

>

Title: Need to include farming under MGNREGS with a view to protect the agricultural sector in the country.

SHRI S.S. RAMASUBBU (TIRUNELVELI): Madam, in our country, more than 70 per cent of our total workforce used to depend on Agriculture. Agriculture is an important industry in our country. They produce food materials for our nation and also foreign exchange is earned by this industry. However, in the last few years, our food production was greatly reduced and is not in proportion to population explosion and export of agricultural commodities reduced. We were forced to import wheat, sugar, pulses and onion, etc. which were produced plenty in our country earlier.

This has greatly affected the common man and this pushes the prices of vegetables, fruits and all other food materials. There is much imbalance in the demand and supply position and inflation rate has reached the double digit level. The farmers are not getting adequate support price for their produce and the middlemen are profiteering.

With the launching of the MNREGS, we have provided livelihood to millions of our workforce, the farm labourers also slowly switched over to it. Now, our Government has handsomely hiked the wages under the Scheme. For example, in Tamil Nadu, the labourers are getting about Rs.119 under our MNREGS. The small farmers are not in a position to afford that much amount to the labourers and they are not able to retain the labourers. So, the labour force in the agricultural field is reduced tremendously. That is why, the small and marginal farmers are finding it difficult to get the labourers. To arrest this trend, our Government may consider deputing the MNREGS labourers to farming. For them, an amount of Rs.50 may be paid as the small farmers' contribution over and above the amount fixed by MNREGS. The small farmers and the medium farmers, who are owning land below five acres, can provide Rs.50 for these labourers and the residual amount paid by MNREGS. Now, under the MNREGS, we are giving Rs.119. With the amount of Rs. 50, the total will be Rs. 169. So, we can provide this amount to the agricultural labourers. If we provide this to the labourers, then, the labour force will come forward to work in the field. This is a support for the small farmers. At the same time, the farmers will also be getting more remuneration by increased production. So, they can produce more agricultural produce because our Government needs, our people need more food materials, cereals, vegetables, fruits. So, all these things can be produced more.

The small farmers, who are owning land below five acres, can get more remuneration by increased production and they can produce more. So, it is a three-dimensional progress for our country. It is a very important point that our agricultural labourers will be getting Rs.169. They will be encouraged to work in the agricultural field. They will come forward to produce more food materials. At the same time, the agricultural labourers will also be benefitted. The farmers will get the benefit of the work force. More food materials can be produced and prices will also come down.

Hence, I would request our Government to consider this. It is a very important point. Our Government can introduce this new concept in the MNREGS. This labour force can be diverted to agriculture. By this way, we can produce more. Thank you.