

Year	Rupees in crores
1993-94	9518
1994-95	7774
1995-96	7496
1996-97	8365
1997-98	7263

(c) and (d) The investment in this sector is expected to increase significantly in the next years but the exact amount cannot be quantified.

(e) The Ministry in its promotional role in boosting investment in processed food sector provides policy support in creating a favourable environment for setting up of food processing units, and financial assistance through its Plan Schemes for establishment of infrastructural facilities, creation of processing capacities, Total Quality Management including ISQ-9000 and other quality control measures, Research and Development, Human Resource Development and Marketing Support.

(f) The largest foreign investments approved for the processed food sector are from U.S.A., Italy, Thailand, Canada and France.

Irrigation Projects in Orissa

5180. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government of Orissa has submitted any proposal to the Union Government for the execution of Bhajanagar, Sorada and Ghodahado irrigation projects in Southern Orissa;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the funds proposed to be allocated by the Union Government for these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Decline in Production of Processed Fruits and Vegetables

5181. SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is substantial decline in production of processed fruits and vegetables in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons for the decrease in production; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to step up the production of processed fruits and vegetables in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) While there has been an increase in production of processed fruits and vegetables every year, from 3.60 lakh tonnes in 1991 to 9.60 lakh tonnes in 1996, there has been a decline in their production in the year 1997, to 9.10 lakh tonnes.

(b) Some of the factors that are likely to affect the status of production are availability and prices of raw materials, market demand and overall economic viability of products.

(e) In order to encourage processing of fruits and vegetables, Ministry of Food Processing Industries provides, under its Plan Schemes, financial assistance in the form of soft loan and grant, for the creation of infrastructural facilities, cold storages, food parks, setting up/expansion/modernisation of food processing industries, research and development projects etc.

Liberal Trade Terms with Nepal

5182. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Nepal has asked India for liberal trade transit terms along a new road across its Southern neighbour to Bangladesh;

(b) whether the former Prime Minister had agreed last year to let land locked Nepal use the 71 kilometres stretch of its territory as a new transit route to reach ports in Bangladesh;

(c) to what extent India has agreed to Nepal's request for liberal trade terms; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Indian Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. During Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral's visit to Nepal in June 1997 the long standing Nepalese request for an additional transit route to Bangladesh via Phulbari was accepted. Operating modalities for the transit on the Kakarbhita-Phulbari-Banglabund route were accordingly worked out, and the route was operationalised from September 1, 1997.

(c) and (d) During a meeting between the Commerce Secretaries of the two countries held in New Delhi in March 1998, several relaxations of the operating modalities, requested by the Nepalese Government, were agreed to, to the satisfaction of both sides.

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5183. SHRI NRIPEN GOSWAMI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :