

Spices Board of India

Source: BL

Why in News?

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

 This comes after certain <u>branded spices</u> 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?

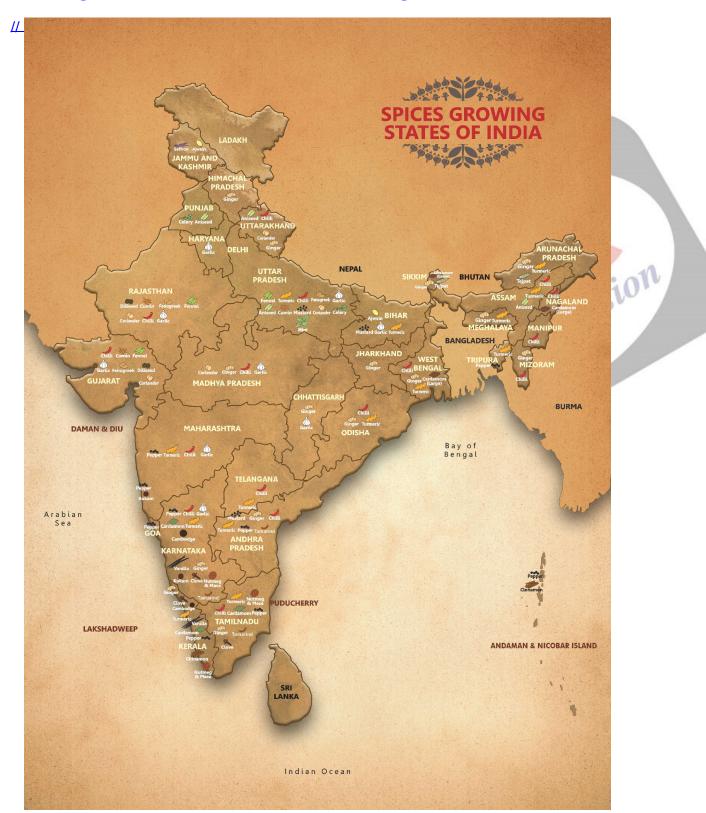
- About:
 - Spices Board was constituted on 26th February 1987 under the Spices Board Act, 1986 with the merger of the erstwhile Cardamom Board (1968) and Spices Export Promotion Council (1960).
 - There are five statutory Commodity Boards under the Department of Commerce.
 - These Boards are responsible 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 <u>Food and Agriculture</u> <u>Organization's (FAO)</u> and the <u>World Health Organization (WHO)</u>.



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)

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