



Mains Practice Question

Case study

Pollution is severely affecting the health of people in a metropolitan city. One of the major causes of this environmental calamity is widespread stubble burning by farmers in the surrounding regions after harvesting paddy crop. Despite an outright ban imposed by the government and the introduction of subsidy packages for buying advance machines to dispose stubble, stubble burning remains unabated. The cause for farmers' indifference towards machines is the belief that the use of machines like happy seeders leads to a fall in the output of successive crops. Recently, the state High Court has called for stringent implementation of the ban order in the neighbouring district of the state capital. You are the District magistrate of one of these districts and want to get rid of this polluting activity. However, your efforts are not yielding desirable results on the ground because of the politicization of this practice. Now, the local leaders are pressuring you to ignore the ban for this season and send deceptive data to the High Court otherwise they will lose support in the election. Although you are against stubble burning, you genuinely sympathize with the farmers for their predicaments.

The district also has a history of farmers' movements which were at times violent. You are well aware of this and want to avoid any untoward incident of violence or agitation in this politically charged atmosphere.

(a) Identify the various issues involved in the case.

(b) As a District Magistrate of the concerned area, what will be your course of action in resolving the issue? (250 Words)

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Approach

- Give an overview of the case
- Identify the stakeholders involved
- Enumerate the issues present in the case
- As the responsible authority suggest the course of action

Ans.

The above asked case study is about a peculiar issue of environmental pollution which involves a number of stakeholders and related issues. As the District Magistrate of the concerned area, my utmost responsibility is to carry out the government's directives regarding the burning of stubble and ensure immediate relief due to increasing pollution caused by it.

Stakeholders involved

- **Public at large:** who is suffering from pollution.
- **Farmers:** who are burning stubble but also suffering due to lack of alternatives available to them in regard to stubble burning.
- **High court:** who as a custodian of rights has given directives to ban stubble burning.
- **Government:** which is directly involved in providing remedial measures to both the public as well

as farmers.

- **Local political leaders:** who are politicising the issue for their personal gains.
- **District Magistrate:** which is responsible for carrying out the orders given by the government.

Issues that are involved in the case are as follows:

- Checking ever increasing pollution in the city caused by stubble burning.
- Poor implementation of the government's order of banning stubble burning.
- Obstructing a public officer in carrying out public orders rightfully.
- Grievance redressal of farmers issue.
- Making farmers aware of the available alternative and consequences of stubble burning.
- Maintaining the public law and order.

As a District Magistrate of the concerned area, I will take the following course of action to resolve the issue:

Short Term Measures

- My immediate step would be to constitute a task force which will check the burning of stubble in the district. Anyone flouting the government's order would be dealt with the full force of law.
- A dossier would be prepared and presented to the concerned secretary of Ministry of Environment in the state to bring to his attention the alarming issue of stubble burning.
- A directive to the local political leaders will be issued where they will be made aware of the High Court advisory.
- Farmer's community would be invited and informed about the government's subsidy package through gram panchayats. They will also be told about the ill effects of stubble burning.
- Given the history of violent protest of the farmers, additional security forces would be called in for standby in case of any probable mishaps.

Long Term Measure

- The air pollution has become a matter of public health concern nationally and internationally.
- Awareness should be generated regarding the use of stubble as animal feedstock which will give the farmers an economic incentive for not burning the rice stalks.
- The ecological approach should be adopted in the long term to convert rice stubble into income rather than making them agents of eco-disaster.
- Rice Bio Parks should be set up, where farmers can convert stubble into income and employment. The rice bio park shows how stubble can be utilized to make products including paper, cardboard and animal feed.
- Farmers should be incentivised to use crop residue management (CRM) machines.
- Besides controlling stubble burning, major pollution sources such as road and soil dust, construction and demolition activities, biomass burning, vehicle emissions, industrial activities, and power production should also be reduced and controlled.
- The directive should be circulated on television, media, video recordings, radio and gram panchayats so that the message reaches every farmer.
- Value addition and government support should invigorate the collection of residues from farms, thereby, converting it to a remunerative step in the process.

Overall, as a District Magistrate, it is my duty and responsibility to take the issue with sensitivity and compassion as it involves not only environmental concerns but issues of farmers also.