

Procurement of sub-standard Paddy and Rice

1076. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sub-standard paddy and rice have been procured;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) what action has been taken/proposed to be taken in the matter; and

(d) the steps taken to procure standard quality of paddy and rice?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (c) Food Corporation of India (FCI) procures paddy and rice stocks as per laid down specifications of the Government of India and as per the relaxation of specifications as decided by Government of India from time to time. During the subsequent inspections, if any sub-standard foodgrains procured is detected, action is taken against delinquents by the concerned authorities.

(d) FCI and State procuring agencies have been advised to procure paddy and rice strictly conforming to the uniform specifications prescribed by the Government of India.

Onion, as an essential commodity

†1077. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that onion is not being considered as an essential commodity for the consumption of common poor people in the country by Government;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact the availability and production of onion have been assessed by Government before taking the decision to put the onion out of the purview of Essential Commodity Act; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) if so, the details of the average production as well as consumption during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) Consequent upon improvement of the availability of various agricultural products, the Government has already removed restrictions such as licensing, stocking and movement on a number of foodstuffs viz. wheat, paddy/rice, coarse grains, sugar, edible oilseeds and edible oils, pulses, gur, wheat products (namely maida, rava, suji, atta, resultant atta and bran) and hydrogenated vegetable oil or vanaspati during the years 2002 and 2003 to do away with the controls as agricultural products. Onion is a perishable commodity and storage problems coupled with controls/interventions have often led to distress sale by farmers in several States at very low prices, causing them economic hardship. Therefore it has been felt that 'Onion' can be removed from the list of essential commodities in the present context of liberalization and free trade.

(c) and (d) 'Onion' is presently existing in the list of essential commodities. Before taking a final decision to put onion out of the purview of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, various trading aspects viz. availability, production etc. of onion would also be taken into account. The average production as well as consumption of onion during the last three years had been as follows:

| Year | Production | (in million tonnes) |
|---------|------------|---|
| | | Consumption including requirement for seeds |
| 2001-02 | 4.80 | 4.29 |
| 2002-03 | 5.45 | 4.90 |
| 2003-04 | 5.72 | 4.89 |

Shortage of storage

1078. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the foodgrains have to be kept lying in open even during monsoon due to shortage of storage space in many parts of the country;