

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1779

ANSWERED ON:04.12.2012

DECLINE IN AGRICULTURAL LAND

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Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of agricultural/cultivable land available in the country including backward areas, State-wise;
- (b) whether agricultural land has declined over the years due to acquisition of land for industrialisation and other development purposes in the country;
- (c) if so, the extent of decline in areas of such land reported during the last three years and the current year, State-wise;
- (d) the details of unused and barren land available in the country, State-wise; and
- (e) the measures taken/plan chalked out in co-ordination with the State Governments to expand agricultural land and to utilise unused and barren land for agricultural purposes in the country?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI TARIQ ANWAR)

(a) to (d): As per the latest Land Use Statistics data (2009-10) compiled by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, the agricultural/cultivable land available in the country including backward areas has marginally declined to 182.47 million hectares during 2009-10 as compared to 182.51 million hectares during 2006-07 on account of shift in area for non-agricultural purposes. The State-wise details of the agricultural/ cultivable land, unused (current fallow & fallow lands other than current fallows) and barren & unculturable land in the country for the years 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 are at annexure.

(e) As per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, Land falls under the purview of State Governments and therefore, it is for the State Governments to bring in suitable Policy/Act/Legislation to check the diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. With a view to prevent conversion of agricultural land for non agricultural purposes, Government of India has also taken several steps, viz.

National Policy for Farmers 2007 (NPF 2007): National Policy for Farmers, 2007 has recommended that "Prime farmland must be conserved for agriculture except under exceptional circumstances, provided that the agencies that are provided with agricultural land for non-agricultural projects should compensate for treatment and full development of equivalent degraded / wastelands elsewhere. For non-agricultural purposes, as far as possible, land with low biological potential for farming would be earmarked and allocated." State Governments have been advised to earmark lands with low biological potential such as uncultivable land, land affected by salinity, acidity, etc., for non-agricultural development activities, including industrial and construction activities.

National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007 (NRRP, 2007): National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007 formulated by Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Land Resources has recommended that as far as possible, projects may be set up on wastelands, degraded land or un-irrigated land. Acquisition of agricultural land for non agricultural use in project may be kept to the minimum; multi-cropped land may be avoided to the extent possible for such purposes, and acquisition of irrigated land, if unavoidable, may be kept to the minimum. These policies have been sent to the States/UTs for implementation.

Further, to increase the agricultural land area in the country and for maintaining balance in different types of land uses, the Government is implementing various Programmes/Schemes, such as, (i) National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPA), (ii) Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Projects and Flood Prone Rivers (RVP & FPR), (iii) Reclamation & Development of Alkali and Acid Soils (RADAS) and (iv) Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDPSA).