

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2654
ANSWERED ON:10.08.2010
AREA OFFICERS UNDER PDS
Dhotre Shri Sanjay Shamrao;Viswanathan Shri P.

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

- (a) whether the Union Government has appointed Area Officers for monitoring of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof indicating the nature of the duties performed by the said officers;
- (c) whether the Union Government has made any assessment of the Area Officers Scheme during the last two years;
- (d) if so, the details and the outcome thereof, State-wise; and
- (e) the extent to which the said scheme has been successful in improving the functioning of the PDS?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

a) to (e): For better coordination between Central Government and State/UT Governments for implementing Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other schemes, an arrangement of field visits by senior officers of the Department of Food & Public Distribution was introduced in 2000. These officers are termed as Area Officers. The Area Officers are to make field visits in the assigned States/UTs to assess functioning of TPDS and progress of schemes by visiting Fair Price Shops (FPSs), Food Corporation of India (FCI) Depots and meeting beneficiaries of such schemes. The duties and responsibilities of the Area Officers are at Annexure-I.

This arrangement of Area Officer was reviewed especially for its effectiveness. Field visits of officers brought feed-back on TPDS and other schemes, which were shared with concerned State/UT Governments for improvement and taking action on the findings/recommendations contain therein. States-wise details of the same in the last two years are enclosed as Annexure-II.

ANNEXURE-I

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2654 DUE FOR ANSWER ON 10.08.2010

Duties and responsibilities of the Area Officers

- (i) The Area Officers shall visit their allocated States/UTs at least once in a quarter for inspecting TPDS functioning.
- (ii) Each Area Officer, during the inspection in the allotted State would inspect TPDS operations in one/two districts in the State. For surprise nature of their inspection and its objective, all Area Officers should select a minimum of two village Panchayats in each of the Districts on random basis. Assessment of the functioning of TPDS in the State be made by inspecting Fair Price Shops, FCI Depots, State Government Department godowns issuing foodgrains to FPS, and as well as interacting with TPDS ration card holding families.
- (iii) The Area Officer would select such areas, having population belonging to Scheduled Cast, Scheduled Tribe and very poor category.
- (iv) The Area Officers shall review functioning of TPDS as per the questionnaire/check list given to them.
- (v) The Area Officers are expected to make an in-depth study on the functioning of TPDS in the area considering the actual situation prevailing in the area and submit an analytical report. In order to assess extent of diversion/leakage and price being charged, officer would first interview AAY/BPL/APL beneficiary on random basis about receipt of foodgrains and prices charged and crosscheck the same with State register maintained with FPSs.
- (vi) Area Officer may collect information from various divisions in the Department on the important issues pending with the State Food Secretary of concerned State and take up the issue with the Food Secretary.

(vii) During meeting with State/UT Government representatives, the Area Officer shall disseminate the important decisions taken by the Central Government and concern of the Department of Food&PD with the functioning of TPDS.

(viii) The Area Officers shall submit their inspection reports within fortnight of inspection to the Department.

ANNEXURE-II

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2654 TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.08.2010 IN THE LOK SABHA

State/UT Findings/ recommendations of Area Officers - 2008-09

West Bengal Less quantity of foodgrains was supplied to BPL/AAY beneficiaries. Higher price was charged from the BPL beneficiaries. FPSs were short of slips for recording the distribution of foodgrains to beneficiaries. Transporter/wholesaler should be selected through tender process.

Bihar Beneficiaries were not getting foodgrains and kerosene regularly. BPL & AAY were not issued new cards after review of the lists. Non-lifting of foodgrains from FCI depots. Charging of higher prices of TPDS commodities by the FPSs.

Assam Beneficiaries distributed foodgrains without producing cards at FPS. Beneficiaries were also getting foodgrains 1 kg less than the quantity allotted to very poor persons in order to adjust the extra transport cost.

Karnataka Records in FPS should be updated and checked by Officers. The State Godowns should maintain quality of foodgrains supplied by the FCI. FPSs should be not very far away from the residences of beneficiaries. Monthly review meetings of functioning of TPDS in the State.

Rajasthan Less quantity of foodgrains was distributed to the BPL beneficiaries i.e. 30 kg. of wheat to BPL families in Tonk, 30 kg of wheat to BPL families in Jaipur district.

Madhya Pradesh BPL cardholders were supplied 20 or 30 kg foodgrains whereas both the categories are entitled to get 35 kg foodgrain per family per month. No supply of foodgrains was made to APL households for some months. Foodgrains were supplied once in two months to wholesalers and subsequently to FPS to reduce transportation cost. Fair price shops did not issue receipts to TPD beneficiaries. It was also noted that Vigilance Committee had not inspected the Fair Price Shops for about 6 months.

Maharashtra The FPS level records to be tallied and checked by Officers. Foodgrains at FPS level should be preserved properly to prevent infestation. FPS should be at vicinity of all beneficiaries. Foodgrains at FCI to be lifted in a time bound manner. Monthly review meeting with State & District level officers to be held regularly.

Findings/ recommendations of Area Officers 2009-10

Jharkhand Improve the functioning of the fair price shops through close monitoring and supervision, especially in the Naxal affected areas and ensure strict implementation of the 9-point action plan. Review of the list of BPL/AAY card holders. Submission of utilization Certificates for foodgrains received by State. Expedite setting up of Village Grain Banks sanctioned almost four years ago. Expedite setting up of a State Civil Supplies Corporation. Create additional

storage capacity to meet storage requirements of the State Government for PDS against Government of India allocations.