

UNFAO warning just a scare: Mr Devinder Sharma

19 November 2014 | News | By Rahul Koul Koul

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Q: What kind of effect will Ebola have on food security globally and how important is UNFAO's warning in this regard?

The global warning by FAO on food security is nothing more than a scare. There is no evidence that Ebola outbreak will impact food production globally. In fact, at a time when there is a supply glut globally and prices have crashed after a 10-year hike that has been witnessed, there is no threat from Ebola that even food importing countries need to be worried about.

Q: Would there be any direct impact on India in terms of food security due to Ebola?

No. There is no direct impact on India as far as its food security needs are concerned. Already, India is saddled with huge carryover stocks of wheat, rice and sugar. We do not import staple food and therefore there is no reason for any alarm.

Q: Whether India really can ignore food security threats as its imports from Europe, US and Africa might get affected due to global shortage?

As I said earlier, the threat on food security is limited to only three countries -- Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In any case, these countries were food importing and their imports might increase now. But for the rest of the world there is nothing to worry.

Such scares were also sounded a few decades back when HIV was expected to hit developing countries in Africa and Asia like a bomb. At that time, the scare came in handy for GM companies to promote GM crops saying that since the rural population is being affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) virus, there is shortage of farm workers and therefore the need to have GM crops which do not need the same kind of labour that is required for spraying pesticides. This was

proposed by Madison Initiative in collaboration with CGIAR and tried in Kenya.

Q: Are we prepared? How can we improve the condition of our food stocks in any such eventuality?

India's food stocks are in a comfortable position. There is no need to panic.