



GI Tag for Pakistani Basmati

Why in News

Recently, Pakistan received the [Geographical Indication \(GI\) tag](#) for its [Basmati](#) rice under its Geographical Indications Act 2020.

- Pakistan is fighting a case in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) against India's move to get Basmati Rice as its product.

Key Points

▪ India-Pakistan on Basmati Rice:

- The issue of protecting Basmati rice as a product of Pakistan came to the forefront **after India submitted an application to the European Union (EU)** claiming sole ownership of the commodity in September 2019.
 - India also claimed that the **region producing basmati is a part of northern India**, below the foothills of the Himalayas forming part of the Indo-Gangetic plain.
 - The Indian claim to the EU was challenged in December 2019 and the main argument by Pakistan was that **Basmati rice was a joint product of India and Pakistan**.
- International laws require that **before applying for registration of any product in the international market it has to be protected under the geographical indication laws of that country**.
 - Pakistan enacted the **Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection) Act in March 2020**, which gives it the right to oppose Indian application for registration of Basmati rice exclusive rights.

▪ Significance of Pakistan's GI tag for its Basmati:

- A GI tag would **strengthen Pakistan's case in the EU**.
 - Pakistan exported 5,00,000-7,00,000 tonnes of Basmati rice annually to different parts of the world out of which 2,00,000 tonnes to 2,50,000 tonnes is being shipped to EU countries.

▪ Effect on India:

- Basmati rice was a **joint heritage of India and Pakistan** and Pakistan is as entitled to secure its Basmati rice trade as India.
- However, Pakistan securing the GI tag for its basmati rice would, **in no way, affect India's Basmati exports**.
- Since **Basmati rice fetches higher prices in the international markets**, India had attempted to block Pakistan's trade in the EU by declaring that its Basmati was the geographically original one.

▪ GI tag for Basmati Rice in India:

- India is a producer of premium Basmati and it has been grown from time immemorial in the **Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP)** area of India and **18 districts of Pakistan's Punjab**.
 - It had been a tough battle for the country to protect Basmati name from the encroachment of various nations which all came out with their own versions of Basmati.
- **[Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority \(APEDA\)](#)** got GI tag for the region located in IGP below the foothills of the Himalayas, spread across seven states (Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Western Uttar Pradesh (26 districts) and Delhi) in May 2010.
- **Reasons Given:**
 - The origin and reputation of Basmati rice as a 'long-grain, aromatic rice' from the IGP is found in tradition, folklore, scientific and culinary literature and political-historical records.
 - Dehraduni Basmati, Amritsar Basmati and Tarawari Basmati are few varieties which have become famous over the period of hundreds of years.

Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

▪ About:

- A **Geographical Indication (GI)** is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin**. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place.
- In addition, the qualities, characteristics or reputation of the product should be essentially due to the place of origin.
 - Since the **qualities depend on the geographical place of production**, there is a clear link between the product and its original place of production.
- It is used for **agricultural, natural and manufactured goods**.

▪ Benefit of GI tag:

- Once the GI protection is granted, **no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products**. It also provides **comfort to customers** about the authenticity of that product.
- A registered Geographical Indications **prohibits a third party to use such GI by any means** in the designations or presentations of goods indicating that such goods originate in a geographical area.

▪ International Protection for GI:

- Internationally GI are covered as a **component of [Intellectual Property Rights \(IPRs\)](#)** under the **Paris Convention** for the Protection of Industrial Property.
 - The **Paris Convention, adopted in 1883**, applies to industrial property in the widest sense, including patents, trademarks, industrial designs, utility models, service marks, trade names, **geographical indications** and the repression of unfair competition.
- GI is also governed by the **[World Trade Organisation's \(WTO's\)](#)** Agreement on **[Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights \(TRIPS\)](#)**.

▪ GI Protection in India:

- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999** which came into force with effect from 2003.
 - The Act provides registration and also protection of GI goods in India.
 - This Act is administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and

Trademarks, who is also the Registrar of Geographical Indications.

- The **Geographical Indications Registry for India is located in Chennai.**
- The registration of a geographical indication is **valid for a period of 10 years.** It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.

Source:DTE

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