

India's Shrimp Industry

Why in news?

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EU to test up to 50 per cent of India's shrimp consignments for antibiotic residues such as chloramphenicol and nitrofurans.

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What are the implications?

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- It has ramped up the cost of India's shrimp exports.

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- India's seafood exporters are miffed by the EU's crackdown, despite the absence of rejections in the recent past.

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- EU tends to use SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary) restrictions in the case of seafood, fruit and vegetables in an exaggerated way, its specifications at times exceeding the norms prescribed in the Codex Alimentarius standards of the FAO.

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What can be India's course of action?

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- India can challenge the EU in the WTO if the latter's SPS norms in the case of shrimps (antibiotics levels in parts per million) are too stringent.

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- Besides antibiotics residues, traceability criterion (where the catch was made) can be hard to meet.

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- The government needs to strike a balance between improving storage, hygiene and marketing infrastructure on the one hand and resisting unreasonable demands that could compromise the livelihoods of 14 million traditional fisherfolk on the other.

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- India's fisher people should indeed be entitled to similar protection as farmers under the WTO's 'livelihood box'.

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- It is now being acknowledged that marine and fresh water pollution, accompanied by the effects of global warming and El Nino, is impacting fish catch, as in the case of anchovies in Peru, even as the global demand for fish is rising.

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- Developing countries, which account for half the fish exports, can make common cause in multilateral trade and climate forums.

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- India accounts for over 6% of the world fish production and 4% of the export of about 150 billion dollars. India should vie for a greater share in China, Japan and West Asia.

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- Fish is endowed with protein and Omega-3 fatty acids, a boon for India where malnutrition and heart disease are endemic. But the quest for a "blue revolution" should not result in the offloading of health, social and environmental concerns.

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Source: Business Line

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