Antibiotic Use in Dairy Sector

GS-PAPER-3 Health (Mains)

Recently, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) held an online meeting on antibiotic use in the dairy sector. The meeting was attended by experts from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying), the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) etc. The meeting highlighted that the milk sold directly to consumers and the processed milk sold in packets are not tested and stay largely unchecked for antibiotic residues.

- India is the world’s largest milk producer, and it also forms an integral part of Indian diets, especially of children’s.
- It produced 188 million tonnes (MT) of milk in 2018-19.
- Urban areas consume 52% of it and the unorganised sector, comprising milkmen and contractors, caters to 60% of this consumer base.
- The remaining demand is met by dairy cooperatives and private dairies which represent the organised sector.

Concerns

Inadequate Focus on Testing: There is an inadequate focus on testing for antibiotic residues in the milk collected by State federations, which process it and sell it as packaged milk.

- Extensive Misuse: Antibiotics are extensively misused in the dairy sector. Such chemical-intensive food leads to antibiotic resistance.
- No Professional Help: Farmers often inject animals on their own judgment of signs and symptoms of a disease without any veterinary supervision.
- Indiscriminate Usage: Dairy farmers indiscriminately use antibiotics for diseases such as mastitis (infection/inflammation of the udder) which is a common ailment in dairy animals.
- The antibodies used by them often include Critically Important Antibiotics (CIAs) for humans.
- The WHO has warned that the CIAs should be preserved in view of the growing crisis of antibiotic resistance.
- Farmers often sell milk while the animal is under treatment, which increases the chances of antibiotic residues.

Easy Availability: The antibiotics are easily available without the prescription of a registered veterinarian and stocked at farms.