

(e) and (f) No, Sir. Online ticketing through IRCTC is gaining popularity and its share *vis-a-vis* counter tickets is increasing. During Financial Year 2018-19, online tickets booked through IRCTC accounted for approximately 70% of total reserved tickets booked. Various measures have also been undertaken for promotion of digital transactions over Indian Railways, including the following:—

- (i) The payment for tickets booked through IRCTC website is made through various cashless modes such as net banking, through credit/debit cards, cash cards, e-wallets and Unified Payment Interface (UPI)/Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM).
- (ii) To incentivise payment through digital means, service charge on online booking of tickets was withdrawn for the tickets booked from 23.11.2016. The facility has been extended upto 30.09.2019.
- (iii) User friendly Mobile App is also available for online booking of tickets wherein payment can be made through credit/debit cards, net banking etc.
- (iv) International credit/debit cards issued outside India are accepted for booking of e-tickets through IRCTC website.

#### **Agrarian crisis in the country**

\*224. DR. AMEE YAJNIK: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has conducted any study on the regions facing agrarian crisis in the country;
- (b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken/being taken by Government to encourage the use of modern agriculture techniques to sustain growth of agriculture to solve the problem of agrarian crisis in the country?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (SHRI NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR): (a) and (b) Taking cognizance of the problem of Agrarian distress and consequent farmers suicide in the country, Government had undertaken a study “Farmers Suicide in India: Causes and Policy Prescription” as an all India coordinated study in the work plan 2016-17 through the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru. The study covered 13 States of the country which included Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The study concluded that frequent crop failure due to vagaries of monsoon, absence of assured water resources and attack of pest and diseases are the most important causes of farmers' distress. The study had made *inter-alia* following suggestions to address the above problems:—

- (i) Bringing individual farmers under the ambit of crop insurance;
- (ii) Judicious use of available water is required;
- (iii) Government intervention through MSP covering cost of production plus reasonable profit margin;
- (iv) Risk hedging through crop and enterprise diversification should be encouraged to reduce farmers' distress aiming at sustainable income; and
- (v) Regulate informal credit market.

The Government has launched various schemes to cater for the above suggested recommendations namely; Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), Increase in Minimum Support Price (MSPs) for all Kharif and Rabi Crops, Har Med Par Ped, Bee-Keeping, Rashtriya Gokul Mission, Blue Revolution, Interest Subvention Scheme, Kisan Credit Card (KCC), etc.

(c) The Government has taken various steps by making various interventions *inter alia* developing/provisioning of improved varieties of seeds; livestock and fish culture; water use efficiency; pest management; improved farm practices; improved nutrient management; agricultural insurance; credit support; markets; access to information and livelihood diversification for a better agriculture production and welfare of the farmer. A brief of various schemes are as under:—

- (i) A Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) is implemented since 2014-15. The SMAM provides a suitable platform for converging all activities for inclusive growth of agricultural mechanization by providing a 'single window' approach for implementation with a special focus on Small and Marginal farmers with the following objectives:—
  - (a) Increasing the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions where availability of farm power is low;
  - (b) Promoting 'Custom Hiring Centres' to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small landholding and high cost of individual ownership;

- (c) Creating hubs for hi-tech and high value farm equipments;
  - (d) Creating awareness among stakeholders through demonstration and capacity building activities; and
  - (e) Ensuring performance testing and certification of designated testing centres located all over the country.
- (ii) A new Central Sector Scheme on Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for in-situ Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi for the period from 2018-19 to 2019-20 has been launched to address air pollution due to stubble burning and to subsidize machinery for the farmers for *in-situ* management of crop residue.
- (iii) Government has been laying special emphasis on dissemination of information and knowledge transfer to the farmers through a series of initiative like Extension Reforms, Mass Media Support to Agricultural Extension, Kisan Call Centres, Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres, Exhibitions/Fairs etc. Further, a network of 681 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) has been established by Indian Council of Agricultural Research to facilitate farmer's access to knowledge and information generated by Agricultural Universities and ICAR Institutes of the country.
- (iv) A Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 'Support to State Extension Programs for Extension Reforms' popularly known as Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) Scheme is under implementation since 2005. Presently, Scheme is being implemented in 684 districts of 29 States and 3 UTs of the country. The scheme promotes decentralized farmer-friendly system in the country with an objective to support State Government's efforts to revitalize the extension system and making available the latest agricultural technologies and good agricultural practices in different thematic areas of agriculture and allied areas to farmers. The extension activities under ATMA include Farmers Training, Demonstrations, Exposure Visits, Kisan Mela, Mobilization of Farmers Groups and organizing Farm Schools etc. During the year 2018-19, 18,59,231 farmers have been given training under the scheme.
- (v) Government is implementing National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) scheme wherein online trading of agriculture commodities including horticulture commodities is carried out in transparent and competitive manner helping the farmers with better price discovery for their produce, while at the same time

lowering transaction costs thereby stabilizing prices. So far, 585 wholesale regulated markets across the country have been integrated with e-NAM platform.

- (vi) Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme is being implemented to assist all State Governments to evaluate fertility in all farm holdings across the country and issue soil health cards to farmers regularly in a cycle of 2 years. Soil health cards provide information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.
- (vii) Under Rainfed Area Development (RAD) a component under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) is implemented since 2014-15 in the country. RAD focuses on Integrated Farming System (IFS) for enhancing productivity and minimizing risks associated with climatic variability. Under this system, crops/cropping system is integrated with activities like horticulture, livestock, fishery, agro-forestry, apiculture etc. to enable farmers not only in maximizing farm returns for sustaining livelihood, but also to mitigate the impacts of drought, flood or other extreme weather events with the income opportunity from allied activities during crop damage. Since inception of the scheme an area of 3.85 lakh hectares has been covered with expenditure of ₹ 1120.95 crore by adaptation of Integrated Farming System.
- (viii) Government is implementing Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) which mainly focuses on water use efficiency at farm level through precision/Micro Irrigation. Besides promoting precision irrigation and better on-farm water management practices to optimize the use of available water resources, this component also supports micro level water storage or water conservation/management activities to supplement source creation.

#### **FDI in multi-brand retail**

\*225. SHRI A. K. SELVARAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government has taken a decision not to allow Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;