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Title : Need to declare Minimum Support Price for tomatoes for the benefit of farmers in Tamil Nadu.

DR. R. SENTHIL (DHARMAPURI): Hon'ble Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Union Agriculture Minister. There were unprecedented rains in Tamil Nadu. After four serious draught hit years in succession, Tamil Nadu got a highest rainfall in 63 years. While it caused havoc and devastation in some places, it also brought good news and gave relief to farmers in some districts, particularly, agriculturists from the Northern Districts in Tamil Nadu, who used to rely on wells for irrigation were enthused by a good rainfall. They took vegetable cultivation and this had resulted in abundant growth of Tomatoes. This excessive growth caused a glut in the market and a great fall in tomato prices. For instance, the price of tomato in this current week is 30 paise per kg. So is the fall that the growers could not get remunerative prices. This is not even adequate to meet the expenses involved in growing them, harvesting them and transporting them to the market. To avoid expenditure on harvesting and transporting, vegetable growers even preferred to leave the ripe tomatoes to perish in the fields without harvesting them. So, the loss is huge and there is a great wastage. Farmers are facing great hardships. They could not get respite after going through four successive draught hit years. Even after good rainfall, no good has come about to the farming community. Two days back, the agriculturists in

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\* English Translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil

Papparapatti took their produce to the highways and crushed tomatoes on the roads in protest against the indifference of the Government. That did not ensure either Minimum Support Price or a remunerative price. At this juncture, I would like to humbly request the Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture to ensure that the MNCs that procure tomatoes in a big way come to the rescue of the vegetable growers now. Such MNCs and middlemen are exploitative and selfish. They make use of this precarious situation to their advantage. Hence, as a minimum measure as in Karnataka, Minimum Support Price may be determined for tomatoes. This is my first prayer. Secondly, Union Government itself may arrange for procurement of tomatoes. Government may either set up cold storage facilities in exclusive warehouses or make use of private sector cold storage facilities to preserve the tomatoes grown abundantly this year. My third prayer is that a regulatory mechanism with a regulated marketing to save these vegetable growers from being exploited by the unregulated market forces may be set up.