

Pesticides Management Bill, 2020

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved the Pesticides Management Bill, 2020 that seeks to replace the existing Insecticides Act of 1968.

What is the Bill about?

- The Bill will regulate the business of pesticides and compensate farmers for losses from the use of spurious agrochemicals.
- Farmers will get to know about the pesticides, their risk and alternatives, and this will be in open source and in all languages digitally.

What are the provisions of the Bill?

- **Compensation** - If there is any loss because of the fake or low quality of pesticides then there is a provision for compensations.
- To ensure speedier compensation for these losses, the Bill moots setting up a dedicated fund of Rs 50,000 crore.
- This will be raised from the fines charged from the defaulting pesticides companies and contributions from the Central and state governments.
- **Central Pesticides Board** - This board will regulate the production, trade, and use of pesticides.
- It will comprise representatives from the Centre, states and farmers.
- **Promotion** of environment- and health-friendly organic pesticides is among the other notable features of this Bill.
- **Penalty** - A key proposal was to raise penalties on the sale of prohibited or spurious pesticides to ₹50 lakh and up to 5 years' imprisonment.
- This penalty was raised from the current ₹2,000 and up to 3 years' imprisonment.

Why such a Bill is needed?

- The pesticides industry has grown haphazardly, resulting in the emergence of many **fake** and **poor-quality chemicals**.
- Only around 300 pesticides have been formally registered for production and use in the country.
- But the number of chemical formulations in circulation is far larger because of the production and sale of **unregistered molecules**.

- Several **pesticides banned abroad are continued to be used** in India, causing deaths and grievous injuries to the farm workers.
- The injudicious and **indiscriminate use of pesticides** is causing widespread air, soil and water pollution.

What are the criticisms?

- By removing the applicability of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, the Bill has favoured decriminalisation of agro-input manufacturing.
- The existing draft provides inadequate representation to States in both pesticide board and the registration committee.
- As States have the best understanding on the agro-ecological climate, environment and soil conditions, they should have a say in the final decision making on pesticide.
- Many of these misgivings could have been avoided by seeking public comments on the final draft of the Bill.

How the new law should be?

- The new proposed law is expected to deter the manufacture and sale of such hazardous chemicals.
- It should formulate stricter norms for approving new molecules.
- It should oblige the farmers to use them cautiously in the recommended manner to avoid leaving any traces in the farm produce.

Source: The Hindu, Business Standard