

(f) The Workshop recommended establishment of vertisols soil management network by IBSRAM (International Board for Soil Research and Management), to assist national agricultural research programmes in applied research and adaptive testing for promoting agricultural development and use of potentially highly productive dark clay soils particularly in Asian, African and South American countries.

#### Fixation of Price of Potato by Government

427. SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government considered the Price fixed for potato by the APC at Rs. 50.00 per quintal to be remunerative .

(b) whether West Bengal Government has fixed Rs. 78/-, Rs. 82/- and Rs. 85/- for different varieties of potato for buying ; and

(c) whether West Bengal Government and other State Governments who buy potato at really remunerative prices, would be financially helped by the Central Government ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI BUTA SINGH) : (a) APC has not recommended price for potatoes. The support price for potatoes at Rs. 50 per quintal has been fixed in consultation with the State Governments of U.P., Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

(b) Yes, Sir. The West Bengal Government have, however, recommended that potatoes would be bought at higher price only from marginal farmers, not exceeding 10 quintals per farmer.

(c) Government of India have issued a general letter to all State Governments advising them that the cooperatives should enter the market wherever the prices of potatoes fall below Rs. 50/- per quintal and that the Government of India would bear 50% of the losses.

#### Improvement of Bullock Carts

428. SHRI G.V. RAMA RAO : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether several M.Ps have raised the question of improvement of bullock carts in the country and if so, details thereof and corrective action taken ;

(b) whether several institutions in India have already developed new carts and wheels and if so, details thereof ;

(c) the number of traditional bullock carts which have been modernised so far ;

(d) whether Australian and American R & D results have any relevance for India and if so, steps taken to use the results for India ; and

(e) the estimated number of bullocks, bullock carts and outlay thereon and how much of agricultural land is covered by the bullock-driven ploughs and for transportation work etc. ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI BUTA SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir. The questions mainly related to improvement in the Bullock Cart technology. The Government in the Ministry of Shipping and Transport has been funding research on improved Bullock Cart design through :- (i) Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (ii) Central Road Research Institute (C.R.R.I.), Research Institute under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. In addition the Indian Council of Agricultural Research is also engaged in some research through All India Coordinated Project and through Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering, Bhopal.

(b) Yes, Sir. The number of institutions have developed new carts. The improvements relate to axle material, payload carrying capacity, braking system, type of wheel etc.

(c) Improved bullock carts manufactured by public and private organisations are available in the country. No statistics of the number of bullock carts modernised are maintained.

(d) Field worthiness of the Australian Ox-Cart was tried and the results were not found to be encouraging. There are no research and development results available from the U.S.A. on the subject. However, a Member of U.S. Business delegation made an offer in the news conference that he could supply process reject tubeless tyres and axle assembly. The suggestion has little research and development value. It only seeks to promote marketing of rejected tyres and wheel assembly available in that country.

(e) As per the Livestock Census 1977 the number of bullocks and bullock-carts are 749 lakhs and 126 lakhs respectively. The operational area according to the Agricultural Census 1977 is 163.34 million ha. and the majority of it is covered by bullock-driven plough.

#### Allocation of Funds under N.R.E.P.

429. SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the fund allocation under NREP has been drastically reduced by the Planning Commission ;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof ; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take so that NREP fulfils the targets ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI CHANDULAL CHANDRAKAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The target fixed for the Sixth Plan for employment generation under NREP is 1500 to 2000 million mandays. Against this, achievement so far is 1662.59 million mandays. The target fixed has, therefore, been largely achieved.

#### Decline in Per Capita Availability of Land due to Soil Erosion

430. SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHURY : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether per capita availability of land is on the decline due to soil erosion and land degradation ;

(b) steps taken by Government to prevent the decline ;

(c) whether State Governments have been directed by the Central Government to take effective measures in this regard ; and

(d) steps taken by individual States and progress achieved by them so far ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI BUTA SINGH) : (a) Availability of land per capita is on the decline mainly due to factors such as increase in population, conversion of agricultural land for housing and industries, mining activities, etc. However, no comprehensive survey of the area subject to soil erosion and land degradation has been undertaken.

(b) to (d) Soil erosion and land degradation problems are identified through soil surveys. A number of soil conservation programmes have been taken up since the First Five Year Plan in the Central and State Sectors for checking soil erosion and land degradation. The thrust continues to be in the State sector on treating both agricultural and non-agricultural lands with various soil conservation measures on watershed basis. Specific anti-erosion measures undertaken include contour bunds and terracing, tree plantation, development of pasture lands, construction of soil conservation engineering structures to control gullies and check run-off, stabilisation of coastal sand dunes and water harvesting structures. Central support has been extended for carrying out soil and land use surveys with a view to identify priority areas and provide basic catchment characteristics. Central support is being extended through the following schemes :-