

NEWS TODAY

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION OF NANO-BASED AGRI-INPUT AND FOOD PRODUCTS IN INDIA

- Centre **released these guidelines after Inter-ministerial coordination** coordinated by Department of Biotechnology.
- **Objective of guidelines:**
 - > To help researchers in **development of products for agriculture** and human consumption.
 - > To help regulators to **assess quality and safety of nano based agriculture** and food products.
 - > To **encourage Indian innovators and industries to develop new nano-based formulations** and products in these sectors.
- **Key features of the Guidelines**
 - > It defines **Nanomaterial (NM), nano-agri-input products (NAIPs) and nano-agri products (NAPs)**. (refer infographics)
 - > It **provides for regulation of such products** mainly under Insecticides Act, 1968, FSSAI guidelines etc.
 - Presently there are no specific provisions to deal with such products.
 - > It **provides safeguards** to ensure Human health safety, Environmental safety, Occupational health safety and waste disposal etc.
 - > They **do not apply to the conventional products or formulations** with incidental presence of natural NMs.
- **Benefits of Nanotechnology in Agriculture**
 - > Compared to bulk form of chemical inputs in crops, use of nano-nutrients can **reduce nutrient run-off** into ground water and thus can **reduce environmental pollution**.
 - > It helps to **increase plant productivity** and **better crop protection** for meeting requirements of providing food to growing population.

Definitions

- NM is defined as a **material that ranges in size from 1 to 100 nm** at least in one dimension or any materials that possess improved properties or phenomena because of the effect of dimension(s), even if these dimension(s) fall outside the nanoscale range, up to 1000 nm.
- NAIP is an agriculture **input preparation containing NMs intended for application on crops** for purpose of farming.
- NAP is an agricultural **preparation containing NMs intended for consumption** or application in food/feed and their supplements as well as nutraceutical delivery.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE RELEASES NEW GUIDELINES ON CONTRACT FARMING

- Guidelines were issued under **Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020**.
 - > Ordinance was brought last month to provide a **national framework on farming agreements that protects and empowers farmers** to engage with wholesalers, exporters or large retailers etc.
- It aims at **facilitating contract farming**, where a private buyer contracts to purchase a crop at a certain price at the beginning of a season, transferring risk of market unpredictability from farmer to corporate sponsor.
- **Key guidelines:**
 - > **Verbal agreements are not recognized** and it should be written in local language.
 - > Farming agreement **should be for a minimum of one cropping season to a maximum of five years**.
 - > Agreement **should clearly indicate the nature of farming**, size of land area, address of the farmer etc.
 - > Agreement can be with **farmers (having land title), farmer producer organisation and also sharecropper**.
 - > **Sponsor would be responsible for any loss or damage** due to inputs supplied to farmers.
 - **Farmers cannot use the inputs** provided by the sponsor **for anything other than growing the produce agreed upon**.
 - > Sponsor is **not permitted to gain or enjoy ownership rights**.

CENTRE'S OVER-RELIANCE ON CESSSES, SURCHARGES PUT STATE FINANCES AT RISK

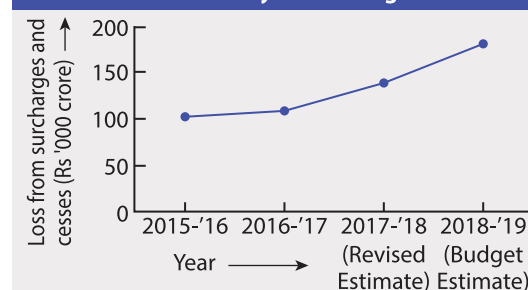
- Share of states from divisible pool of central taxes **fell sharply from 36.6% in FY19 to 32.4% in FY20**.
 - > This is well below 14th Finance Commission recommendation of 42%.
- Article 270 allows the **Centre to levy cess and surcharge** which the Centre **need not share with state governments**.
 - > While **cesses are imposed for specific purposes, surcharges are a tax on taxes**, both meant to be temporary in nature. Example:
 - Swachh Bharat cess to finance Swachh Bharat initiatives.
 - Surcharge of 10% is levied if income is more than Rs. 50 Lakhs.
 - > **In surcharge, there is no need to stipulate the purpose** at the time of levy and it is the discretion of the Union to utilise the proceeds of the surcharges for whichever purpose it deems fit.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING WANTS OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) PLATFORMS CONTENT UNDER ITS PURVIEW

- At present, OTT platforms that are digitally streamed falls under the domain of **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- OTT refers to **film and television content provided via a high-speed Internet connection** rather than a cable or satellite provider.
- Recently during the lockdown, **several OTT platforms** such as Netflix, Amazon Prime have witnessed a huge jump in their subscription.
 - > However, **India has no regulations** as of now for the emerging media like OTT players.
 - > OTT is also **not covered under Central Board of Film Certification**.
 - > Moreover out of five different media -**print, radio, TV, films and OTT** -four of them have certain kinds of regulatory practices and OTT is unregulated.
- Earlier, in 2018, MeitY asked **OTT media services to regulate themselves**.
 - > In pursuance of this, **Internet and Mobile Association of India** (not-for-profit industry body) announced **code for the Self-Regulation for Online Curated Content Providers**.
 - It **prohibited Content** which promotes and encourages disrespect to sovereignty and integrity of India or promotes and encourages terrorism and other forms of violence etc.
 - > Certain provisions of Indian Penal Code, 1860; Information Technology Act etc are also applicable to OTTs.

- **State's Concern**
 - > **States oppose their permanent nature** and wants them either be eliminated or, if continued beyond a specified period, should form part of the divisible pool.
 - > **Centre using cesses as a tool to enter administrative domain of the states** such as cesses on agriculture (Krishi Kalyan cess) and sanitation (Swachh Bharat cess).

Loss to states from levy of surcharges and cesses



EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES ARE ZONOTIC: UN REPORT

• This report was released by **United Nations Environment Programme and International Livestock Research Institute** highlighting increasing trend of Zoonotic diseases.

• "Zoonotic disease (ZD)" or "zoonosis" is a **disease that has passed into the human population from an animal source.**

> ZD can be bacterial, viral, or parasitic in nature such as Ebola, malaria, rabies, COVID-19 etc.

• Key highlights

> About **60% of human infections** are estimated to have an animal origin. Further 75% of **emerging infectious diseases** are zoonotic.

> **7 anthropogenic factors identified for ZD-** increased demand for animal protein; rise in intense and unsustainable farming; increased use and exploitation of wildlife; unsustainable utilisation of natural resources; travel and transportation; changes in food supply chains and climate change crisis.

> Emerging zoonotic diseases **threaten human and animal health, economic development and the environment.**

> Report identifies **One Health approach**, which **unites public health, veterinary and environmental expertise**, as the optimal method for preventing as well as responding to zoonotic disease outbreaks and pandemics.








> Report made **recommendations based on One Health approach** like expanding scientific enquiry into zoonotic diseases; Incentivising sustainable land management practices; Improving biosecurity and control etc.



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Centre won't extend deadline for Equalisation Levy on foreign e-com firms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalisation Levy was introduced in 2016 to tax payments for digital advertisement services received by non-resident companies without a permanent establishment here, if these exceeded ₹1 lakh a year. • In 2020-21 Budget, it was widened by including e-commerce companies that sell more than ₹2 crore of in-scope goods or services to Indian customers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > For this purpose, tax rate is 2 % and this came into effect from April 1.
<p>Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enacted by US in 2017, it aims to counter the aggression by Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It stipulates punitive sanctions that U.S. could place on a country conducting significant transactions in defence, energy, oil pipelines and cybersecurity technology with any of the U.S.'s adversaries. • US has recently signalled that despite the ongoing standoff with China at the LAC, India's purchase of Russian arms could be liable for sanctions under CAATSA.
<p>Kuwait Approves Expat Quota Bill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill intends to introduce a quota system for employing foreigners in Kuwait in order to reduce the number of foreign workers and to balance the population proportion of Kuwaitis and expats. • As per the bill, Indian expatriate community, which is the largest expat group in Kuwait, should not exceed 15% of the national population. • It will reduce the Indian presence in Kuwait by 7-8 lakhs and impact India's remittance economy.
<p>Golden Birdwing (Troides aeacus)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a Himalayan butterfly and India's largest butterfly. Before this Southern Birdwing was the largest for past 88 years. • While the female Golden Birdwing was recorded from Didihat in Uttarakhand, the largest male was from the Wankhar Butterfly Museum in Shillong (Meghalaya). • It has a wingspan of 194 mm.
<p>Shifting Seasons on the Siberian Steppe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASA has captured significant seasonal changes in Russia's Kulunda steppe- a large area of flat, unforested grassland. • Steppe is a temperate grassland with dry & grassy plain. • Steppes are semi-arid and receive 25 to 50 centimeters of rain each year. • The largest temperate grassland in the world is the Eurasian steppe, extending from Hungary to China (Manchuria plains). • Steppes are called the bread basket of the world.
<p>Indian Railways to be 'Net Zero' Carbon Emission Mass Transportation Network by 2030</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For this, Indian railways plans to solarise railway stations by utilizing its vacant lands for renewable energy projects. • With this, it would become the first transport organization to be energy self-sufficient.
<p>Moon is more metallic than thought before: NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means that the Moon's subsurface might have greater quantities of metals such as iron and titanium than thought before. • This may mean Earth's crust has lesser amounts of iron oxide than the Moon. • This questions most popular theory about the Moon's creation, that a Mars-sized protoplanet collided with newly formed Earth around 4.5 billion years ago, breaking off a piece of our planet that went on to become its satellite.

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