



Salt Sector Crisis

For Prelims: Rock Salt Mining, Rann Sarovar, Minimum Support Price

For Mains: Salt Sector Crisis, Role of Government in Development of Salt Industries

Why in News?

The Salt Industry is facing enormous challenges in meeting the demand and handling the crisis faced by salt farmers and workers.

- While **farmers are facing low prices due to the non-availability of [minimum support prices](#)**, workers are also in distress due to lack of proper arrangements for wages and social security.

What is the position of Salt Sector?

- **India:**
 - **India ranks third in the production of salt in the world** next to the USA and China.
 - **Sea salt** constitutes about **70% of the total salt production in the country**.
 - Salt manufacturing activities are carried out in the **coastal states** of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal Goa and hinterland State of Rajasthan.
 - **Gujarat produces about 28.5 million tonnes of salt per year**, which is more than **80% of the country's total production**.
- **Worldwide:**
 - The **worldwide salt production is currently 200 million tons** and exceeding the mark rapidly.
 - Worldwide industries manufacture this huge quantity of salt **not only for consumption but for non-edible and industrial purposes as well**.

What are the Methods of Production?

- **Solar Evaporation Method:**
 - Solar salt production is, typically, the capturing of salt water in shallow ponds where the sun evaporates most of the water.
- **Rock Salt Mining Method:**
 - Salt exists as deposits in ancient underground seabed, which became buried through tectonic changes over thousands of years. Many salt mines use the "**room and pillar**" system of mining.
 - Shafts are sunk down to the floor of the mine, and rooms are carefully constructed by drilling, cutting and blasting between the shafts, creating a checkerboard pattern.
 - After the salt is removed and crushed, a conveyor belt hauls it to the surface. Most salt produced this way is used as [rock salt](#).
- **Vacuum Evaporation Method:**

- It involves evaporation of salt brine by steam heat in large commercial evaporators, called **vacuum pans**.
- This method yields a very high purity salt, fine in texture, and principally used in those applications requiring the highest quality salt.

What is the Salt Sector Crisis?

- **Minimum Support price:**
 - The **Indian Salt Manufacturers' Association (ISMA)** has demanded the classification of salt production as agricultural activity under the ministry of agriculture instead of its current status as an industry governed by the ministry of industries & mines.
 - **Mining produces hardly 0.5% salt.** 99.5% of salt is produced either from sea water or from sub soil water and the whole process is done by **seeding, farming and harvesting**.
 - Unseasonal rains and floods are resulting in demand for Minimum Support Price.
 - **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices.
 - The major objectives are to **support the farmers from distress sales** and to **procure food grains for public distribution**.
- **Wages and Social Security:**
 - Companies have replaced cooperatives and they decide the wages of these workers and the production of farmers. Most of them are migrant labourers.
 - The cooperative sector is more or less passive. Workers are going through serious health issues and economic distress with no minimum wages or social security.
 - 12 workers died when the wall of a packing unit collapsed in Morbi.
 - Projects such as **Rann Sarovar**, a freshwater lake construction project in 5,000 square kilometers of this area, will render about 50,000 people jobless.

What is the Role of Government in Development of Salt Industries?

- Salt is a **central subject** listed as item number 58 of the Union List of the **7th Schedule of the Constitution**. It is listed as a **mining industry**.
 - The Government of India has **de-licensed the Salt Industry** by deleting provisions relating to Salt in the **Central Excise & Salt Act, 1944**.
- The **Salt Commissioner's Organization** plays a facilitating role in overall growth and development of the Salt Industry in the country.
- A separate **nodal agency with common rules and regulations** regarding salt production is required. Minimum wages and social security must be ensured with a **uniform policy for the entire country**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQs)

Q. Who of the following organized a march on the Tanjore coast to break the Salt Law in April 1930? (2015)

- (a) V.O. Chidambaram Pillai
- (b) C. Rajagopalachari
- (c) K. Kamaraj
- (d) Annie Besant

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- Modelled on the lines of Dandi March, the Vedaranyam Salt March was led by C. Rajagopalachari from Trichinopoly to coastal town of Vedaranyam.
- Rajagopalachari and over 150 volunteers collected salt directly, bypassing the Salt Law. Awareness

- on national issues such as caste discrimination and use of Khadi was part of this march.
- Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

Source: TH

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