

Task Force on drought

8.5 A Task Force on drought was set up under the Chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister with Finance Minister, Rural Development Minister, Food & Public Distribution Minister and Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission as members to continuously monitor the situation and issue policy directives from time to time to provide timely and adequate attention to the emerging demands of the States. In pursuance of the decisions of the Task Force, the Central Government took a number of steps in the form of advance release of funds from Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) under relaxed norms, release of foodgrains free of cost for relief works and employment, deferment/waiver of realization of principal/interest on agricultural loans and, free transportation of fodder and water (Box 8.1).

Box 8.1 : Drought relief measures

- Release of Rs 1227 crore of Central share of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for 2002-03 to the States of Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. This included advance release of 2nd instalment of Central share to 13 States.
- Rs 1018 crore released from NCCF for drought relief, including funds for cattle camps in Rajasthan.
- State Governments have been directed to utilize normal component of Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) for drought mitigation. For initiating drought relief works (for generation of rural employment), 27.74 lakh tonnes of food-grains was allocated under special component of SGRY, free of cost, to the affected States.
- Allocation of 30,000 MT of cattle grade feed, free of cost, to Rajasthan.
- Scheme of financial support to NGOs for cattle-care with an out-lay of Rs 25 crore.
- Free transportation of fodder and water by Rail to the affected States upto 30th June, 2003.
- Financing of 435 cattle camps for 1.62 lakh animals in Rajasthan with assistance of Rs11.66 crores.
- Additional assistance for Drinking Water Supply to Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh from the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP).
- Deferment /waiver of realization of principal and interest on agricultural loans.
- One Time Drought Relief Price ranging from Rs20/- per quintal for paddy, Rs15/- per quintal for bajra and sunflower, Rs10/- per quintal for soyabean and pulses etc.
- Extension of Agriculture Input Subsidy to farmers (other than small and marginal farmers), with land holding upto 2 hectares.