



Toxic Farming

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Around ten farmers have reportedly died after spraying 'Profex Super' insecticide on Bt cotton plantations in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra.
- This has raised the demand for stronger regulation of insecticide sale and use in India.

\n

\n\n

What are the causes?

\n\n

\n

- **Guidance** - Cotton growers rely on high volumes of insecticides to prevent severe pest attacks.
- This is increasingly due to the pressure to protect the investments made.
- There is a lack of agricultural extension officers to advice farmers on the proper use of pesticides.
- Resultantly, they rely on the advice of unscrupulous agents and commercial outlets for pesticides use.
- Also, they do not take precautions such as wearing masks and covering themselves and checking the wind direction while spraying.
- **Regulation** - The system of regulation of insecticides in India is obsolete.
- A new Pesticides Management Bill introduced in 2008 was studied by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, but it is still pending.

- \n
- Evidently, a large quantum of pesticides sold today is fake and they enjoy a higher growth rate than genuine products.
- \n
- It is to be noted that agricultural products from India, including fruits and vegetables, have been subjected to import restrictions internationally for safety concerns.
- \n
- **Other causes** - The increasing intensity of pesticide use is suspected to be due to the loss of efficacy of some genetically modified cotton in warding off pests.
- \n
- Also, the Centre has failed to use its communication infrastructure, such as DD Kisan, Doordarshan dedicated to agriculture, etc to address distressed farmers, leading to their death.
- \n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

- \n
- Focus on pesticide regulation is as important as focus on growth in agricultural production and exports.
- \n

\n\n

- \n
- Clearly, there is a need for a **high-level inquiry** into the nature of pesticides used across the country.
- \n
- A forward-looking **farm policy** would minimise the use of toxic chemicals.
- \n
- More importantly, the regulatory system should be enhanced.
- \n
- It is imperative that a **Central Pesticides Board** be formed to advise on the proper use and disposal of pesticides.
- \n
- This will strengthen the oversight of registration, distribution and sale of toxic chemicals.
- \n
- The Insecticides Act of 1968 should be updated and a new law should come in its place.
- \n

- This can eliminate the shortfalls in the current rules that govern enforcement and introduce penalties where there are none.
\n
- Aligning the new pesticides regulatory framework with **food safety laws** and products used in health care will make it broad-based.
\n
- Encouraging **organic methods** of farming where they are efficacious could benefit both the farmer and the consumer.
\n

\n\n

Quick Fact

\n\n

Profex Super Insecticide

\n\n

- \n
- Profex Super is a combination of Profenofos and Cypermethrin.
\n
- Environmental changes have resulted in huge attacks of bollworm and whitefly on cotton.
\n
- Also, cotton crop is increasingly vulnerable to pests such as bollworm in the current weather.
\n
- When sprayed without covering the mouth and nose, it causes adverse skin reactions, burning sensation, dizziness, and headaches.
\n
- Experts however doubt it to be a cause for death as it is not very toxic generally and the tragic results could be due to faulty application.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative