

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, December 3, 1996/Agrahayana 12.
1918 (Saka)

(The Lok Sabha met at Two Minutes Past
Eleven of the Clock)

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Production of Cotton

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*161. JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :
SH : NITISH KUMAR :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether production of cotton is declining in the country;

(b) if not, the facts in this regard;

(c) whether per hectare production of cotton in the country has come down over the years;

(d) if not, the per hectare production of cotton in the country during the years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and

(e) the area of land under cotton cultivation during each of the said years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH) : (a) to (e). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) No, Sir.

(b) The annual compound growth rate of production of cotton during the period 1980-81 to 1994-95 is observed to be 3.88 percent. In recent period also, the production has risen from 107.4 lakh bales in 1993-94 to 118.9 lakhs bales in 1994-95 and further upto 130.9 lakh bales in 1995-96.

(c) No, Sir. During the last 10 years per hectare production of cotton has gone up from 197 kg. to 246 kg.

(d) The yield of cotton per hectare during the years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 was 249 kg., 257 kg. and 246 kg. respectively.

(e) The area under cotton during 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 was 73.21, 78.71 and 90.63 lakh hectares respectively.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question was related to decrease in per hectare production of cotton. The Hon. Minister has, in his reply, admitted that the area under cultivation of cotton has gone down during the last few years. If we work out the percentage of yield in relation to the area, we find that in 1995-96 area under cotton cultivation was 90.63 lakh hectares and the yield per hectare was 246 Kg., compared to it, per hectare yield of cotton in 1993-94 was 249 Kg. although the area under cotton cultivation was only 73.21 lakh hectares. The hon. Minister has admitted it in the figures, yet he did not admit it in his statement. My first supplementary question is as to what are the reasons for the low yield of cotton in our country as compared to the world average yield of cotton because per hectare average yield of cotton in the world is 592 Kgs. as compared to 240 Kgs. in India? I would also like to know the steps being taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to push up average yield of cotton to the level of world average yield? This is my first question.

MR. SPEAKER : You can ask your second supplementary later on.

SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH : The question of the Hon. member is related to per hectare production of cotton in other countries of the world. He has said that per hectare yield of cotton in the world is 592 Kgs. This is not a fact. In Israel, per hectare yield of cotton is 1709 Kgs. It is 1009 Kgs. in Turkey, in Australia it is 1636 Kgs. and in USA, per hectare yield of cotton is 767 Kgs.

This is true that the yield of cotton in India is the lowest as compared to other countries of the world. I raises between 246 and 259 Kgs. per hectare in our country. The reason being that in India cultivation is like a gamble to which our Hon. Minister of Agriculture usually refers to and say that the real Minister of Agriculture is the monsoon. When rains are timely and favourable, cotton production is good but when monsoon plays truant, it does affect cotton cultivation. Excessive rains resulting in more diseases to the cotton crop. We have seen that since 1991 yield of cotton increasing. Every year some increase is registered. Since the cultivation in our country is dependent on rain, the yield is low. However, it is the endeavour of the Government to see that per hectare yield of cotton goes up.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon. Minister has linked the fall in production of cotton in the country to the monsoon. Monsoon is a world-wide phenomenon and India cannot be an exception. The Hon. Minister has not given any reason as to why the Government could not increase the per hectare yield of cotton.

Sir, before I ask my second supplementary, I would like to say that cotton growers get very low price for their produce and that is the reason that they are shifting to other crops. The cotton growers of Rajasthan have demanded that Government should take steps to fix the support price of Narma at Rs.3000 per quintal and of desi cotton at Rs.2500 per quintal and procure their produce. In view of the statement made by the Finance Secretary, Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia that a cess could be imposed on all cotton fabrics in the textile industries in order to provide subsidy to the cotton growers, may I know from the Hon. Minister whether this proposal is under the consideration of the Government?

SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH : Sir, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices submits its report to determine the minimum support price of cotton. On receiving the report of the Commission the department examines the cost of production and the reasonably arrived at income of the farmer and on that basis the price of cotton is fixed by the Government. While doing so the Government remains conscious of the fact that the farmer should get remunerative price in every eventuality so that the cotton production does not fall and the cotton grower is not discouraged. Therefore, the Government is always ready to consider the demands and the problems of the farmers seriously be they belong to Rajasthan or other cotton producing States.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to tell the Hon. Minister that average per quintal cost of production of cotton comes to Rs.1125. What should the poor farmer do in such a situation when he is not getting even the cost of production? Therefore, will the Government increase the price of cotton?

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Justice, such long argument is not allowed. Shri Nitish Kumar.

SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR : Sir, if the price of cotton is not raised the farmer will be ruined. I would like to know what steps the Government is talking to increase the support price of cotton?

MR. SPEAKER : I have called the name of Shri Nitish Kumar. You please sit down.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, just now the Hon. Minister was replying to the supplementary questions in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture. I do not know whether he has the full information with him about all these things. That is why he has given a general reply to a specific question. When the Hon. Member said that indigenous per hectare yield of cotton is 246 Kgs. as compared to 550 Kgs. per hectare at the international level, the question that the Hon. member was asking was that what the Government was doing to increase the per hectare yield of cotton in our country? In reply to this the Minister has apportioned the blame on to the monsoon

Sir, I have with me the copy of the reply given by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture in Parliament last year. He had told that certified seed is not available to the farmers in adequate quantity. Is it also one of the reasons for low yield? In reply to this question the Hon. Minister had told the Rajya Sabha that the quantity of certified seed available was sufficient to cover only 30% of area under cotton cultivation.

The shortage of certified seed is coupled with the problem of pest control. Sometimes winds blowing from Pakistan destroy the entire cotton crop. Is there any scheme with the Government regarding pest control? All these things should have been replied to while telling the House as to how the Government plan to increase the cotton production. We want specific answer to this question.

Secondly the Government announces minimum support price. But no procurement agency comes forward to procure cotton from the farmers at the announced support price. As a result the farmers are forced for distress sale. What does the Government propose to do to overcome such a situation?

I would also like to know the reaction of the Government to this point.

[English]

The Union Finance Secretary, Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia, has favoured imposing a cess on all cotton fabrics that could help bail out the poor cotton farmers labouring under....

MR. SPEAKER : That has already been asked.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : Your 'two minutes' time is over.

[English]

Your question will be disallowed.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : It is not a question of minutes. If I do not make this point, how will the Government come forward with its reaction? ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You put your question.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : I am putting the question only and I want the Government's reaction thereto. Please allow him to express his reaction.

[English]

...the poor cotton farmers labouring under depressed cotton prices and at the same time helps subsidise the handloom weavers. The Indian cotton farmers was perhaps as poor as the manual labourer. Shri Montek Singh observed and asked if farmers world over could get the benefit of better prices for their produce then why not Indian farmers.

[Translation]

This is the statement of the Finance Secretary issued a few days back. Through you, I want the reaction of the Government to this statement. Does the Government propose to take any steps in this direction?

SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister had been the Minister of the Department of Agriculture and is considered an intelligent Member. Therefore, he is justified in seeking a proper reply. His question is divided in two parts. One of them relates to the yield of cotton. In regard to yield, we have admitted that there has been a gradual increase in the yield from 1950-51 to 1995-96. The yield per hectare has risen from 95 Kgs. in 1949-50 to 246-257 kgs. in 1995-96. This is so despite the fact that irrigated area under cotton cultivation is very small. Average yield per hectare was 95 Kgs. When irrigated area was only 8.2 per cent. At present irrigation has been extended to about 34 per cent area which has led to increase in the yield. Another question which he raised was about the certified seed. About this too, the Government is cautious. To this end, the Government is running an Intensive Cotton Development Scheme through which the farmers would get certified seed, fertilizer and irrigation facility. Provision has been made to supply insecticides to save the crops from diseases and pests. That is how the Government is always cautious about the yield.

So far as the price is concerned, minimum support price is fixed by the Agricultural Prices Commission. For instance, in Punjab, the minimum support price has been fixed at Rs.1165 per quintal this year. In October, the price rules at about Rs. 1775 and at the end of the reasons, the price was Rs. 2045 per quintal. Similarly, in the beginning of November, the price was Rs.1760 but now it is Rs.2000. In Andhra Pradesh, the price was Rs.1981 in October which rose to Rs.2038 by the end of the month. In November, the price was Rs.1831 per quintal and by the end of the month, the price rose to 2152 per quintal. Similarly, the price in Gujarat was Rs.2125 per quintal...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : You can lay it on the Table of the House.

(Interruptions)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : What is the reaction of the Government on the observation made by the Finance Secretary, Shri Montek Singh?...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : In response to the reply that has been given, I would like to say that the farmers are not getting more than Rs.1500 per quintal.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I have given the floor to Shri Lakshman Singh. Nothing else will go on record.

[Translation]

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH : It is essential to push up production of cotton. Oilseeds and pulses crops are also grown up alongwith cotton in the Kharif season. Therefore, it has also to be ensured that area under cotton during the Kharif seasons does not shrink and the equation between the production and price is maintained. Soyabean crop is also raised in the Kharif season. It is also not proper to increase the area under cotton and to decrease the area under Soyabean. I would like to know as to what steps the Government propose to take to maintain the balance between different Kharif crops?

SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH : Cotton growers in the cotton growing States are getting reasonable price for their produce. Accordingly, the production has gone up and so has the area under cotton cultivation. It is ensured that area under cotton cultivation does not go down in relation to the demand for cotton.

SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have an important point to make...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : This is Question Hour. We cannot have a full debate on this issue now. That requires a separate notice.

[English]

Dumping of Graphite Electrodes

*162. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether certain countries have been dumping graphite electrodes in India;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating its environmental effect;

(c) whether any investigation has been made in this regard;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(e) the action taken by the Government in the matter?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) and (b). As per information from the Ministry of Commerce, graphite electrodes are being