

some representatives of the union started a hunger strike. The hunger strike was called off on the intervention of the officers of the Control Industrial Relations Machinery. The negotiations on the demands are in progress.

Benefits available to Small Farmers for Agriculture Development Plans

*109. SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE (KRISHI MANTRI) be pleased to state :

(a) the latest study, if any, made of the appropriation by a small minority of rich farmers of the lion's share of total agricultural production ;

(b) the position in respect of the alleged near-monopoly of such rich farmers in respect of the allocations to them of irrigation, credit, fertilisers, seeds, implements and other facilities ;

(c) the extent to which benefits of the new technology are available, if at all, to the small farmers ; and

(d) Government's present thinking and performance projects in this matter ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (KRISHI MANTRALAYA MEN UP MANTRI) (SHRI JAGANNATH PAHADIA) : (a)

(d). The two main objectives of the Fourth Plan in the agricultural sector are to increase agricultural production by about 50% per annum and to enable the maximum participation of the rural community particularly the weaker sections in development and share its benefits. It has been accepted that in the uneven pattern of distribution of land-holdings, the new agricultural technology making it available the resources and tools of development has tended to sharpen the disparity between the more privileged and the less privileged.

A number of studies conducted at the instance of the Planning Commission show that the small farmers were not less progressive than the larger in their willingness

to adopt modern inputs and agricultural practices. They were, however, handicapped by such factors as fragmentation of holdings, insecurity of tenure, inadequate and untimely supply of inputs and water, lack of credit facilities and unsatisfactory arrangements for marketing and storage. The All India Rural Credit Review Committee has also referred to the fact that the small farmers have not benefited in proportion either to the numbers or their needs through the various programmes of rural development and that this is particularly true regarding availability of institutional credit for agriculture. They had, therefore, recommended, apart from the general re-orientation of loaning policies and procedures, the setting up of special agencies as a pilot experiment to undertake specific measures for helping potentially viable small farmers to earn the surplus out of their farm business and activities.

This recommendation has been accepted by the Government and a Central Sector project for setting up 46 Small Farmers Development Agencies in selected districts to benefit about 50,000 small farmers in each is being implemented. These Agencies will identify the programmes of small farmers in their areas, prepare appropriate programmes and ensure availability of inputs, service and credit, through the existing institutions as far as possible. A grant of Rs. 1.5 crores approximately will be provided for each such Agency by the Government of India during the Fourth Plan.

In addition, another project for the large class of sub-marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and landless labourers, a pilot project for provision of supplementary occupations and other employment opportunities has also been drawn up to be implemented in 41 selected areas all over the country. Each such project is expected to cover about 20,000 among this category. A grant of Rs. 1 crore roughly has been made available for each project in the IV Plan. So far 45 projects in SFDA and 34 projects in MFAL have been approved by the Government of India. The experience in these projects is expected to yield results for wider application for the development of the less-privileged section in the rural community.