

(vi) Need to take steps to write off the loan taken by Coffee

Cultivators in Wayanad district of Kerala and

Neighbouring districts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

SHRI K. MURALEEDHARAN (CALICUT): I bring to your kind notice the sad plight of the small and marginal coffee growers in Wayanad district, Kerala and the neighbouring districts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. During late 1970s and early 1980s, the coffee-growing farmers in this area found it extremely difficult to have market for their product, due to the alarmingly low price of coffee on the one hand and the spiral cost of production on the other. As a result of this, the farmers had to take loans from the Coffee Board from 1980 onwards. Due to the successive large scale failure of crop during the years that followed, the farmers could not repay their loans nor did the Board take any steps to realise the debts. It was during this period that some of the farmers switched over to other crops, abandoning the coffee cultivation. The Government of India in 1987 came with A.R.D.R. (Debt Relief) Scheme to cover the loans up to Rs.10,000/-. It was not made available to the coffee growers. Now that loan of four crores of rupees availed by nearly 8,000 farmers in the eighties even after repayment made by some of the farmers has swelled up to Rs.16 crore (including penal interest) and the farmers are being subjected to untold hardship as the Board is bent on initiating legal measures to squeeze out money from the debt-laden farmers. I request the Government of India to take steps to enable the Coffee Board to write off the debts incurred by small and marginal coffee cultivators.