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Title: Need to procure levy rice at market price of Paddy alongwith milling charges.

SHRI L. RAJAGOPAL (VIJAYAWADA): Mr. Chairman Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of the Government the plight of the paddy and cotton farmers. In the last eight years of the UPA Government, of course, there has been a substantial increase of MSP in respect of paddy and cotton. Earlier it was Rs.550 for paddy; it has gone up to Rs.1100. For cotton it was Rs.1800; now it has gone up to more than Rs.3300. Still they are not remunerative enough because the input costs have gone up, like fertilizers cost, pesticides cost and especially the labour component because of the MGNREGA scheme under which wages have gone up from Rs.50 to nearly Rs.150-200. Agriculture has become unviable for farmers, especially in the case of paddy and cotton if MPS is not increased.

In my area, Vijayawada, there are a lot of paddy and cotton growers. We have been requesting the Government to increase the MSP. We also met the Agricultural Prices Commission which has recommended an increase of Rs.160 for paddy in the last season. But unfortunately the Government considered to increase by only Rs.80; the balance increase of Rs.80 has been pending since then. We need to look at what is the remunerative price, what is the input cost for any produce that the farmers are producing. But, it is not happening. We are increasing the prices; but we are not taking into consideration the plight of the farmers or the input costs. We are not seeing whether they are making any money on this. For that reason, most of the MPs from Andhra Pradesh have been repeatedly requesting the Government time and again by collectively meeting the Minister concerned to increase the MSP for both paddy and cotton.

Last year the cotton price had touched Rs.6000 per quintal and the Indian industry was able to survive at Rs.6000 per quintal. Still this year the Government has fixed the MSP for cotton at Rs.3300. They should increase it to at least Rs.5000. Similarly, in respect of paddy, 75 per cent of what the millers procure is going as levy rice and the Government is fixing the price of MSP and is calculating the levy price on the MSP, plus milling charges, thereby they are converting the MSP, which is the Minimum Support Price, as a fixed price. Minimum Support Price means the minimum price that a farmer should get. Most of the times he should get more than the MSP. This is the least price a farmer should get. But, unfortunately in the case of paddy, they have made it the fixed price because 75 per cent of the rice from millers is going to the Government as levy and they are paying to the millers only the MSP plus the milling charges. They are not looking at the market price. If the Government can agree that they procure the rice at the market price, plus milling charges, definitely farmers will get remunerative price. Or else, at least they should be allowed to export both cotton and paddy. They restrict and regulate the marketing channels. As a result, the input cost goes up and the output costs are not increased. They are suffering a lot because of this.

I want the Government to consider all these aspects and ensure that for paddy at least Rs.1500 per quintal should be the MSP and for cotton Rs.5000 per quintal should be the MSP. Cotton MSP price increase should be determined by the Cotton Corporation of India. I want the Government should seriously consider this. Otherwise, the farmers are in distress. They are virtually helpless. Kindly help the farmers. I want the Government to take it up as an important issue and settle it before the Session ends.

MR. CHAIRMAN :

Dr. K.S. Rao,

Shri A. Sai Prathap and

Shri Anantha Venkatarami Reddy would like to associate themselves with the issue raised by Shri L. Rajagopal.