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Agrochemical Spraying through Drones Illegal

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Why in News

Recently, the Union Government has clarified that drone-spraying is illegal as per the **Insecticides Act, 1968**.

This clarification has come after environmentalists highlighted that the usage of drones for agrochemical spraying has increased and has the potential to create problems.

Key Points

- The Insecticide Act, 1968 does not allow aerial spraying. As per its provisions, **aerial application of pesticides** needs **approval or permission** from the **Central Insecticides Board (CIB)**.

Further, the CIB has not granted any approval or permission in the past for the use of drones to spray pesticides.

- Aerial spraying **impacts a larger area** while **decreasing the efficacy** on the target pests.
- Drones and unmanned remote-controlled machines can be harmful tools for spraying chemicals.

There is **no scientific validity** that **drones help in precision spraying**.

- **Adverse weather and wind conditions can result in drifting** of the fine hazardous chemical beyond the range of application.

Kasargod in Kerala faced the negative consequences of aerial spraying of **Endosulfan (a pesticide)** for over 25 years.

Central Insecticides Board

- It was **established under Section 4 of the Insecticides Act, 1968** and it works under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare**.

- It advises the central government and state governments on technical matters arising out of the administration of the act and to carry out the other functions assigned to it.

Advice is given on:

- The risks to human being or animals involved in the use of insecticides/pesticides and the safety measures necessary to prevent such risk.
- The manufacturing, sale, storage, transport and distribution of insecticides/pesticides with a view to ensure safety to human beings or animals.

Kasargod Incident

- Over 20 years of aerial spraying on cashew plantations and on other crops in Kerala left many people especially children with **mental and physical disorders** like deformities and other health complications.
- The health effects of the chemical include **neurotoxicity, late sexual maturity, physical deformities, poisoning**, among others.
- Studies established linkages between aerial spraying of the pesticide and the growing health disorders in Kasaragod district.
- In **2011**, the **Supreme Court banned** its production and distribution of Endosulfan.

Source: TH