

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- †1780
TO BE ANSWERED ON- 13/02/2023

PRICE INCREASE OF FOOD ITEMS AFFECTED THE SCS

†1780. SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH JAUNAPURIA:

Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the price increase of food items has affected the people of Scheduled Castes in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the steps taken by the Government to save Scheduled Castes from the adverse effects of food inflation; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and whether any decision has been taken in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRIBAL AFFAIRS
(SMT. RENUKA SINGH SARUTA)

(a) to (d): Although the question regarding price increase of food items affecting SCs pertains to MoSJE and Ministry of Consumer Affairs, but since it has been assigned to this Ministry and affects tribal communities also, it is submitted that the Government is seized of the issue of price increase of food items. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Department of Consumer Affairs in response to Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1998 answered on 23.12.2022 and Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 15 answered on 7th December 2022, has already informed the Parliament that the Government ensures food security to the poor and vulnerable households by distributing major cereals, namely, wheat and rice under NFSA, 2013 for beneficiaries at highly subsidised rate. In order to address the problem of malnutrition, the Government has approved the supply of fortified rice throughout the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and in other welfare schemes of Government of India in all States and Union Territories (UTs) in a phased manner by the year 2024. With a view to ameliorate the distress due to Covid, government has been distributing additional food grain free of cost @ 5 kg per person per month since April, 2020 under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) over and above the NFSA allocation.

Further, Government takes various measures from time to time to augment domestic availability and stabilize the prices of essential food commodities. These steps, inter-alia, include releases from the buffer to cool down prices, imposition of stock limits, monitoring of stocks declared by entities to prevent hoarding as also requisite changes in trade policy instruments like rationalization of import duty, changes in import quota, restrictions on exports of the commodity etc.

In order to manage the overall food security of the country and moderate prices of foodgrains the Government amended the export policy of wheat from free to prohibited category on 13th May 2022 for restricting export of Indian Durum Wheat, and from 12th July, 2022 the export of atta (wheat) is subjected to the recommendation of Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on export of wheat. Further, the export of broken rice has been banned and export duty of 20% imposed on non-Basmati rice except for parboiled rice w.e.f. 9th September, 2022.

To augment domestic availability and moderate the prices of pulses, import of tur and urad have been kept under 'Free Category' till 31.03.2023 and basic import duty on masur has been reduced to zero w.e.f. 27.07.2021, and the Agri-cess on masur import reduced to zero from 13.02.2022 till 31.03.2023. To prevent hoarding and restrictive trade practices in respect of tur the Government on 12th August, 2022 issued a directive to all the States and UTs to enforce stock disclosure by stockholders of tur under Section 3(2)(h) and 3(2)(i) of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and to also monitor and verify the stocks.

In order to stabilise the prices of onion, the Government procured a record 2.51 lakh metric tonnes of onion for the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) buffer stock in current year (2022-23). Targeted disposal of the stocks to major consumption centres to moderate the prices has commenced from September, 2022. Apart from market disposal, States and Government/cooperative retail agencies have been offered onion at a discounted rate of Rs.8/- kg for making available to the retail consumers. A total of 1.53 lakh MT of onion from the buffer has been released till 30.11.2022.

To control the prices of edible oil, the Government reduced the basic duty on crude palm oil, crude soyabean oil and crude sunflower oil from 2.5% to Nil, and Agri-cess on these oils has been brought down to 5%. The basic duty on refined soyabean oil and refined sunflower oil has been reduced to 17.5% from the previous rate of 32.5% and the basic duty on refined palm oils has been reduced from 17.5% to 12.5%. The Government has also extended the free import of refined palm oils for a period upto 31.12.2022. In addition to these, the Government has imposed stock limits on edible oils and oilseeds for a period up to 31st December 2022. Thereafter, the Government exempted the big chain retails and wholesalers of edible oil companies from the stock limit order with effect from 2nd November 2022 in order to make the supply chain seamless amid easing global edible oil prices. The Government has also issued Notification for allocation of Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) for import of 20 LMT of Crude Soyabean Oil and 20 LMT of Crude Sunflower Oil for the financial year 2022-23 and 2023-24 at zero import duty and zero Agri-cess.
