DDT to South Africa

GS-Paper-2 I.R India and Africa (PT-MAINS)

Recently, HIL (India) Limited has supplied 20.60 Metric tonne of Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), a fertilizer to South Africa for their malaria control program. The Company is further in the process of supplying DDT to Zimbabwe and Zambia in the current Financial Year 2020-21.

HIL (India) Limited

It is a PSU under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. It was incorporated in 1954 to manufacture and supply DDT to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for malaria control programmes. It is the sole manufacturer of DDT globally.

DDT:
It is a colorless, tasteless, and almost odorless crystalline chemical compound. It was first synthesized in 1874 by the Austrian chemist Othmar Zeidler. Its insecticidal action was discovered by the Swiss chemist Paul Hermann Muller in 1939.

He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1948 "for his discovery of the high efficiency of DDT as a contact poison against several arthropods. Arthropods are invertebrate species which include insects (Mosquitos), arachnids (Spiders), and crustaceans (Crabs) etc. Originally developed as an insecticide, it became infamous for its environmental impacts.

A worldwide ban on agricultural use was formalized under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. However, its limited use in disease vector control continues, because of its effectiveness in reducing malarial infections.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends DDT as one of the efficient Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) chemicals to curb mosquito menace and it is widely used by Southern African countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique and India. IRS is a core vector control intervention that involves the application of a residual insecticide to internal walls and ceilings of housing structures where malaria vectors may come into contact with the insecticide.

Supply to South Africa: South Africa will be utilising DDT in three provinces
bordering Mozambique. The region is highly affected with Malaria and it has reported maximum morbidity and mortality.

Supply to Other Countries: HIL (India) Limited has recently exported Malathion Technical 95% to Iran under Government-to-Government initiative for the Locust Control Programme and also exported Agrochemical-fungicide to Latin American region.

Malaria

Malaria is caused by Plasmodium parasites. The parasites are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes, called "malaria vectors".

Impact: Malaria continues to be one of the major public health problems globally. In 2018, an estimated 228 million cases of malaria occurred worldwide.

Most of the cases and deaths (93%) were reported from African Region. In the South East Asia Region, India accounts for the majority of cases and death.

According to World Malaria Report 2019, India reported 2.6 million fewer cases in 2018 compared to 2017. Thus the overall incidence of malaria in the country has reduced.

However, 7 states (Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh) account for about 90% of the burden of malaria cases in India.