

## **Pesticide Poisoning in Maharashtra**

### **Why in news?**

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- Recently, around 20 people have died due to pesticide related infections in Vidarba.

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### **What is the crux?**

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- Those spraying pesticides in cotton fields started taking ill recently.
- 20 died and over 800 people are now in hospital - with symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, stomach ache, and vision loss.
- The Maharashtra government has ordered a probe & announced compensation for the families of the diseased.
- The damage seems to have been caused by excessive inhalation of organo-phosphate and organo-chloride groups of insecticides.
- It first enters the fat below the skin, and then the blood.
- Bombay High Court issued notices on a PIL seeking criminal action against the officials concerned and pesticide firms.
- Agriculture Department has meanwhile initiated a 'Quality Control' probe to check the pesticides.

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### **What aggravated the current crisis?**

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- As height of the crop this year was around 5 feet or more, it necessitated spraying at head level.
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  - The winds & high temperatures that made pesticides stick on the skin of sprayers were also critical factors for the episode.
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  - Also, the spacing reduction between rows & increased mono-cropping of cotton aggravated the situation.
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  - The agri-department also admits the rampant use of pesticides with little information.
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  - The grade of the pesticide used and its potency needs closer scrutiny.
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### **What can be done?**

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- Pesticide spraying is more remunerative than other farm options due to the risks involved.
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  - While the labourers were aware of the hazards, they didn't seem to have received any advice on precautions to be taken.
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  - Stricter adherence to the Insecticides Act, 1968, that requires the agricultural department to train farmers in pesticide use is needed.
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  - Also, the government is planning to make it compulsory for Krushi Seva Kendras that sell fertilizers to provide proper advisories.
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  - There is also a need to enhance the reach of protection kits.
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**Source: Indian Express**

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