

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:175
ANSWERED ON:22.11.2011
UN AID PROGRAMME
Reddy Shri Magunta Srinivasulu

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

(a) whether the Government has decided to allow free flow of food for the United Nations Aid Programmes as part of the global initiative to tackle scarcity of food and volatility in prices; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a)&(b) No, Madam. The Government has not decided for free flow of food for UN aid programmes. The export of wheat and non-basmati rice was totally banned w.e.f 9-2-2007 and 1-4-2008 respectively. However, the Government of India has been allowing export of non basmati rice and wheat to various countries on case to case basis on diplomatic basis / humanitarian aid. A quantity of 20.78 lakh tons of non- basmati rice and 8.60 lakh tons of wheat were allowed on diplomatic basis / humanitarian aid after the ban was imposed. Further, the quantities of 48,299 MTs, 48,512 MTs, 34,026 MTs and 34,228 MTs of foodgrains(wheat & rice) were given to United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) for their country programme in India during the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively. In addition to the above, India has signed an agreement alongwith other members of the SAARC to set up a SAARC food bank in which India's share is 3,06400 MTs.

In the recent years, there has been a record production and procurement of wheat and rice leading to huge quantities in buffer stocks and strategic reserves far in excess of norms. Because of this sufficient availability and temporary shortage of storage space, Empowered Group of Ministers(EGoM) in its meeting dated 08-09-2011 decided to lift the ban on export of non-basmati rice and wheat by bringing them under Open General Licence(UGL). The exports is to be done out of privately held stocks through Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) ports. It was also decided that the exports should be closely monitored and as and when the quantities reach a level of 20 lakh tons each of non basmati rice and wheat, Government may again consider imposing ban on the exports. The export of wheat products has also been allowed on private account with a quantitative limit of 6.50 lakh tons w.e.f 03-7-2009 till 31-3-2010 and the same has also been extended till 31-3-2012.

In the meeting of G-20 Agriculture Ministers in Paris on 22-23 June, 2011, a Ministerial declaration on Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture was issued. It has been decided to focus generally on agricultural production and productivity, market information and transparency, international policy coordination, reducing the effects of price volatility for the most vulnerable and financial regulation of agricultural financial markets. Regarding the trade policy, while India has agreed that restrictions on export of food items affect food availability, India has also said that free exports at the time of national shortage of food cannot be allowed because domestic food security comes before global food security. So India has not agreed to the free flow of exports rather it is to be decided by keeping in view the national needs and domestic food security.