Agriculture Ministry relaxes fumigation condition on imported onion

Syllabus subtopic: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers

News: In the light of public concern over high prices of onions in the market the Ministry of Agriculture has decided to allow relaxation from the condition of fumigation and endorsement on PSC as per the Plant Quarantine Order, 2003 for onion imports upto 30th November 2019

Prelims and Mains focus: effect of this measure on onion farmers, about Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures

What is fumigation?

- Fumigation is a method of pest control that completely fills an area with gaseous pesticides (known as fumigants) to suffocate or poison the pests within.

About Plant Quarantine

- Plant quarantine is the restriction imposed by authorities on the production, movement and existence of plants or plant materials or animal products or any other article or normal activity of persons to control the introduction or spread of a pest.
**Plant Quarantine Order, 2003**

The Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order, 2003 aims

- to prevent the introduction and spread of exotic pests that are destructive, by regulating the import of plants and plant products through adequate policy and statutory measures
- to support India’s agricultural exports through credible export certification
- to facilitate safe global trade in agriculture by assisting producers, exporters and importers and by providing technically comprehensive and credible phytosanitary certification.

**Salient features**

- It places a prohibition on the import of commodities contaminated with weeds and/or alien species. Import of packaging material of plant origin is restricted unless the material has been treated.
- Mandatory permit requirement on imports of seeds, including flower seeds, propagating material and mushroom spawn cultures.
- It classifies Agricultural imports as:
  1. a) Prohibited plant species
  2. b) Restricted species where import is permitted only by authorized institutions
  3. c) Restricted species permitted only with additional declarations of freedom from quarantine pests and subject to specified treatment certifications
  4. d) Plant material imported for consumption or industrial processing permitted with normal phytosanitary certification

**It includes provisions for regulating the import of:**

- soil, peat and sphagnum moss
- germlasm, genetically modified organisms and transgenic material for research
- live insects, microbial cultures and biocontrol agents
- timber and wooden logs.

**Phytosanitary Certificate**

- Phytosanitary Certificate is a certificate that certifies plant and plant products are free from regulated pests, and conforms with other phytosanitary requirements as specified from the importing country.
- Phytosanitary certificate procedures are undertaken as per the guidelines of National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) or equivalent authorities in a country, certifying to meet import phytosanitary requirements.
- Each country has designed certain parameters to meet with the phytosanitary requirements of foreign countries, as per the guidelines of WTO agreement.
Too hot to handle

Onion prices usually rise in the last months of every year and 2019 is no exception. A look at the bulb's price trend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Bengaluru</th>
<th>Chennai</th>
<th>Delhi</th>
<th>Hyderabad</th>
<th>Mumbai</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>1,965</td>
<td>2,050</td>
<td>1,938</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>1,774</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,875</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<td>Mar.</td>
<td>1,217</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>2,324</td>
<td>1,521</td>
<td>1,052</td>
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<td>Apr.</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>2,017</td>
<td>2,522</td>
<td>2,157</td>
<td>1,433</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>1,513</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>2,523</td>
<td>3,070</td>
<td>1,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>2,808</td>
<td>2,938</td>
<td>4,104</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>1,859</td>
<td>3,830</td>
<td>2,767</td>
<td>4,048</td>
<td>2,062</td>
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<td>Aug.</td>
<td>2,625</td>
<td>3,229</td>
<td>3,338</td>
<td>4,575</td>
<td>2,595</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>3,978</td>
<td>4,925</td>
<td>5,167</td>
<td>6,643</td>
<td>4,881</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>3,825</td>
<td>4,967</td>
<td>5,625</td>
<td>6,284</td>
<td>4,708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seasonal effect: Table lists average retail price every month (₹ per quintal). In Hyderabad, prices soared above ₹60/kg

Costly in November:
Graph shows onion's retail price every day in November.
Each dot represents a day's avg. price (₹ per quintal)

On Nov. 7, avg. price was ₹10,000/quintal in Hyderabad
Nov. 4; ₹9,000/quintal

Compiled by Vignesh Radhakrishnan. Source: National Horticulture Board