

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

LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. *277

TO BE ANSWERED ON 19.03.2025

SPIKE IN ESSENTIAL FOOD PRICES

*277. SHRI JOYANTA BASUMATARY:

Will the Minister of **CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken cognizance of the spike in essential food prices across the country;
- (b) if so, the details of the steps taken to curb the persistent inflationary pressures in the food sector and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the appropriate steps taken or likely to be taken to ensure the availability and affordability of such food items for the vulnerable sections of society;
- (d) whether the Government has taken any initiatives to improve post-harvest storage facilities and reduce losses to minimize price fluctuations and volatility in the food market; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*277 FOR 19.03.2025 REGARDING SPIKE IN ESSENTIAL FOOD PRICES.

(a) & (b) : Department of Consumer Affairs monitors the daily prices of 38 essential food commodities submitted by the 555 price monitoring centres that have been set up, with Central assistance, by the State Governments and UT Administrations across the country. The daily report of prices and indicative price trends are duly analysed for taking appropriate decisions such as release of stocks from the buffer, stock disclosure by stockholding entities, imposition of stock limits, changes in trade policy instruments like rationalisation of import duty, changes in import quota, restrictions on exports of the commodity etc. Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) reviews and deliberates, on regular basis, the situation of prices and price trends of essential agri-horticulture commodities and suggests measures to enhance availability through increased domestic production and through imports.

(c) : In order to ensure accessibility and availability of foodgrains for vulnerable section of the society, the Government decided to provide free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for a period of next five years with effect from 1st January, 2024, as per their entitlement (i.e. 35 kg of foodgrains per month per AAY household and 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month in case of Priority Household). To tackle the volatility in prices, government maintains buffer stocks of pulses and onion for market interventions through calibrated and targeted release to moderate the prices in the market. Part of the stock of pulses from the buffer is converted to dals for retail sale to the consumers at affordable prices under the Bharat Dal brand. Similarly, atta and rice are distributed to retail consumers under Bharat brand at subsidized prices. Onion from the buffer had been released during September to December, 2024 in a calibrated and targeted manner to moderate prices in high price consuming centres at wholesale markets and through retail outlets. Onions from the buffer were distributed among retail consumers at Rs.35 per kg through stationary retail outlets and mobile vans in major consumption centres.

These measures have helped in making essential food commodities available to the general consumers at affordable prices and also in stabilising the prices. The overall food inflation rate had declined to 3.75% in February, 2025 from 10.87% in October, 2024

(d) & (e) : Government takes various initiatives to improve post-harvest storage facilities and reduce losses to minimize price fluctuations and volatility in the food market. These are:

- (i) Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) implements Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to provide a medium and long term loan facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest market infrastructure including warehousing facility and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.
- (ii) DA&FW is implements the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) for holistic development of horticulture sector to increase the postharvest management infrastructure and reduce post-harvest losses in the country, under which financial assistance is provided for various horticulture activities including setting up of pack houses, cold storages, reefer transport, ripening chamber, primary processing etc.
- (iii) DA&FW implements Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI), a sub-scheme of Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM) under which assistance is provided for construction of warehouses in the rural areas in the States to enhance the storage capacity for agriculture produce.
- (iv) Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) implements Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) with the objective of reducing post-harvest losses of horticulture and non-horticulture produce and providing remunerative price to farmers for their produce.
- (v) The Ministry of Cooperation implements the “World’s Largest Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative Sector” for creation of various agri infrastructure at Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) level, including setting up decentralized godowns through convergence of various existing schemes. Under these schemes PACS can avail subsidies and interest subvention benefits for construction of godowns/storage facilities and setting up of other agri infrastructure. Further, NABARD is also extending financial support to PACS by refinancing them at highly subsidized rates of around 1 percent, after incorporating the benefits of 3% interest subvention under AIF scheme for projects up to Rs. 2 crore. Establishment of decentralized storage capacity at PACS level would reduce post-harvest losses by creating sufficient storage capacity in the country and strengthen food security of the country up to Panchayat/village level. It will also prevent distress sale of crops by farmers and enable them to realise better prices for their crops.
