



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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BASMATI CONUNDRUM: INDIA-PAKISTAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DISPUTE

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "BASMATI CONUNDRUM: INDIA-PAKISTAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DISPUTE". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ECONOMY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Lately, notable types of basmati rice from India, such as Pusa-1121 and 1509 Basmati, have been found in Pakistan but marketed under different names. This development has prompted Indian scientists at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) to express apprehension, advocating for legal measures to protect the interests of Indian farmers and exporters. It underscores the immediate need for coordinated efforts to safeguard Indian farmers and uphold fair trade practices.

INDIA'S BASMATI UNDER THREAT: UNAUTHORISED CULTIVATION IN PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN'S CULTIVATION OF INDIAN BASMATI VARIETIES

Pakistan's cultivation of Indian basmati rice varieties throws a wrench into India's long-held dominance in this prestigious grain. Popular IARI-developed varieties like **Pusa Basmati-1121 (PB-1121)** have been found **growing in Pakistan under a different name ('PK 1121 Aromatic')**. Even newer, disease-resistant strains like Pusa Basmati-1847 haven't escaped this trend, raising concerns about the control and protection of these intellectual properties.

INDIAN SAFEGUARDS FOR BASMATI CULTIVATION

- India has a **robust legal framework to safeguard its basmati varieties**. The **Seeds Act of 1966** restricts the cultivation of these specific, high-quality strains to designated regions within India, ensuring optimal growing conditions and maintaining the unique characteristics of the grain.
- The **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPV & FR Act) of 2001** further strengthens this framework by protecting the rights of Indian farmers and breeders. **This act allows Indian farmers to cultivate, save, and exchange seeds within the designated areas** but prohibits them from selling branded basmati seeds without proper licensing.

CHALLENGES POSED BY UNAUTHORISED CULTIVATION

Pakistan's unauthorised cultivation of these protected varieties poses a significant threat to the Indian basmati industry.

- **Firstly, it undermines the efforts and investments made by Indian farmers and breeders** who have spent years developing these superior strains.
- Secondly, the **potential for quality dilution exists if these basmati varieties are not cultivated** under the specific conditions outlined by IARI. This **could tarnish India's reputation as a premium supplier** of authentic basmati rice. Lastly, increased competition from Pakistan could lead to lower basmati prices in the global market, impacting Indian farmers' livelihoods.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

1. To address this challenge, India might consider **raising the issue in international forums like the World Trade Organization (WTO)**.
2. By **highlighting the intellectual property rights (IPR) associated with these basmati varieties**, India can seek to curb unauthorised cultivation in Pakistan and protect its legitimate interests in the global basmati market.
3. Additionally, India could explore **strengthening its seed security measures and collaborating with international bodies** to establish stricter regulations on the trade of protected agricultural varieties.

IMPACT ON GLOBAL BASMATI MARKET

India's Basmati Exports Soar, But a Challenge Emerges

India's basmati rice exports are poised for record highs, with **projections exceeding 5 million tonnes in the current fiscal year**. However, a **growing concern threatens** this success: Pakistan's unauthorised cultivation of Indian-bred basmati varieties.

India's Advantage: Superior Quality and Established Reputation

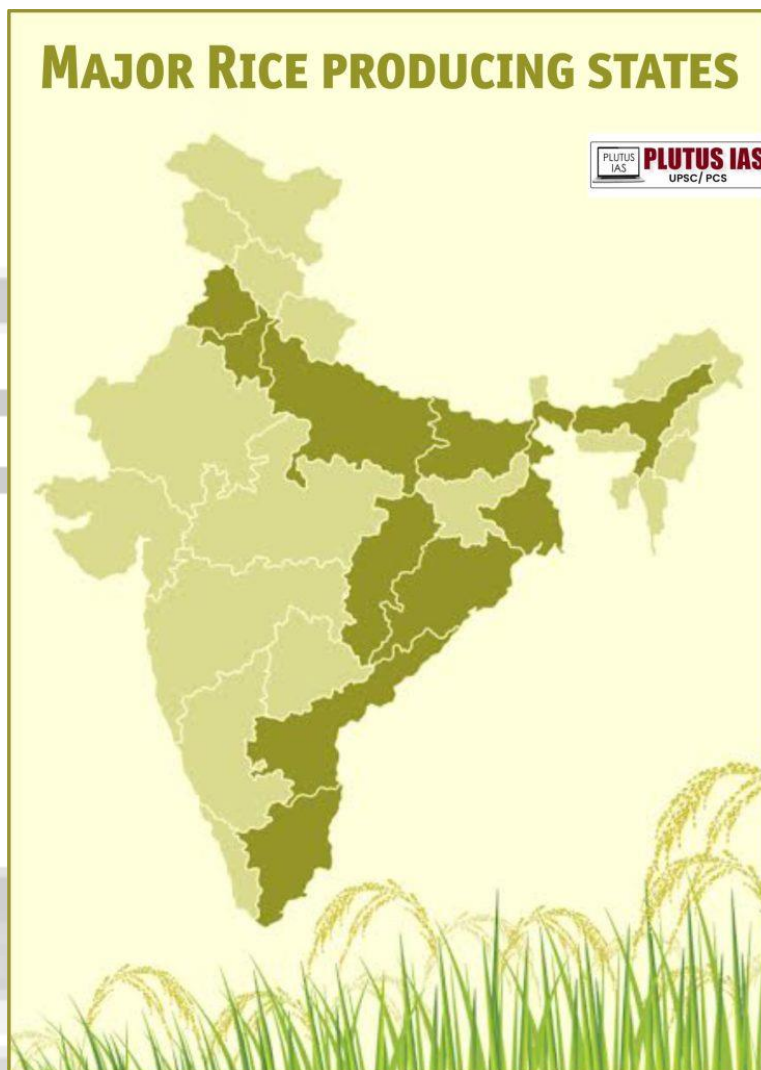
India enjoys a dominant position in the global basmati market due to its focus on **high-quality, IARI-developed basmati strains**. These varieties are **renowned for their distinct aroma, long grain structure, and optimal cooking characteristics**. This commitment to quality has **fostered a loyal customer base in markets like Iran and Saudi Arabia**, where discerning consumers prioritise taste and texture.

Pakistan's Strategy: Competitive Pricing Through Currency Fluctuations

Pakistan's basmati exports have gained traction due to the **depreciation of the Pakistani rupee, enabling them to offer competitive pricing in international markets**, particularly the EU and UK. Here, Pakistan currently holds a **significant 85% market share**. However, **concerns exist regarding the quality of Pakistani basmati**. While these varieties may share names with their Indian counterparts, unauthorised cultivation outside designated growing areas with specific climate and soil conditions could compromise the delicate characteristics that define authentic basmati rice.

Navigating the Future of Basmati Rice

To address the issue of unauthorised cultivation, India might consider **raising the matter at international forums like the WTO**, leveraging its strong case built on intellectual property rights and Geographical Indication (GI) status. Additionally, exploring collaborative efforts with Pakistan on seed regulations and basmati research could be a long-term solution.



ABOUT PROTECTION OF PLANT VARIETIES AND FARMERS' RIGHTS ACT, 2001

India's Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPVFR Act) **strikes a balance between promoting innovation and protecting the rights of those who drive agricultural progress.**

- **Breeders** benefit from exclusive rights to control and profit from new varieties they develop.
- **Researchers** have the freedom to use registered varieties for research, but must seek permission for repeated use in developing new ones.
- **Farmers** can register their own varieties, save seeds, and sell produce, while also being acknowledged for their role in conserving plant diversity.

By safeguarding intellectual property and empowering all stakeholders, the PPVFR Act fosters a robust agricultural ecosystem in India

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. What is/are the advantages/advantages of zero tillage in agriculture?

1. Sowing of wheat is possible without burning the residue of the previous crops.
2. Without the need for a nursery of rice saplings, direct planting of paddy seeds in the wet soil is possible.
3. Carbon sequestration in the soil is possible.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: C

Q2. Which of the following is NOT a type of intellectual property covered under TRIPS?

- (a) Copyrights
- (b) Trademarks
- (c) Patents
- (d) Sovereign rights

Answer: D

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. The post-harvest value chain offers significant opportunities for income generation. Discuss the role of R&D in developing innovative food processing and storage technologies to enhance the value of agricultural produce in India.

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