

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs

RAJYA SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. *91

TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.07.2023

SOLUTION FOR HIGH TOMATO PRICES

*91. SHRI P. WILSON:

Will the MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken cognisance of the high prices of tomato which have reached a staggering amount of ₹ 110-150 per kg in different parts of the country, if so, the availability of tomatoes, and the policy put in place to ensure quality of tomatoes while regulating the prices;
- (b) the steps taken by Government to reduce the price of essential crops such as tomato, onion, and cucumber;
- (c) whether Government has decided to import tomatoes to balance the demand and supply of commodity across the country; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof, if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL)

(a) to (d) : A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) To (d) OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*91 FOR 28.07.2023 REGARDING SOLUTION FOR HIGH TOMATO PRICES BY ONLINE COMPANIES BY SHRI P. WILSON.

(a) & (b) : The Department of Consumer Affairs monitors the prices of 22 essential food commodities, including tomato and onion, through 536 price reporting centres across the country. In order to check the current increase in prices of tomato and make it available to the consumers at affordable prices, the Government has started the procurement of tomatoes under Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) and is making it available at a highly subsidised rate to consumers. The National Cooperative Consumers Federation (NCCF) and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED) are continuously procuring tomato from mandis in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra and making it available at affordable prices in major consuming centres in Delhi-NCR, Bihar, Rajasthan, etc. after subsidizing the price to the consumers. The tomatoes have been disposed initially at retail price of Rs.90/kg which has been reduced to Rs.80/kg from 16.07.2023 and further reduced to Rs.70/kg from 20.07.2023. In respect of onion, the Government maintains onion buffer under the PSF in order to check the volatility in prices and make onions available to consumers at affordable prices. The buffer size has been increased year after year from 1.00 lakh metric ton (LMT) in 2020-21 to 2.50 LMT in 2022-23. The onion buffer target for 2023-24 has been enhanced further to 3.00 LMT. Onions from the buffer have been released in major consumption centres during the lean season from September to December in a calibrated and targeted manner to cool down prices.

The period from June to August is the lean months for tomato and when prices tend to rise. Besides, tomato is highly perishable commodity and not amenable to storage. The crop seasonality and vulnerability to damage together with excessive monsoon rains and logistics challenges make tomato highly vulnerable to price volatility.

The Department of Consumer Affairs has launched in 2022, a grand challenge for development of technologies for primary processing, storage and valorization of onions with the overall objective of ensuring availability of onion to consumers at affordable prices. The 606 ideas submitted by various categories of participants had been evaluated by team of experts and 11 ideas have reached prototype development stage. Prototype development is in progress on ideas pertaining improved storage, pre-harvesting treatment, primary processing and valorisation of onion. On a similar line, Tomato Grand Challenge has also been launched 30.06.2023, to invite ideas on comprehensive and focused area interventions in tomato value chain, from cropping and market insights for the farmers to improved packaging, transportation and storage. The Tomato Grand Challenge is open to students, research scholars, faculty members, industry individuals, Indian start-ups, professionals etc.

(c) & (d) : There is no proposal to import tomatoes as the current increase in prices is mainly due to crop seasonality and weather factors such as excessive rains in parts of the country and logistics disruptions in isolated areas. The estimated total production of tomato in 2022-23 is 206.21 LMT which is comparable with the previous year's production of 206.94 LMT.
