

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:71

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2001

CHIEF MINISTER'S CONFERENCE ON IMPACT OF WTO AGREEMENT ON AGRICULTURE

IQBAL AHMED SARADGI;PRABODH PANDA

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a conference of the Chief Ministers was held in Delhi to discuss the Catastrophic impact of World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement on Indian agriculture and food management;

(b) if so, the details of the discussion and outcome thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken in the light of the decisions of the conference?

Answer

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH)

(a) to (c): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (c) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.1 DUE FOR REPLY ON 26TH JULY, 2001.

(a) to (c): The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation organised a Conference of Chief Ministers under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister on 21st May, 2001, at New Delhi to discuss issues relating to the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Food Management. The Chief Ministers of 12 States and Union Ministers of Agriculture, Finance, Commerce and Industries, Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution and the Deputy Chairman (Planning Commission) participated in the Conference, besides representatives of other States and Union Ministries;

Discussions were held on the following agenda items:

- Agriculture Production Strategies : Diversification, post-harvest interventions and value addition,
- Removal of restrictions of movement and stocking of food and agricultural produce,
- Operation of the Essential Commodity Act, 1955 as applied to food and agricultural produce,
- Decentralization of procurement and distribution,
- Impact of WTO on Indian Agriculture.

The Conference provided an opportunity for a frank exchange of views and sharing of concerns and suggestions. The Prime Minister, during his concluding remarks, called for awareness building measures in order to remove misconceptions relating to WTO. He announced the constitution of a Standing Committee of Union Ministers and Chief Ministers to consider issues concerning agricultural strategies, food management and promotion of agricultural exports in the wake of WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

The first meeting of the Standing Committee of the Union Ministers and Chief Ministers on Food Management and Agricultural Exports was held on 6th July, 2001, where the following agenda items were discussed:-

(i) Enhancing the efficiency of procurement and reducing the cost of distribution of foodgrains under PDS through decentralized and active involvement of the States.

(ii) Implementation of the Food for Work Programme and Grain Bank Scheme.

(iii) Review of Essential Commodities Act and Control Orders to ensure free

movement .

An Intra-Ministerial Group has been constituted by the Standing Committee to workout modalities of Food for Work Programme and Grain Bank Scheme. The Group is expected to submit its report in four weeks. On restructuring of the system of procurement of foodgrains, it was decided that the Government of India would work out a detailed proposal in consultation with the States. There was general consensus that restrictions on movement of foodgrains need to be removed and that controls on trade of foodgrains need to be reviewed.

With regard to building of awareness on WTO related issues, a series of State-level meetings are planned, two of which have already been held.