

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1363

ANSWERED ON:13.08.2013

SHORTAGE OF FARM WORKERS

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Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that introduction of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has led to acute shortage of farm labourers across the country thereby affecting food production and forcing small farmers to abandon agriculture;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the preventive steps taken by the Government in this regard;

(c) whether guidelines for convergence of MGNREGA with programmes of this Ministry are not being followed;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(e) the concrete steps being taken to save farmers from the prevailing agrarian distress apart from notifying new works related to agriculture and allied activities under the MGNREGA?

Answer

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

(a) to (e): Studies conducted on the impact of MGNREGA reveal that its implementation leads to reduction in distress migration to urban areas as well as increase in wages in rural areas. Temporary shortage of labour has also been reported in some regions during the peak agricultural season. However, food production has not been affected due to implementation of MGNREGA and has in fact increased from 217.28 million tonnes in 2006-07 to 259.29 million tonnes in 2011-12. As per the census results though the number of cultivators has decreased from 127.3 million in 2001 to 118.7 million in 2011, number of agricultural labourers has increased from 106.8 million in 2001 to 144.3 million in 2011.

In order to improve convergence of MGNREGA with other development programmes and to strengthen its implementation, the fourth edition of MGNREGA operational guidelines 2013 have been issued which have strengthened the synergy between MGNREGA and rural livelihoods, particularly agriculture.

Government has taken several steps to revitalize agriculture sector and improve condition of farming community on sustainable basis by increasing investment, improving farm practices, rural infrastructure and delivery of credit, technology and other inputs, extension, marketing, etc. Various programmes/schemes for the development of agriculture sector are being implemented in a decentralized manner with flexibility to State Government to formulate and implement appropriate projects to suit their specific requirements. The focus of Government is primarily on expansion of farm income, creation of non-farm income opportunities, improvement in productivity of rainfed agriculture, increasing coverage of farming areas under protective irrigation and forging appropriate backward and forward linkages. Other measures taken by the Government for the benefit of farmers include enhancement in minimum support prices of agricultural commodities, increase in credit flow to agriculture sector, debt waiver/relief, interest subvention on crops loan etc.