

## In Maharashtra, most beneficiaries of loan waiver from western region

In Maharashtra, 3.76 million farmers - most of them from the state's prosperous western region - have had loans of Rs.77.6 billion written off thanks to the waiver announced by the central government five months ago, an official statement said Saturday.

The highest number of beneficiaries - 1.52 million - are from the western Maharashtra region and have had loans of Rs.39.8 billion, or about 50 percent of the total package for the state, written off.

The region is considered the bastion of Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), a partner in the ruling Democratic Front government in the state and an ally of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the centre.

The agrarian-crises hit Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra, which recorded 4,422 farmers' suicides between January 2001 and June 2008, stood second in the list of beneficiaries, the statement said.

A little more than 1.25 million farmers in this region have had loans of Rs.18.5 billion, or about 25 percent of the total package, written off.

Next in the list is the backward Marathwada region where over 800,000 farmers have had loans of Rs.17.5 billion, or 23 percent of the package, written off.

At last place is the coastal Konkan region, where 160,000 farmers had loans of Rs.1.7 billion or two percent of the total package, written off, the statement said.

The beneficiaries include 2.70 million farmers with landholdings below five acres and another 1.58 million holding five acres and more of land.

The debt waiver and relief package of Rs.600 billion for farmers throughout the country was announced in the union budget for fiscal 2008-09 and was later scaled up to Rs.710 billion.

( © IANS / India eNews)