

Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity. All of us know that the agriculture sector is the biggest contributor to the Indian economy yet each passing day sees our farmers in misery and plight. Sometimes, the farmer community thinks whether it is a blessing or a curse to be a farmer in India. Sir, every year, our country witnesses flood, super cyclone and drought putting the farmer community in great danger. Yet, when it comes to the benefit⁸⁰ of farmer, we are far away and far behind the target. Each passing day sees the agricultural land of our country diminishing. Farmers are caught between the weather god and the money lenders. They have been harassed by the money lenders. The Government does not support them in getting the minimum support price.

The F.C.I. does not buy their foodgrains. There is distress sale of foodgrains in different parts of the country. They do not get compensation for the losses¹⁶⁰ they suffer due to cyclone and flood. If I am correct, the Government agencies have said that the suicide rate of the farmers has dropped this year. Since the Agricultural Minister comes from a farming background and I also come from a farming background, I think he should be sympathetic and he should be honest on what he is going to deliver to the farmers.

The Union budget presented this year shows that there is a decline in the allocation²⁴⁰ to the agricultural sector. I would like to Minister to justify as to why there is a decline in the allocation why there is a cut in expenditure in the agricultural sector. Sir, for the compensation that the farmers want for damaged crop, they have to run around like anything. The total crop insurance is a big scam in our country. The farmers have to fight between the touts, the henchmen but only selected people get the compensation. After running³²⁰ from pillar to post when they are frustrated, they are pushed to the wall and they have nothing to do but to commit suicide. Sir, I take the example of Odisha which has a history of flood, drought and super cyclones. The last two super cyclones damaged the backbone of farmers who were not given compensation even after many months.

Now, I would like to place a critical point before the Union Government. Sir, March rains are highly complicated rains.⁴⁰⁰ The meteorological study of 2010 indicate that across the Asian region, including India, whenever there are rains, specially at the concluding phase of Rabi season and at the onset of Kharif season both the farming community and the agrarian sector have faced very serious challenge. In the last 15 years, we have not come across the March rains. This time, the month of March has begun with untimely rains and it is warning us to be alert about the fungal diseases.⁴⁸¹