

Title: Requested the Government to take steps to protect the Agricultural Sector by making local farm products and services globally competitive.

DR. MANDA JAGANNATH (NAGAR KURNOOL): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an important matter in the 'Zero Hour.'

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मैडम, मैंने आपका नाम पुकारा था, लेकिन आप उस समय हाउस में नहीं थीं।

DR. MANDA JAGANNATH : It is feared that under the WTO regime, agriculture would suffer most as Indian farm products are not globally competitive. Andhra Pradesh being a major producer of agricultural goods, the impact is expected to be serious.

The State is already suffering from over-production of several products like paddy, tobacco and chillies and attempts to export them have not yielded much results because of high production costs and also high pesticide residues in these products.

The situation has led to unrest and suicides among farmers. The Union Government has, so far, taken no steps to prevent the collapse of the farm prices as is evident from the new Agriculture Policy and the Budget of 2001-02, which is designed to help corporations.

There is, therefore, a need for a concerted strategy in the agricultural sector to find a solution to this problem and make local products and services globally competitive under the new WTO regime. I request the Union Government to take note of this problem and take suitable measures, as the agricultural sector has been badly hit.