

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
(DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE)

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2439
TO BE ANSWERED ON 08th AUGUST, 2018

ILLEGAL IMPORT OF PEPPER

2439. SHRI K. K. RAGESH:

Will the Minister of **COMMERCE & INDUSTRY** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Central Government is aware of the reports about illegal import of pepper and other spices from some of the South East Asian countries to India; and
- (b) if so, whether Government is taking any concrete measure to address such illegal imports?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY)

(a) & (b): Several requests /representations have been received from State Governments, public representatives, growers associations etc regarding the illegal import of low quality pepper into India from Vietnam through Sri Lanka. Since most of the pepper producing countries are in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, the stakeholders have raised apprehensions of routing the pepper produced in ASEAN countries including Vietnam to India through Sri Lanka, by utilizing the provisions of India Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISLFTA) and Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). However, no such representation has been received regarding illegal import of other spices.

The various steps taken up by the Government to curb illegal import of pepper include, inter-alia, the following:

- (i) Vide DGFT Notification dated 6/12/2017, Union Government fixed Rs.500/- per kg as Minimum Import Price for Black Pepper.
- (ii) Subsequently, amendment was brought out in the Minimum Import Price (MIP) Notification by making import of pepper over & above Rs.500/- per kilogram free and import below Rs.500/ per kg. prohibited vide DGFT Notification dated 21/3/2018.
- (iii) To prevent import of cheap pepper from other countries through Sri-Lanka by taking advantage of the provisions of India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISLFTA) and Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), Sri Lankan Authorities have been requested to exercise extreme care and diligence in issuing the Certificates of Origin.
- (iv) Instruction has been issued to authorized officers of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and field formations of Customs to be vigilant at the point of entry in the ports in order to stop the possibility of entry of inferior quality pepper from other countries.