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Relaxation of Fumigation Norms on Import of Onions

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Why in News

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has allowed the relaxation of fumigation norms for the **import of onions** for a limited time period.

- The liberalized fumigation norms will facilitate private import of onions from **Afghanistan, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran**. It will help to **boost the availability and check price rise of onions**.
- The norms will also provide relaxation from the endorsement on the **Phytosanitary Certificate (PSC) as per the Plant Quarantine Order, 2003** for onion imports.
- The imported onions which arrive at Indian ports without fumigation and endorsement to that effect on the PSC would be **fumigated in India** by the **importer through an accredited treatment provider**.
- On a regular basis, imported onions are allowed in the country **only after the commodity is fumigated and certified by the exporting nation**.
 - Importers are subjected to **four times additional inspection fees** on account of non-compliance.
 - However, current consignments of onions under liberalized norms **will not be penalised for non-compliance**.

Fumigation

- **Fumigation** is a **pest control method that involves filling the airspace** within a structure with **toxic gas**. Eg. **Methyl Bromide, Phosphine, etc**.
Methyl bromide is **forbidden** in developed nations, and its use was restricted by the **Montreal Protocol** due to its **role in ozone depletion**.
- It is mainly used to control pests in storage buildings (structural fumigation), soil, and grains.

- It is also used during processing **of goods to be imported or exported to prevent transfer of exotic organisms.**
- It is seen as the **most effective way to kill all pests, insects, and nematodes.**

Phytosanitary Certificate

- Phytosanitary certificates are issued to indicate that consignments of plants, plant products meet specified phytosanitary import requirements under **International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), 1951.**
 - **Phytosanitary measures** are aimed at the protection of human, animal and plant health from diseases, pests, and contaminants.
- Usually, PSCs are generated by the **exporting country.**
- It can **only be issued by an authorized officer from a government department** that is authorized by a **National Plant Protection Agency (NPPO).**
 - NPPO is in force to protect the threat of spreading pests, contamination or diseases into the country of import.

Plant Quarantine Order, 2003

- It ensures the **import of pest and fungus free agricultural commodities in the country which is or may be destructive to crops.**
- Plant quarantine is a **technique that ensures disease- and pest-free plants.**
 - During the process, a **plant is isolated** while tests are performed to detect the presence of a problem

Source: PIB