Status of Spices Exports in India

Why in news?

Rcently Singapore and Hong Kong recalled certain spice mix products over the presence of a higher than prescribed level of sterilizing agent Ethylene Oxide

Status of spice exports in India
• India is the world's largest spice producer. It is also the largest consumer and exporter of spices. • In the fiscal year 2023-2024, India exported spices worth 4.4 billion dollars, marking a 12.3% increase from the previous year. • India produces about 75 of the 109 varieties which are listed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). • **Major exports-** Chilli, spice oils, oleoresins, curry powder, cumin, mint products, cardamom, and pepper are among the major exports. • **Export markets**- China, Bangladesh, West Asian countries, and the U.S. are crucial markets for Indian spices. • **Largest spice producing States**- Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Why India uses Ethylene Oxide?

- **Contaminated spices**- It occurs during storage in mandies (auction yards) where spices are exposed to human, bird, reptile, and insect contact.
- **Need of sterilizing agent**- Contamination occurs during Large factories receive material from mandies, leading to high microbial levels and necessitating ETO sterilization.
- **Broad spectrum activity-** EtO exhibits broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity, targeting a wide range of microorganisms including bacteria, fungi, and viruses which makes it suitable for sterilizing diverse types of spices with varying microbial loads.
- **Industrial efficiency-** It can be carried out on a large scale in industrial settings, making it suitable for processing bulk quantities of spices efficiently.

What are the steps taken by India to promote spice exports?

Export development and promotion of spices

- **By-** Spices Board of India
- **Aim-** To support the exporter to adopt high-tech processing technologies and upgrade the existing level of technology for the development of industry and to meet the changing food safety standards of the importing countries.
- **Benefits-** It provides benefits such as promoting Indian spice brands abroad, setting

up infrastructure in the major spice growing centers, promoting organic spices and special programmes for north-eastern entrepreneurs.

Setting up and maintenance of infrastructure for common processing (Spices Parks)

- **By-** Spices Board has launched eight crop-specific Spices Parks in key production/market centers
- **Objective-** To facilitate the farmers to get an improved price realization and wider reach for their produce.
- **Purpose-** To have an integrated operation for cultivation, post-harvesting, processing, value-addition, packaging and storage of spices and spice products.
- **Benefits-** The common processing facilities for cleaning, grading, packing, and steam sterilization will help the farmers to enhance the quality of the produce, resulting in better price realization.

Spice complex Sikkim

- **Origin** - Spices Board submitted a project proposal to the state's cell for setting up a Spice Complex in Sikkim.
- **Need**- To seek financial assistance for facilitating and demonstrating common processing and value addition in spices to help farmers and other stakeholders in the state.

SPEDA

- **About-** India has notified the formation of an exclusive Committee to be known as 'Saffron Production and Export Development Agency (SPEDA).
- **Objective-** It is constituted for the overall development of the Saffron industry in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Headquarters**- Srinagar.
- **Role-** SPEDA will assist and encourage creation of appropriate infrastructure for processing, packing, warehousing, research and establish quality evaluation laboratory for Saffron.

Prevention of ETO sterilization

- The Spices Board has issued protocols to prevent ETO contamination and initiated mandatory testing of spice consignments to affected countries.
- It's also advocating for uniform standards on ETO usage internationally.

What lies ahead?

- EtO issue could be used to undermine Indian spice trade, potentially leading to a significant decline in export volume.
- This highlights the urgency for swift action to address the situation and safeguard India's export interests.

Quick fact

Spice Board of India
• **Established year-** In 1987 under *Spices Board Act 1986* • **Nodal agency-** Ministry of Commerce and Industry • **About-** It is the India's regulatory and export promotion agency for Indian spices, spices are sold under the brand name 'Flavourit'. • **Headquarters-** *Cochin, Kerala* • **Regional lab**- Mumbai, Delhi, Tuticorin, Kandla and Guntur. • **Spice Train**-It is an online campaign started to educate Indians about the country's rich spice heritage

References

1. The Hindu- Explained status of spice exports
2. Indian Spices- About Spices Board of India

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