

Regarding problems of rubber cultivators

ADV. FRANCIS GEORGE (KOTTAYAM): Sir, the rubber farmers of our country, especially those from Kerala State, are facing a very serious crisis because as all of us are very well aware, Kerala accounts for 80 per cent of the production of rubber. Almost 5.5 lakh hectares in Kerala are used for cultivation of rubber.

Sir, 87 per cent of the production comes from small and medium farmers, and this is very vital for the agricultural GDP of Kerala. The problem is that the price has fallen drastically. In August 2024, the price had reached up to Rs. 245, and now it has come down to the range of Rs.170 to Rs. 174. This is a very serious issue. The crisis has been exacerbated by the surge in compound rubber imports from ASEAN countries, which benefit from lower import duties under trade agreements. Adding to the farmers' plight is the allegation of cartelization by major tyre manufacturers, who are accused of manipulating prices by stockpiling rubber and withholding purchases from the domestic market.

The Kerala Government had introduced a Rubber Production Incentive Scheme from 2015 onwards, and now Rs. 170 are insured per kg of rubber. This has been introduced for the benefit of farmers under the Direct Benefit Transfer scheme. As on 18/1/2023, Rs. 1,790 crore have been transferred to 4.46 lakh farmers.

But the demand is a fair price of Rs.254 per kg. of rubber.

HON. CHAIRPERSON : What is your demand?

ADV. FRANCIS GEORGE : Sir, I am coming to that. So, I urge upon the Central Government to address this crisis with urgency and consider the following measures. First of all, investigate the alleged tyre cartel and take strict action if found guilty of price manipulation. Impose higher import duties on compound rubber to protect domestic producers. Duty on compound rubber has to be raised to at least 70 per cent. Announce a special relief package for affected rubber farmers.

HON. CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Shri Rajkumar Roat.

ADV. FRANCIS GEORGE: Sir, just a minute. Establish a price stabilization mechanism through the Rubber Board. Support value addition and diversification of the rubber industry to enhance rubber farmers' income. Rubber should be brought under the Minimum Support Price mechanism.

HON. CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Shri Rajkumar Roat ji.

ADV. FRANCIS GEORGE : Also, include it in the restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme. Raise replanting subsidy to at least one lakh rupees per hectare.
? (*Interruptions*)

HON. CHAIRPERSON: Kindly conclude. You have taken more than three minutes.

ADV. FRANCIS GEORGE: Sir, let me complete. It is a very vital issue for us. Just give me one minute. Include rubber in the proposed ?Livelihood security box? ?
(*Interruptions*)

HON. CHAIRPERSON: You have already taken more than three minutes. Shri Rajkumar Roat.

? (*Interruptions*)

HON. CHAIRPERSON: He has already put his demands. Point has already been well taken. I think, you need not support him. Kindly take your seats.

? (*Interruptions*)