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Title: Regarding miserable conditions of the paddy farmers in West Bengal.

SK. SAIDUL HAQUE (BARDHMAN-DURGAPUR): Hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise here to highlight the miserable condition of the paddy farmers of West Bengal, particularly the farmers of my constituency, Bardhaman-Durgapur. The price of paddy has fallen so much that the small and marginal farmers, the lower/ middle category farmers are making distress sale of their produce. What happens in our State is that the Food Corporation of India procures rice from the rice-millers, and the FCI does not procure rice directly from the farmers and as a result, the farmers have to sell their paddy to rice-millers.

But rice mills are not purchasing the paddy from farmers at the Government stipulated price on the plea that FCI is not procuring rice from them which is fixed as levy. Rather, FCI is bringing rice from other States which is even needed for Mid Day Meal Programme and for additional quota of ration. In fact, FCI is far behind the targeted procurement. The Central Government fixed target for FCI this year of 3 lakh metric tonne to be procured from within the State by September, 2011. But up to July, FCI procured only 54 thousand metric tonnes from the mills as a result, mills are not purchasing paddy from the farmers, when they are purchasing they are purchasing when the prices are low, causing much distress to the farmers. In West Bengal in the regime of Left Front Government, Self Help Groups were encouraged to purchase paddy directly from the farmers and that the Government and the FCI would procure rice from the self-help groups for Mid Day Meal Programmes and for distribution through ration shops to the BPL. But FCI is also not procuring from SHGs, as a result of which SHGs are not purchasing from farmers.

Hence, I urge upon the Government to direct the FCI so that it makes direct purchase from the farmers at the Government fixed Minimum Support Price through its Direct Purchase Agents in order to save the farmers from distress sale of their products.