

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:834
ANSWERED ON:24.11.2009
FERTILITY OF DROUGHT HIT AREAS
Joshi Shri Mahesh;Kataria Shri Lal Chand

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the fertility of drought-hit areas is on the decline;
- (b) if so, the efforts made by Government to restore the fertility of such areas during the last two years; and
- (c) the progress made in this regard?

Answer

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

(a) & (b): The drought hit areas are generally poor in fertility due to moisture stress. The Government is advocating soil test based balanced and judicious use of chemical fertilizers, bio-fertilizers and locally available organic manures to maintain soil health and its productivity. In vermicompost, some of the secretions of worms and the associated micros acts as growth promoters which along with other nutrients improve physical, chemical and biological properties of soil in the long run. They help in better nutrient uptake and increase tolerance towards drought and moisture stress. Biofertilizer being a cheap and eco-friendly source of nutrients, holds greater promise in maintaining soil fertility in such areas. Crop residues as soil mulch cum manure can reduce runoff, soil and nutrient losses, evaporation and weed infestation etc. besides conserving residual soil moisture and serving as a source of nutrients.

(c): A new scheme, namely, "National Project on Management of Soil Health & Fertility" (NPMSF) has been introduced during 2008-09. The components of new scheme include setting up of 500 new static Soil Testing Laboratories (STLs), setting up of 250 mobile STLs, strengthening of the existing 315 STLs, promotion of organic manures, soil amendments and distribution of micro-nutrients during 11th Five Year Plan. An amount of Rs 16.63 crore was released under NPMSF scheme to 16 States during 2008-09 and an amount of Rs. 20.89 crore has been released to 9 States during 2009-10 (till 20-11-2009).