



Spices Board of India

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Why in News?

The Spices Board of India has taken up the issue of setting limits for using **Ethylene Oxide (ETO)** in spices with [CODEX](#), the international food standards body.

- This comes after certain [branded spices](#) exported by Indian **companies to Hong Kong and Singapore** were recalled due to concerns related to ETO contamination, **followed by a ban by Nepal** on the sale and import of certain spice-mix products due to similar concerns.

What is the Spices Board of India?

- **About:**
 - [Spices Board](#) was constituted on 26th February 1987 under the **Spices Board Act, 1986** with the merger of the erstwhile **Cardamom Board (1968)** and **Spices Export Promotion Council (1960)**.
 - There are **five statutory Commodity Boards** under the Department of Commerce.
 - These Boards are responsible for **production, development and export of tea, coffee, rubber, spices and tobacco**.
 - It is responsible for the **export promotion** of the **52 scheduled spices** and the **development of Cardamom**.
 - Spices Board is the **flagship organisation** for the development and worldwide promotion of Indian spices.
 - The Board is an **international link** between the Indian exporters and the importers abroad.
- **Issue of Ethylene Oxide (ETO):**
 - **ETO** is a chemical used as a **sterilizing agent** in spices, but it is considered **carcinogenic** when used beyond certain limits.
 - While efforts are being made to prevent **ETO contamination**, the sample failure rate for Indian spice exports is **less than 1%** in major markets.
 - As of now, CODEX has not established a limit, and there is also no standardized ETO testing protocol available.
 - India has taken up with the **CODEX committee** the need for setting up limits for ETO usage as different countries have different limits.
 - The Spices Board released guidelines for exporters to prevent ETO contamination and ensure the safety of all markets.
 - It advises against using ETO as a sterilising agent for spices and suggests alternatives like **steam sterilisation and irradiation**.
 - **Other countries** like the US, New Zealand, and Australia have also raised concerns about the **quality of some Indian spices** and are determining if further action is needed.

Note:

- India is the world's **largest spice producer**. It is also the largest consumer and exporter of spices.

- In 2023-24, India's spice exports reached USD 4.25 billion, capturing a 12% share share of global spice exports.

International Food Standards

- Since 1963, the Codex system has developed openly and inclusively to address new challenges.
- Codex standards are based on **sound science** provided by **independent international risk assessment bodies** or ad-hoc consultations organized by the [Food and Agriculture Organization's \(FAO\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. The staple commodities of export by the English East India Company from Bengal in the middle of the 18th century were: (2018)

- (a) Raw cotton, oil-seeds and opium
- (b) Sugar, salt, zinc and lead
- (c) Copper, silver, gold, spices and tea
- (d) Cotton, silk, saltpetre and opium

Ans: (d)

Q. In making the saffron spice, which one of the following parts of the plant is used? (2009)

- (a) Leaf
- (b) Petal
- (c) Sepal
- (d) Stigma

Ans: (d)