

(b) There were 5277 joint farming co-operative societies in the country on 30th June, 1969. The total area under cultivation by these societies was 1.79 lakh hectares and the total value of produce raised by these cooperatives during 1968-69 was Rs. 6.59 crores.

(c) The total membership of the joint farming societies as on 30th June, 1969 was 1.19 lakhs; of these, 0.88 lakh were working members including 0.54 lakh members who were employed full-time in the field operations.

Non-Lifting of Wheat by Food Corporation of India from Mandis in Uttar Pradesh

*868. SHRI RAM SEWAK CHOWDHURY : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there were heavy arrivals of wheat stocks in the Mandis of Uttar Pradesh in the month of May, 1971 and that there was no off-take of the commodity by the Regional Manager, Food Corporation of India, Lucknow;

(b) if so, whether the farmers of Uttar Pradesh could not get the benefit of Price Support Scheme sponsored by Government of India; and

(c) the action taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE) : (a) to (c). It is a fact that there were heavy and unprecedented arrivals of wheat in the mandis of Uttar Pradesh in May, 1971. The massive arrivals did initially upset the arrangements that were made for procurement and led to difficulties like congestion in the mandis, shortage of gunnies, etc. The problems were reviewed at the highest level and immediate steps were taken to remedy the situation.

2. The administrative machinery of the corporation in Uttar Pradesh was suitably strengthened by posting additional staff. Arrangements were made for rushing gunnies and availability of funds. To supplement rail movement from Western Uttar Pradesh, arrangements were also made for long distance movement by road from procurement areas to the depots to relieve congestion in the markets. Closer coordination was established with the agencies of the State Government. Popular committees were established under the chairmanship of Collector to coordinate the procurement operations. To relieve the distress of the farmer due to damage caused to wheat by untimely and unseasonal rains, specifications were promptly and appropriately relaxed. Purchases of rain affected wheat were also immediately commenced. Consequently the Corporation was able to purchase nearly 3,81,000 tonnes of wheat during May, 1971 against 1,14,000 tonnes for the corresponding period during last year. During the month of June, the procurement operations are still continuing and already about 8 lakh tonnes of food-grains have been procured against the original target of 6,50,000 tonnes set by the Agricultural Prices Commission. The price support procurement operations by the F. C. I. assisted by the cooperatives has been, by and large, successful in protecting the interests of the farmers.

Increase in price of Steel

*869. SHRI P. GANGA REDDY : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Hindustan Steel Ltd., has requested Government to increase the prices of Steel;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) No, Sir.