

## Frankincense

**Prelims** - Environmental Ecology & Climate Change, International Relations.

**Mains** - GS-III (Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment).

### Why in news?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has recently issued a warning, highlighting the extinction risk faced by Frankincense-producing trees (*Boswellia* species).

- **Frankincense** - Is a fragrant resin obtained from various species of trees belonging to the *Boswellia* genus.
- The five main species of *Boswellia* are:
  1. *Boswellia carterii*
  2. *Boswellia serrata* (Indian Frankincense)
  3. *Boswellia sacra*
  4. *Boswellia frereana*
  5. *Boswellia papyrifera*

### Significance

- Historically famous as *one of the three gifts* (along with gold and myrrh) brought to the infant Jesus.
- Used for centuries in *perfumes and incense*.
- Research suggests *potential medicinal benefits* due to its *anti-inflammatory properties* (for conditions like ulcerative colitis, IBS, bronchitis, sinusitis) and possible use in reducing asthma risk.
- Frankincense was once considered more valuable than gold and was reserved for royalty.
- Frankincense remains *deeply embedded in Dhofari culture*, symbolizing warmth, respect, and hospitality.

***Dhofari culture***, found in the Dhofar region of Oman, is a rich tapestry woven from influences of the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, and the Indian subcontinent.

- It played a significant role in *cultural exchange between Oman and India*.
- **IUCN Red List Update** - Multiple *Boswellia* species on Yemen's Socotra Island have recently been moved to more threatened conservation status categories (Endangered/Critically Endangered).

## Causes of Decline

- **Overgrazing** - Goats graze on saplings, exacerbated by the decline of traditional rotational grazing and larger herd sizes.
- **Climate Change Impacts** - Prolonged droughts hinder sapling survival, while more frequent and intense cyclones, floods, and landslides damage or uproot mature trees.

## Way forward

- Building fences to protect young trees from goats.
- *Promoting frankincense honey production* for alternative income.
- Emphasizing the *need for local action* to combat extreme weather impacts.

## References

1. [Down to Earth | Frankincense](#)
2. [Mint | Frankincense](#)

