



Agrochemical Spraying through Drones Illegal

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 Kasargod district.

- In **2011**, the **Supreme Court** **banned** its production and distribution of Endosulfan.

Source: TH

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