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.
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- 20 died and over 800 people are now in hospital - with symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, stomach ache, and vision loss.
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- The Maharastra government has ordered a probe & announced compensation for the families of the diseased.
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- The damage seems to have been caused by excessive inhalation of organo-phosphate and organo-chloride groups of insecticides.
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- It first enters the fat below the skin, and then the blood.
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- Bombay High Court issued notices on a PIL seeking criminal action against the officials concerned and pesticide firms.
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- 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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