

LOK SABHA

Thursday, November 3, 1988/ Kartika 12,
1910 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

(MR. SPEAKER in the Chair)

(ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS)

[English]

Review of Comprehensive Crop
Insurance Scheme

*21. SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL:
SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be
pleased to state:

(a) whether the review of Comprehensive crop Insurance Scheme undertaken by Government to reduce losses has been completed;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to reduce the financial burden of Government in the field of crop insurance?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL): (a) to (c). A Group was constituted by Government to conduct an indepth study and critical review of the functioning of the Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (CCIS). The recommendations of the Group have been considered and modification of the Scheme from Rabi 1988-89 onwards is presently under examination of the Government.

SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not an encouraging reply. Govern-

ment has been incurring losses ever since the Crop Insurance Scheme has been implemented. In 1985 there was a loss of Rs.83 crores and in 1987 of Rs. 290 crores. We want to give protection to the agricultural economy, whether it is by means of fertilizers, or by giving subsidy through energy, or else by allowing support price to the farmers. But in the event of natural calamities, the question arises as to how to give protection to the farmers. In that event, insurance alone can chiefly provide a solution.

It has come to notice that instead of promoting the insurance scheme, there has been slackness in it. I want to know whether the reason behind this slackness is that the govt. are incurring constant losses on this account? Are you going to increase the amount of premium and include sugarcane, banana and other cash crops in it so that your premium collections may increase and the losses may be reduced? In this way all the crops will be covered under the scheme. What steps are you going to take in order to reduce the extent of loss, for the proper implementation of the scheme?

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, he has asked a very valid question. This is right that many a times farmer's crop gets destroyed due to hail storm, drought or floods. Keeping this in view, Government has introduced the crop Insurance scheme. But there is some lacuna in it due to which there have been many complaints during the last two years. The Government has collected an amounts of Rs. 56.84 crores as premium during the period 1985-86 to 1987-88. The Government has come to pay an amount of Rs. 550 crores as claims during these three years. Complaints have been received from many quarters, especially Maharashtra and Gujarat, that some people have filed wrong claims. Complaints have also been received to the effect that at many places, a loan of Rs. 150 crores was raised in a single day to get the

benefit of claim after covering the people under this scheme. Keeping in view all this the hon. Prime Minister has constituted a Committee, under the chairmanship of Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao with the hon. Finance Minister and myself as the members of committee to suggest the steps for the proper implementation and continuance of the scheme. Two or three meetings of this committee have been held and it has been decided that this scheme should be continued. Once a situation had arisen when we had been compelled to drop this scheme. But now this scheme is continuing and some changes have been effected in it. Earlier farmers were paid at the rate of 150 per cent of the loan amount raised by them. Suppose one had taken a loan amounting to Rs. 3000, he was paid Rs. 4,500. Now this has been reduced to 100 per cent whereby only the loan taken from the bank is covered. There has been no increase in the amount of premium and its limit has also been raised to Rs. 10,000. It is being seriously considered as to how to continue with it in the future and to cover all the farmers under it, irrespective of the fact that the farmers have taken loan or not. The amount of premium may be raised and anyone who wants to get his crops insured may do so. At present block is the unit and a farmer can get his claim in case there is 80 per cent loss in the entire block unit. Each block consists of 100-200 villages and all the villages are not hit at the same moment by floods and hailstorm. This happens only once in a while, and the patwari also maintains the land records of his area. Therefore the committee is considering to take this patwar circle as the unit and to cover all the farmers under the scheme. The present scheme will be applicable to Rabi crop too and any further decision taken in this regard will be announced in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Does a factory in the city get its claim only when all the factories of that city have been gutted in fire?

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Such is the present provision.

SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL: I have not got reply to my question as to whether sugarcane, banana and other cash crops are also going to be covered.

The main reason of the losses incurred during the last three years is also that a major part of India was struck by drought. Even this year, due to excessive rains, crops have been damaged in Punjab, Assam etc.

SHRI K.S. RAO: This has happened in Andhra Pradesh also.

SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL: In Andhra Pradesh also it is the same situation. The amount of claim given there during the last years is 60 per cent. Wherever the number of claims sanctioned there was more, the losses incurred also have been proportionately higher.

You are going to implement this scheme in the whole country for all the farmers, but my suggestion is, that it should be implemented at the earliest. The enthusiasm which marked the beginning of the scheme seems to be sliding down and the people are gathering the impression that this scheme was meant to mislead the people by the Central Government and that the Government is not serious about it. What steps are the Government going to take in order to remove this misconception of the people.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at present 3-4 cash crops -- i.e. sugarcane, cotton, tobacco etc. have not been covered under this scheme and it is being considered to include them. Premium etc. is also being considered very seriously and these will be kept in view while taking an decision in this regard.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN: When will you do it?

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: We will do so before the sowing of the next Kharif crop and will reach at some decision. The people should not gather any such impression before the next crop that the Government is against

the farmers and is not interested in doing anything for the farmers. This scheme has been initiated for the welfare of the farmers and there is no question of suspending it. A committee has been formed to improve it and we will tell you about it in the next session when it is improved.

[English]

SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there has always been a feeling that we have been doing a lot of things for the farmers but whenever occasion arises we always shirk our responsibility. There appears to be a contradiction between the Minister and the Ministerial source. I would like to know whether this Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme will be extended to all the farmers or only to the loanee farmers because there is always a lack of trust in the farming community. So, I would like to know whether this comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme will be extended to all the farmers or only to the loanee farmers.

[Translation]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have just submitted in the House that at present we cover only those farmers who take loan from the banks and not all the farmers. A committee has been set up recently and it is considering it seriously as to how all the farmers may be covered under the scheme. A decision about it will be taken before the next Kharif crop.

[English]

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO: Sir, you have aptly commented just a few seconds back whether all the factories will be left out for the matter of compensation. The main crux of the problem in this scheme is the definition of the defined area which till now is a block or a mandal or a taluk. You have also agreed that some time damage may not occur in all the villages but you have not made it clear that the Government has agreed to make a change in the present definition of defined area and take the revenue village or a small group of villages relating to that revenue

village as a unit to really benefit the farmer whose crop is very badly damaged. I would like to have a categorical answer for this from the Hon. Minister.

[Translation]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan have not accepted this scheme. I was myself the Chief Minister of Haryana at that time and had refused to accept tehsil or block unit as appropriate. Under this scheme a farmer will get his claim only when there is loss in the whole tehsil area. Following me all the three states had refused. Now I am in charge of that department. I can not say as to what extent can bureaucracy prove an impediment. As I had submitted earlier, that I think so and Shri Narasimha Rao as well as Shri S.B. Chavan should also be of the same view. But there are some hindrances, the solutions of which are under consideration. The hon. Prime Minister also wants that all the farmers should be covered under the scheme and no matter whether we charge extra premium, the farmer should get compensation for the crop which gets damaged. For this purpose, Patwar circle should be taken as a unit because it is patwari who maintains all the land records.

[Translation] -

If the villages are small, then one 'Patwari' can look after two or three villages. Then the people will not have to face problems. All the farmers should be covered, whether they take loan or not, premium should be taken from them. This matter is being considered in depth. I total agree with you that something should be done for the farmers. We will try to do something to the extent possible.

MR. SPEAKER: I agree to it also that I am unable to understand what you are saying.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: What can be more clear than it?

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: The hon. Minister can shift all the responsibility on bureaucracy.

[English]

But the bureaucracy has to work under him. He does not work under the bureau-^hcracy.

SHRI K.S. RAO: I have admiration for the hon. Minister for his sympathy and support towards the kisans. The entire farming community of the country has felt extremely happy when the crop insurance scheme was introduced. The farming community is by and large known to us as peace-loving and it is still maintaining our traditions and values. But in the recent past, we observed that they are losing their patience and coming to the conclusion that only by violent methods or by organizing associations or strikes, can they get their genuine demands served. They come to this conclusion when they see that several of the other sections which are organised are getting their privileges sanctioned one after another by various Governments. I only request the hon. Minister to come out with that scheme which will help the farming community before they lose patience and come to the streets and resort to violence.

[Translation]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, details have already been given. I don't want to waste precious time of the House by repeating it. For the welfare of the farmers, a committee has been set up by the hon. Prime Minister and that committee is considering seriously as to how best farmers could be helped. As owners of factories and vehicles are given compensation on damage if insured, farmers should also be given compensation for their crops destroyed by floods, drought or diseases. Factories and cars are insured. So the farmer's crops should also be insured. The committee will take a decision with regard to it very soon.

[English]

Development of High Yielding Variety Rice by IARI

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*22. SHRI VAKKOM PURU-
SHOTHAMAN:

SHRI MOHANBHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether scientists of Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) have developed a variety of paddy that has the potential of being harvested within sixty days;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any experiment has been conducted to grow this quality of paddy, if so, the details thereof;

(d) the areas identified for growing this variety of paddy; and

(e) the steps taken to popularise its cultivation and to release the seeds to farmers in sufficient quantity?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL): (a) and (b). No rice variety maturing within 60 days has been released so far by Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) However, research work is in progress to develop short duration varieties of paddy which are currently under evaluation.

(c) to (e). Questions do not arise.

[English]

SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN: Sir, my question is whether the scientists of Indian Agricultural Research Institute have developed a variety of paddy that has the potential of being harvested within sixty days. And the answer is that no rice variety maturing within sixty days has been 'released so far'. But the Scientists of IARI claim that they have developed such a variety which is the fastest growing paddy in the entire world and it has been published in the papers also. I honestly believe that we as Members of Parliament have a right to know whether this high claim of the scientists of IARI is true or not.