



Need for a Pesticide Management

Why in news?

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Union government is working with Pesticide management bill 2017 to replace archaic Insecticides Act, 1968.

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What are the impacts of unregulated pesticide usage in India?

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- Recently within a few weeks, about 50 farmers have died due to use of pesticides in Maharashtra and over 1,000 have suffered critical ailments.

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- The use of imported, untested pesticides and unregistered technical procedures could be a reason for the deaths.

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- Farmers continue to commit suicide in large numbers and one primary cause is the sale of misbranded (substandard, spurious, expired) pesticides which disappoints them during harvests.

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- Along with pesticide misuse the inordinate use of antibiotics in the poultry and dairy industry is a major reason for human diseases, monumental species loss and environmental damage.

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What are the flaws with existing regulations mechanisms?

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- The larger pesticide companies (brand owners and marketing agents) generally outsource production to smaller manufacturers.

- The quality degradation happens in the outsourcing stage and the smaller manufacturers can't be prosecuted because the Central law only stipulates prosecution of the manufacturer.
- When the licence to sell pesticides is issued, applicants declare a "responsible person" to be held accountable for violations.
- The person is usually a low-paid employee, who over time becomes unreachable, even serving the prosecution notice becomes difficult.
- Most pesticide samples simply don't fail the test, this is because of conniving officers who don't follow procedures and for a "sample failure" to be legally valid, samples have to fail consecutively.
- The cumbersome documentation procedure allows the second sample to expire before it's tested, rendering the process invalid which makes the crime intractable.

What measures need to be encompassed in new regulation?

- The declaration of responsible person, therefore, has to be among the top five financial beneficiaries of the firm and the fine should be computed as a percentage of the total sales in the state.
- Mandatory e-documentation (as per the IT Act, 2000) for agriculture departments will expedite the process and increase transparency.
- Currently, only a magistrate can order suspension of pesticide sales over an evident violation, these powers need to be delegated to a pesticide inspector.
- The Central Insecticide Board and Registration Authority should be restructured and many of its powers be transferred to the states.
- All agriculture-input packaging must mandatorily have a bar code giving product information such that the bar code will sync with the GST and the e-way bill.
- States should make retailers log all agriculture input sales onto state government servers, allowing for traceability from the factory floor to

farmer's field and for regulation enforcement.

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- Such digitisation at the ground-level will facilitate a farmer grievance redressal mechanism to make the system accountable.

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Source: Indian Express

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