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Title: Shri H.D.Devegowda called the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the problems being faced by farmers in Chickmangalur District due to Damage of Arecanut crop, affected by Yellow Leaf Disease and steps taken by the Government in this regard.

MADAM SPEAKER: The House shall now take up Item 35, Calling Attention. Shri H. D. Devegowda.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA (HASSAN): Madam, I call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The situation arising out of problems being faced by farmers in Chickmagalur District due to damage of Arecanut crop, affected by Yellow Lead Disease and steps taken by the Government in this regard."

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI ARUN YADAV): Madam, I share the concern of hon. Member on problems faced by the farmers of Karnataka due to damage of arecanut crop affected by Yellow Leaf Disease (YLD).

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr. Devegowda, have you received the statement of the Minister?

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA (HASSAN): Yes, I have received it.

MADAM SPEAKER: You can lay the statement on the Table of the House.

SHRI ARUN YADAV : Madam, I lay the statement on the Table of the House.

* Karnataka is the largest arecanut producing State in India with an annual production of 231,700 tonnes from an area of 174,400 ha. Shimoga, Dakshin Kannada, Tumkur, Davanagare, Chickmagalur, Uttara Kannada, Chitra Durga, Udupi are the main districts producing arecanut. These eight districts cover about 94 per cent of production of arecanut.

Yellow Leaf Disease (YLD)

The Yellow Leaf disease in arecanut is caused by Phytoplasma (virus-like) organism and is vectored by infected plant hoppers (*Proutista moesta*) in areca plantations. This Phytoplasma is known to infect many palms. Globally, there is no cure to the diseased palms. However, the recommendation from long time research suggested for a clean-cultivation of areca plantations as well as by keeping affected palms in a healthy condition by adopting recommended cultural practices including improved drainage conditions in the arecanut garden and plant protection practices. The older palms are to be cut and replanted with healthy seedlings. The wood can be productively utilized for various purposes.

The intensity of the disease in some of the areca gardens in Sringeri and Koppa taluks ranges from 25 per cent to 100 per cent resulting in sharp decline in yield levels. It is estimated that the yield levels declined to the extent of 75 per cent in some of the gardens over a period of time. The present status of spread of YLD is nearly 33 per cent of the total area in the Hill Zone.

In the light of various representations received from arecanut growers of Western Ghats of Chikmagalur and Shimoga districts of Karnataka, the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Govt, of India constituted a Central Team under the chairmanship of Dr. Gorakh Singh, Horticulture Commissioner, to go into the details of the problems faced by the arecanut growers of these districts. The Central team visited the Chikmagalur and Shimoga districts of Karnataka from 17th to 19th November, 2009 to study the problems of arecanut growers and made following major recommendations:

- (i) Expansion of area under arecanut cultivation should be discouraged. Even in existing gardens, whenever the need for new planting arises, the possibility of planting other more remunerative crops should be considered.
- (ii) Since the income from arecanut has fallen, the cultivators should be encouraged to take cultivation of other crops suitable for the area like banana, coffee, cocoa, pepper, cardamom, tuber crops, fruit crops, etc., in their gardens to supplement their income.

- (iii) Various alternative uses and medicinal values of arecanut have been reported. Therefore, viable technologies are to be developed for exploiting it economically. Studies for the uses of arecanut in pharmaceutical, industrial and cosmetic sectors are to be intensified. Available alternative uses of arecanut for medicinal and industrial purposes have to be promoted in a wide manner to increase the domestic consumption of the produce, through institutional funding.
- (iv) To increase income from unit area of land in the existing arecanut plantations, crop diversification with inter and mixed cropping is to be encouraged. Hence, the following programmes need to be implemented under National Horticulture Mission (NHM):
- â€¢ Rehabilitation of YLD affected arecanut gardens under rejuvenation component by cutting and removing severely diseased palms and replanting, management of disease affected arecanut palms, awareness among farmers.
 - â€¢ Area expansion programme with alternative crops suitable for the area.
5. Promotion of alternative uses of arecanut through transfer of technology (ToT) programme,
 6. ICAR should speed up research activities and suggest a scientific approach for the effective control of YLD of arecanut.
 7. Keeping in view the conditions of arecanut growers in the Chickmagalur and Shimoga districts having land holding less than 4 ha, the loan waiver of areca growers and providing fresh loan may be considered.
 8. Market intervention scheme should be implemented in the traditional belt of Malnad and Coastal regions only.

Follow up Action on the Recommendations

Based on the recommendations submitted by The Central Team, Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Government of India has initiated the implementation of the following plan of action:

1. The recommendations were forwarded to the concerned Departments of Government of India viz. Department of Financial Services in respect of loan waiver of arecanut growers and providing fresh loans; Department of Health and Family Welfare regarding alternative usage of arecanut for medicinal purpose.
2. ICAR to continue its research activities including developing kits for early detection and certification of disease free planting seedlings.
3. Central Plantation Crop Research Institute (ICAR) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras to develop more effective crop management approaches and demonstrate these to Arecanut growers in the affected areas.
4. State Government of Karnataka has been advised to include schemes aimed at area expansion of alternative crops, rejuvenation/replacement of senile Arecanut plants in the Annual Action Plan under NHM in a phased manner.

The above steps will keep in check the YLD in arecanut to some extent as there is no complete cure for this disease.

Other ongoing Government Interventions

1. Government of Karnataka during 2008-09 has sanctioned Rs. 494.38 lakh for a period of 4 years to establish Arecanut Research Station at Sringeri, Chickmagalur district exclusively for conducting research on Yellow Leaf Disease. An amount of Rs.2.60 crores has been released to Horticulture University, Bagalkot and research activities has been initiated and soil and plant specimen samples has been corrected from low, medium and highly affected arecanut gardens.
2. There are no schemes under State sector or Central sector for area expansion of arecanut. However, necessary nutrients and plant protection inputs are provided through Integrated Nutrition Management (INM) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) component of National Horticulture Mission (NHM) at 50 per cent subsidy up to a maximum of Rs. 1,000/- per ha. During 2009-10 an amount of Rs. 20 lakhs and Rs. 111 lakhs has been utilized under INM and IPM respectively.
3. Plant Protection chemicals are being distributed for the management of pest and disease of horticulture crops including arecanut under State sector scheme 'Integrated Management of Pest and Diseases of Horticultural Crops.
4. In the year, 2007-08, the areca crop was severely affected by fruit-rot disease (Koleroga). To manage this disease, a

special package wherein assistance at 50% of the cost upto a maximum of Rs. 1500 per hectare was provided to the beneficiary to take up two sprays of 1 per cent Bordeaux mixture. The programme was taken up in Dakshina Kanada, Udupi, Hassan, Chickmagalur, Shimoga, Uttar Kannada and Kodagu districts and an amount of Rs. 668.53 lakhs was utilized.

5. Government of Karnataka has implemented the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for Arecanut (Chali variety) during 2009-10. As per the scheme, the support price for "Chali" variety of arecanut is fixed at Rs. 6,900/- per quintal by Government of India for which Rs. 600/- was added as incentive by Government of Karnataka. Chali (White variety) arecanut is being procured at Rs. 7500 per quintal and 1,028 quintal has been procured till 11.11.09.

6. During 2008-09, Rs. 1.00 crore was provided for "Arecanut Research and Development Foundation", Mangalore for conducting research on arecanut products like areca wine, ayurvedic medicine and tannins used for industrial purpose.

7. A delegation from Karnataka, led by Shri B. S. Yeddyurappa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka and Shri M. Veerappa Moily, Union Minister of Law & Justice, comprising State Ministers, Members of Parliament, Legislators and Officers from the State Government met Hon'ble Union Agriculture Minister on 21st March 2011 at New Delhi to discuss problems faced by the Arecanut growers due to decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court relating to ban on the use of plastic sachets for packaging Arecanut and tobacco products, and the prevalence of YLD in Arecanut. State Government has been advised to submit a suitable proposal to procure Arecanut under Market Intervention Scheme.*

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA (HASSAN): I have gone through the statement of the hon. Minister for Agriculture both on Yellow Disease as well as the steps taken by the Government of India on the basis of the recommendations made by the Central team headed by Dr. Gorakh Singh.

The Report was given in 2009. Unfortunately, we are discussing this matter in 2011. What steps have been taken on the recommendations made by the Expert Committee sent by the Union Government in 2009? Has any of the recommendations made in the Report been accepted and implemented? Please let me know about it.

SHRI ARUN YADAV : Madam Speaker, a Central team had visited Chikmagalur and Shimoga districts of Karnataka between 17 and 19 November 2009. They studied the problems of the farmers and growers, and a few recommendations have been made by the team that visited the affected areas. The first recommendation was expansion of area under arecanut cultivation to be discouraged. Secondly, the farmers instead of going for arecanut cultivation should go in for other crops suitable for the area like banana, coffee, cocoa, pepper, cardamom, etc. ...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदया: अखबार को समेट कर बगल में रख दीजिए।

...(व्यवधान)

SHRI ARUN YADAV : Thirdly, the available alternative uses of areca nut for medicine and industrial purposes should also be promoted. Fourthly, to increase the income of the farmers the team has said that there should be crop diversification, there should be inter-cropping in the gardens of areca nut to encourage the farmers to have more incomes from the existing farms. Besides promotion of alternative uses of areca nut through transfer of technology programme, the ICAR is already doing research on this issue. Fourthly, keeping in view the condition of areca nut growers in Chikmagalur and other Districts having the landholdings of less than four hectares, a loan waiver scheme for areca nut growers to provide fresh loans has been considered.

A market intervention scheme has been already gone through by the Karnataka Government which has already been implemented. The State Government is already looking into it.

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA : Has any recommendation made by the Gorakhnath Committee been implemented so far? Hon. Minister has said that for landholdings of four hectares and below, crop loan has to be waived off. Have they taken any decision for the last three years on that?

They have imposed a ban on use of plastic sachets for packing areca nut. For all other purposes, even for packaging of water and milk, sachets are used but it is banned for packaging of areca nut. The adverse effect of that is that today there is no buyer in the market. Nobody is coming forward to buy the product. The farmers' condition is so bad. As against Rs.15,000 per tonne once, today nobody is ready to purchase it at even Rs.4,000 or Rs.3,000 a tonne. Please let me know if what you say about inter-cropping and others have been implemented or not. Only an amount of Rs.11 lakh has been spent last year. What exactly do you want to do for the farmers in 12 Districts of Karnataka? I do not know what is going on in

the other States. There are seven to eight States growing areca nut and the total production is more than two lakh tonnes. I do not want to go into further details. I have got all reports. Please let me know.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please conclude. This is becoming twice, which is not really permitted.

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA : Please do not pay lip sympathy. If you want to do something concrete, say it. Otherwise, say no and let the farmers commit suicide.

SHRI ARUN YADAV: Madam, the recommendation of the Committee has already been sent to the Finance Ministry and the Finance Ministry is looking into the matter.

SHRI D.V. SADANANDA GOWDA (UDUPI-CHIKMAGALUR): Madam, I would like to associate myself with the Calling Attention of Shri Deve Gowda on the problems being faced by areca nut growers in the country.

SHRI D.B. CHANDRE GOWDA (BANGALORE NORTH): Madam, I would like to associate myself with the Calling Attention of Shri Deve Gowda on the problems being faced by areca nut growers in the country.

MADAM SPEAKER: All right.
