Prelim Bits 24-12-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative agriculture has received much attention from all stakeholders, as it was emphasised in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on "Climate Change and Land."

- Regenerative agriculture is a holistic farming system that focuses on soil health, food quality, biodiversity improvement, water quality and air quality.
- It aims at
    - Improving soil health through practices that increase soil organic matter, biota and biodiversity.
    - Enhancing water-holding capacity and carbon sequestration.
- Regenerative agriculture aspires to improve the resources like soil and water but also them apart from maintaining them.
- Use of natural inputs, minimum-till, mulching, multi-cropping and sowing of diverse and native varieties can increase the soil's water-holding capacity
- Regenerative agriculture employs - Reduced usage of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, cover crops, integration of livestock and reduced or zero tillage.
- The Union government is promoting regenerative agriculture with an aim to reduce application of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and to lower input costs.
- States like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim and Gujarat have also introduced schemes to promote it.

References

1. Down To Earth - Regenerative agriculture can help save water
2. WEF - What is regenerative agriculture?

Joynagar Moa

Moa makers and IIT researchers are developing packaging material to increase shelf life of Moa to improve its exports.

- Moa is a popular Bengal sweetmeat available only during the colder months of the year.
- The moa is a popped-rice (*khoi*) ball held together with fresh date-palm jaggery, extracted only in the winter.
- The popped rice is mixed with jaggery, sugar, cashew nuts and raisins.
- The sweet's history date back to 1904 and its manufacture is so synonymous with Joynagar, a settlement on the outskirts of Kolkata.

- The Joynagar Moa earned the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2015 (till 2022) and now extended for another 10 years.
- The high perishability of this GI tagged sweet has prevented it from being shipped abroad.
- A packaging material to increase shelf life of Moa is being developed to improve Joynagar moa exports.

References

1. The Hindu - This winter turning out to be sweet for moa makers
2. Outlook - 5 GI Tag Gifts For Foodies To Bring Back From Kolkata

Merging PMGKAY with NFSA

The Union Cabinet approved the extension of free food grain distribution scheme for 81.3 crore poor people for a period of one year from January 2023.

- The Union government would provide free food grains to beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, 2013, as per their entitlement, for a year beginning January 2023.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 -** The persons belonging to eligible households received food grains at subsidised price under NFSA.
- There are two categories of beneficiary households under the NFSA, 2013.
    1. Antyoday Anna Yojana (AAY)
    2. Priority Households
- The AAY households are entitled to 35 kg of food grains per month irrespective of the number of family members.
- The priority households get food grains depending on the number of family members (each member 5 kg per month).
- **PMGKAY** - The Union government has discontinued the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKY) was launched in April 2020 amid Covid-19.
- Under PMGKY 5 kg of free wheat and rice was provided free of cost to 80 crore poor per month.
- The free food grains were given on top of the NFSA entitlement of 5 kg food grains at subsidised rates.
- In September, the government had extended PMGKAY for three months till December 31.
- **Merging** - The government aims to subsume the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) under the NFSA Act.
- The free portion (5kg) of that scheme has been added to the NFSA (35 kg).

References

1. Indian Express - For 1 year from Jan, Govt makes food grains free
2. Economic Times - Cabinet approves extension of free food grain distribution scheme to poor

Monument Regulations

Uttar Pradesh has the largest number of Centrally Protected Monuments which have been encroached upon, closely followed by Tamil Nadu.

- India has a total of 3,695 Centrally Protected Monuments or Sites in the country, under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- Uttar Pradesh has the largest number of Centrally Protected monuments in the country at 743, followed by Tamil Nadu which has 412.
- While 75 protected monument sites have been trespassed in Uttar Pradesh, the corresponding number for Tamil Nadu is 74.
- Functions of ASI in protecting monuments
- The monuments are regularly inspected by the ASI officials to assess their present condition.
- Necessary conservation and preservation works are taken up as per the requirement.
- **Actions of ASI against encroachments**
    - Filing police complaints.
    - Issuing show cause notices to defaulters for the removal of the said encroachments.
    - Issuing demolition orders to the Collector requesting for the demolition or removal of the said encroachments.
- **Regulation of construction** - The ASI regulates construction around the protected monuments through the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) (Amendment) Act, 2010.
- The Act prohibits any new construction within 100 metres around a protected monument.
- The next 300-metre radius around the protected monument is regulated.
- Any constructions in these protected areas have to be approved by the National Monument Authority.
- **National Monuments Authority -** National Monuments Authority (NMA) under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India has been setup as per the AMASR Act, 2010.
- NMA is constituted with a Chairperson and up to 5 Whole Time and 5 Part Time Members each and a Member Secretary.
- The Director General of ASI is an ex officio Member.

References

1. The Hindu - UP has largest number of Centrally Protected Monuments encroached upon

BF.7 Variant

The current surge in Covid-19 infections in China is believed to be driven by the BF.7 sub-variant of Omicron that is circulating in that country.

- When viruses mutate, they create lineages and sub-lineages.
- BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the Omicron variant BA.5.
- It has the strongest infection ability and a shorter incubation period.

- It has a higher capacity to cause reinfection or infect even those vaccinated.
- India saw very few cases of BF.7, as BA.5 variant was not as prevalent in India as they were in European countries.
- At present, a recombinant variant XBB is the most common variant in India.

XBB variant

- XBB is a recombinant of two Omicron sub-variants, BA.2.10.1 and BA.2.75.
- XBB is more immune evasive and more likely to cause re-infection or breakthrough infections in people.
- Like any other Omicron variant XBB is known to affect the upper respiratory tract.
- The XBB variant is likely to lead to a fever, cough, and cold.

References

1. Indian Express - What is BF.7 which drives the new surge in China?
2. Indian Express - The XBB variant is not more dangerous than Delta

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