Silk Self Reliance

Why in news?

The recent Union Budget announcement of a rise in customs duty on import of raw silk from five per cent to 15 per cent has brought cheer to silk farmers in the southern states.

How will the rise in customs duty benefit the domestic industry?

- It will directly benefit farmers and reelers, as this will stabilise the price of cocoons and raw silk in the domestic market.
- Second, our imports will get reduced and, thereby, it will be an encouragement and inspiration for local rearers to go for import substitutes and buy bivoltine silk.
- It will also boost production-gradable silk in the domestic market, as the increase in duty will bring down the dependence on imported raw silk.
- The rise in import duty will also encourage farmers to take up sericulture on a larger scale and contribute towards quality raw silk production and attaining self-sustenance.
- In total, we are aiming to eliminate imports by 2022.

What is the present demand for silk and the domestic production?

- About 5,700 tonnes, particularly bivoltine mulberry silk of international quality, mainly from China.

- India is the largest consumer of raw silk in the world.
- Consumption was 28,733 tonnes in 2011-12, while our production was 23,060 tonnes.
- Of this, mulberry silk output aggregated 18,272 tonnes (79.2 %). The remaining 4,788 tonnes (20.8 %) was Vanya silk.
- The balance of the requirement was met through imports.

What is the Central Silk Board doing to bridge the gap between demand and supply?

We have set a target of producing 32,000 tonnes of raw silk, an increase of 39% over the current production during the 12th Five Year Plan.

The government has planned to encourage silk farmers through various programmes - Cluster Promotion Programme, Catalytic Development Programme, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and others.

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Source: Business Standard