

Government has claimed reimbursement during the last 3 years is as under:—

1996-97	Rs. 30.90 crores
1997-98	Rs. 24.17 crores
1998-99 (upto December 1998)	Rs. 28.20 crores

#### Price of Onion

3013. SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR:  
DR. ULHAS VASUDEO PATIL:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the price of onion has sharply fallen and the farmers are in great crisis;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to arrest the decline of onion price;

(d) whether the Government have taken a decision to compensate the farmers facing crisis;

(e) whether the Government propose to fix minimum support price of onion like other agricultural commodities; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) The wholesale prices of onions have declined during the last three weeks at the producing centres due to arrivals of fresh crop. The estimated production of late kharif and rabi crops of onions is likely to be much higher as compared to those of last year.

(c) and (d) The Government has permitted the export of 1.50 lakh MTs of onions up to May, 99 to help the farmers to get reasonable prices for their produce.

(e) and (f) No, Sir.

#### Contaminated Drinking Water

3014. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether drinking water of many States contain fluorine beyond permissible limit of 1.5 ppm leading to various ailments;

(b) if so, the details of study conducted in this regard; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A nation wide survey was conducted by the Ministry during 1991-93 to identify the status of water supply in the rural habitation and the validation survey was conducted during May-July, 1994. As per the information received from the States, currently, there are 32211 habitations affected by fluoride in 16 States of the country.

(c) Provision of safe drinking water is a State subject and States are to design water supply systems suited to the State, Government of India support the efforts of the State Governments both technically and financially through the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP), Powers to sanction projects relating to quality of water have since been delegated to the State Governments. However in the past, 427 Defluoridation plants have been installed for removal of excess fluoride from the drinking water. Government of India has also sanctioned 707 schemes designed to cover a population of 18.74 lakh spread over 4625 habitations in 9 States under the Submission programme. Five Pilot Projects have also been initiated in the States of Andhra Pradesh (3), Rajasthan (1) and Gujarat (1) wherein all the proven technologies are being tried out. State Governments have been advised to constitute State Level "Fluorosis Control Cells" aimed at organising large scale training, awareness generation and capacity building programme.

#### Import of Wheat

3015. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL:  
SHRI RAM NARAIN MEENA:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state: