabad, a unit under the department undertakes various extension and publicity activities like exhibitions, radio talks, TV programmes, distribution of literature on organic inputs/organic farming etc. to educate the farmers. NCOF is also publishing bi-annually Bio-Fertilizer Newsletter as well as quarterly Organic Farming Newsletter. In addition, various books on production and use of bio-fertilizers have been published in various languages for distribution to the farming community. Radio jingles on organic agriculture are broadcasted on 4 different FM Radio Stations including Delhi, Bangalore, Nagpur and Lucknow.
- (iii) NCOF organizes 30 days certificate course on organic farming for skill development in organic agriculture sector for youth. It also conducts 10 days Refresher course for analysts under Fertilizer control order (FCO); 5 Days Trainers Training and 2 Days training for field functionaries and extension staff of the State Government.
- (iv) ₹ 25.98 crore as central share has been released to Government of Maharashtra under PKVY scheme to develop 932 clusters during the year 2015-16.

#### **Bringing down prices of essential medicines**

\*143. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether prices of essential medicines have come down from April, 2016 since the WPI has come down, if so, the details thereof;