Daily Mains Practice Answer 22-07-2026

Q. Discuss the importance of cotton in India's agricultural economy and export sector. Analyse the major challenges affecting its productivity and global competitiveness. (250 words, 15 marks)

Direction: Intro---------Importance + Challenges------Conclusion.

Introduction:

Describe briefly cotton's contribution to the economy (or) Cotton crop's geography (or) India is the only country cultivating all 4 recognised cotton species (or) mention it is white gold, commercial/cash crop, under the 5F vision of India, etc.

Main Body

Importance of cotton in agricultural economy & export sector

- Livelihood & Rural economy – Supports over 6 million cotton farmers & generates employment.
- Backbone of the Textile Industry – Supplies raw material, supports MSMEs, Farm to Fashion value chain.
- Export Competitiveness – India - major exporter of raw cotton, cotton yarn, fabrics, and garments, contributing significantly to foreign exchange earnings.
- Value Addition – Generates valuable by-products like edible oil, cattle feed, etc., contributing to food, feed, and rural energy needs.
- Cotton fibres unsuitable for spinning are processed into absorbent or surgical cotton
- Regional Development – Promotes rural industrialisation through ginning, pressing, spinning, and weaving industries.

Major challenges affecting productivity

- Low Yield – Average yield remains lower than global competitors like Brazil, China, Australia, etc.
- Pest Issues – Pink bollworm & whitefly infestation along with declining effectiveness of Bt. Cotton.
- Seed Challenge – Limited availability of high-yielding, pest-resistant seed varieties.
- Climate Change – Irregular monsoons, droughts, heat stress, and unseasonal rainfall reduce productivity. (over 65% of cotton area is rain-fed)
- Small Landholdings – Small farm sizes limit mechanisation and adoption of modern technologies.
- High Input Costs – Rising costs of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and labour reduce

farmers' profitability.

Challenges to Global Competitiveness

- Higher contamination due to manual harvesting affects fibre quality.
- Inadequate mechanisation increases production costs.
- Competition from Brazil, USA, Australia, and synthetic fibres.
- Price volatility and fluctuations in global demand affect export earnings.
- Concerns regarding excessive water use and chemical-intensive cultivation.
- Quality inconsistency and weak traceability reduce export competitiveness.

Conclusion:

Conclude on a positive note (or) suggest some measures/initiatives to support livelihoods, industry, economic growth & Atmanirbhar Bharat vision in the years ahead.