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Title: Need to provide adequate foodgrains under PDS to ensure food security of APL and BPL beneficiaries as per National Common Minimum Programme.

SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA (MAVELIKARA): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an urgent matter of public importance.

The prices of essential commodities are on the rise particularly all the foodgrains across the country. The price of rice and wheat has been on the rise and there is even scarcity of foodgrains in the market. The segregation of beneficiaries under the Public Distribution System as APL beneficiaries and BPL beneficiaries has, in effect, kept a larger number of deserving sections out of the benefits of the Public Distribution System. The efforts of the Government since the introduction of the policy of economic liberalisation have been to undermine the importance of the Public Distribution System. The UPA Government assured in the Common Minimum Programme to strengthen the Public Distribution System and to move towards universalizing it. But that promise, even after four years in office, has not been fulfilled.

The meager increase in the food subsidy allocation in the present Budget too is inadequate to ensure food security for more than 70 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. The needs of food deficit States like Kerala cannot be met with this. The Centre has reduced the allotment of rice to Kerala from 1,13,420 metric tonnes to 21,334 metric tonnes which results in a shortage of 82 per cent for monthly distribution. This has severely affected the foodgrains availability and pushed the prices of foodgrains in the open market. Therefore, the Government should take urgent steps to universalize the Public Distribution System in order to ensure the food security of the vast majority of our population.