Pilot Projects on DBT in Fertilizers

Why in news?

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Union government with the guidance of NITI Aayog is implementing pilot projects on DBT in fertilizers.

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How the pilot project is being implemented?

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- Initially NITI Aayog decided to roll out the pilot project on DBT in fertilizers in 16 districts.
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- Since then DBT in fertilizers has been rolled out in 19 States and Union Territories and 12 States are expected to come on board by Feb 2018.
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- By June 2018, DBT in fertilizers is expected to expand its footprint in the entire country.
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- These initiatives have been supplemented by Department of Fertilizers, including appointment of 24 State DBT co-coordinators, and organising about 4,500 training sessions across India.
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What is the role of technology in DBT in fertilizers?

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- Each time a farmer purchases fertilizers from a dealer, he/she presses his or her thumb at a point-of-sale (PoS) device and an authenticated receipt comes out giving details of the purchase and subsidy to be paid by the government directly to the manufacturer.
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- The records of dealers are automatically updated and payment is made

digitally or in cash.
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- Training videos are also placed on YouTube, and the comprehensive redress system in place is being expanded to a multilingual help desk.
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- Connectivity issues has been addressed through flexibility in choosing the connectivity option (Wifi, LAN, PSTN) or use of external antenna to improve signal strength.
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What are the benefits of DBT technology?

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- Farmers, especially those purchasing urea were facing constraints of availability and occasionally overcharged in the past, now satisfied with new DBT mechanism.
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- DBT in fertilizer envisages transfer of subsidy to manufacturers upon authentication of purchase by farmers.
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- This restricts diversion, prevents leakages, and brings about greater transparency, accountability and efficiency.
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- Through this new mechanism farmers received transaction receipts, and were charged the same amount as mentioned in the receipt.
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- The grievance redress mechanism has improved and retailers are also satisfied.
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What more needs to be done?

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- The application device must be made agnostic so that retailers can use desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc. to run the application.
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- A toll-free number need to be created soon to allow conversations in regional languages will help the farmers.
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- The waiting time for farmers purchasing fertilizers need to be reduced.

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- While Aadhaar is the preferred form of identification of buyers, other forms of identification should also be used.
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- The Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers (2016-17), in its 36th Action Taken Report, has recently emphasised that while implementing DBTs, subsidy should be disbursed directly to the farmer’s bank account.
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- This requires serious consideration while Phase-I is implemented and stabilised.
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Source: The Hindu

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