

16 June 2019: UPSC Exam PIB Summary & Analysis

Union Minister of State for Shipping and Chemical & Fertilizers reviews Supply and Availability of Fertilizers in Jammu and Kashmir

Context:

- Union Minister of State for Shipping and Chemical & Fertilizers Shri Mansukh Mandaviya convened a review meeting regarding supply and availability of fertilizers in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The meeting was attended by senior officers of the State Agriculture Production Department and fertilizer supplying companies.
- He stressed on the importance of setting up storage facilities for fertilizers, creating a buffer stock and ensuring that no shortage occurs during seasons of high demand.

Decisions taken:

- When apprised of the problems J&K faces in fertilizer supply such as infrastructure problems, the minister said that the demand for opening of additional rake points would be considered.
- He also asked the fertilizer supplying companies to ensure timely stocking of fertilizers considering the weather conditions particularly in the Valley during winters.
- He also stressed on the need to bring in transparency in the fertilizer business, including maintaining correct data entry regarding fertilizer stocks and sale records by the Wholesalers and Retailers in their respective areas.

Organic Farming Practices:

- The minister talked about the need for shifting to sustainable and organic farming practices stating that the indiscriminate use of fertilizers was harmful for both humans and animals.
- He opined that organic practices would not only yield better crop results, but also enhance the soil quality and structure, making it more effective in retaining water and nutrients.
- The minister asked the Department to promote organic and bio-fertilizers.
- He also asked the department to work with experts in the field to identify sustainable ways for adoption of need-based technology in the farm sector.

Tidbits for IAS exam:

Neem Coated Urea

- The government in 2015, allowed urea producers to produce up to 100% neem coated urea.
- Currently, the entire quantity of indigenously produced urea and imported urea is being mandatorily neem coated.
- The benefits of neem coated urea are:
 - Improvement in soil health
 - Reduction in costs with respect to plant protection chemicals
 - Reduction in pest and disease attack
 - Increase in the yield of paddy, sugarcane, maize, soybean and tur/red gram.
 - Reduction in the diversion of urea for non-agricultural purposes after the entire supply of urea has become neem coated. Highly subsidised urea is being sold to farmers with the intention that they be used only for agricultural purposes. Previously, farmers were using them for non-agricultural needs also.

NPK

- NPK stands for Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K). These are the essential nutrients required for any plant growth.
- The NPK ratio in a fertilizer refers to the available nutrients by weight contained in that fertilizer. For example, a bag of fertilizer may have the NPK ratio given as 20:5:5. This means that it has four times more nitrogen in it than phosphorus and potassium.
- The desirable ratio of NPK in soils is 4:2:1.
- Unbalanced use of fertilizers can lead to the soil being depleted of its fertility.