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Date –30-April 2025

ENHANCING AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS: APEDA CONDUCTS A CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), in collaboration with the Government of Odisha, organised a Workshop-cum-Capacity Building Programme on April 25, 2025, at Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Hall, OUAT, Bhubaneswar, to promote agricultural exports from the state. The event featured over 10 stalls set up by Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), women agripreneurs, government departments, and exporters, showcasing Odisha's unique GI-tagged and indigenous agri-products such as Koraput Kalajeera Rice, Kandhamal Haldi, Koraput Coffee, Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal, Kendrapada Rasabali, and Salepur Rasagolla. Addressing the gathering, Deputy Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister Shri Kanak Bardhan Singh Deo highlighted the state's efforts to promote organic and GI products in international markets and appreciated APEDA's collaboration.



WHAT IS APEDA?

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is a statutory body established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December 1985. The Act (2 of 1986) came into effect

from 13th February, 1986 by a notification issued in the Gazette of India: Extraordinary: Part-II [Sec. 3(ii): 13.2.1986]. The Authority replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC).

FUNCTIONS OF APEDA

- 1. Promotion of Agri-Exports:** Promotes the export of scheduled agricultural and processed food products like fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, cereals, pickles, honey, floriculture products, herbal plants, and beverages.
- 2. Development of Export-Oriented Industries:** Supports infrastructure development and modernisation of agri-processing units through financial assistance, surveys, feasibility studies, and subsidy schemes.
- 3. Registration of Exporters:** Registers persons or companies as exporters of scheduled products to regulate and promote formal exports.
- 4. Standardisation and Quality Control:** Fixes standards and specifications for scheduled products to ensure quality exports and to meet international standards.
- 5. Inspection and Certification:** Conducts inspection of meat and meat products at slaughterhouses, processing units, and storage areas to ensure hygiene, safety, and quality.
- 6. Packaging and Branding Promotion:** Encourages development of improved packaging for export items to enhance shelf life, appeal, and international competitiveness.
- 7. Training and Capacity Building:** Organises workshops, seminars, and training sessions for farmers, exporters, and agripreneurs to build export readiness and knowledge.
- 8. Market Intelligence and Export Promotion:** Provides exporters with market intelligence, trends, and promotional support through international fairs, buyer-seller meets, and digital outreach.

APEDA ROLE ANALYSIS

- 1. Export Promotion:** Promotes exports of agri and processed food products, focusing on diversification and value addition, especially GI-tagged and organic products.
- 2. Policy Implementation:** Implements government schemes under the Ministry of Commerce and aligns with the Agriculture Export Policy (AEP).
- 3. Market Access:** Organises trade fairs, buyer-seller meets, and provides market intelligence to help exporters access global markets.
- 4. Capacity Building:** Trains farmers, FPOs, and exporters on quality standards, certifications, and export procedures.
- 5. Organic Promotion:** Implements the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) for organic certification and export support.
- 6. Infrastructure Development:** Supports cold chains, pack houses, and labs to boost export-ready infrastructure.
- 7. Regulatory Functions:** Registers exporters, sets quality standards, and inspects meat and dairy products for export.
- 8. Partnerships:** Collaborates with state governments, SFAC, ICAR, and others for coordinated export development.

ISSUES IN THE AGRICULTURAL EXPORT

- 1. Inadequate Infrastructure Challenge:** Poor logistics, lack of cold storage, and insufficient transport networks impact export efficiency. India ranks 44th in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) 2023, highlighting significant infrastructure bottlenecks.
- 2. High Export Costs:** Exporters face high freight costs, customs duties, and compliance expenses, making Indian agricultural products less competitive. According to the Indian Council for Research on International

Economic Relations (ICRIER), India's logistics cost is approximately 13-15% of GDP, compared to 8-10% in developed countries.

3. Quality Control and Standards Compliance: Meeting international quality standards (e.g., GAP, HACCP) for exports is difficult due to varying global requirements. According to the APEDA, Indian exports of fresh produce like fruits and vegetables face significant rejections due to quality issues, with over 10% of shipments rejected by the European Union in some cases.

4. Limited Market Access: Trade barriers, tariffs, and non-tariff barriers like sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) restrictions limit access to key international markets. According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India faces significant SPS barriers, with 15% of agricultural exports being impacted by such measures.

5. Dependence on Traditional Markets: Indian agricultural exports are heavily dependent on a few markets, primarily the Middle East and Southeast Asia, limiting diversification. In 2020-21, nearly 40% of India's agricultural exports were directed towards the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

6. Fluctuating Crop Yields: Indian agriculture faces uncertainties due to monsoon dependence, climate change, and pest outbreaks, affecting export consistency. The Ministry of Agriculture reported a 15% decrease in rice exports in 2020-21 due to poor yield caused by erratic monsoon patterns.

7. Lack of Value Addition: Most agricultural exports from India are raw, limiting revenue potential compared to processed goods. India exports over 80% of its agricultural products as raw commodities, while developed countries export more than 70% as processed goods.

8. Regulatory Hurdles and Red Tape: Complicated export regulations, delays in certifications, and multiple approvals increase the time and cost for exporters. A report by APEDA found that 25-30% of export delays are caused by regulatory bottlenecks, such as lengthy certification processes for organic products.

WAYS TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS

1. Strengthen Export Infrastructure: Invest in cold chains, pack houses, testing labs, and logistics hubs near farms. Establish dedicated Agri Export Zones (AEZs) and link them to ports.

2. Promote Value Addition: Encourage food processing industries to convert raw produce into high-value products. Provide subsidies and incentives under schemes like PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADANA Yojana).

3. Facilitate Organic and GI Product Exports: Promote GI-tagged and organic-certified products through branding and international exhibitions. Strengthen certification and traceability systems under NPOP.

4. Diversify Export Markets: Reduce over-reliance on a few regions by exploring Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. Use trade agreements (e.g., CEPA, FTA) to gain preferential access.

5. Simplify Export Procedures: Digitise certification, customs clearances, and inspection processes. Create a single-window export clearance system for agri-products.

6. Capacity Building for Farmers and FPOs: Train farmers and FPOs in quality standards, post-harvest handling, and global market requirements. Link FPOs with export houses and aggregators.

7. Enhance Market Intelligence and Promotion: Provide real-time data on global demand, prices, and regulations. Organise buyer-seller meets, virtual trade fairs, and reverse buyer missions.

8. Policy and Financial Support: Offer export incentives, credit guarantees, and transport subsidies. Implement the Agriculture Export Policy (AEP) effectively at the state level.

CONCLUSION

India's agricultural export potential is immense, owing to its diverse agro-climatic zones, rich biodiversity, and a wide array of GI-tagged and organic products. Institutions like APEDA play a pivotal role in promoting these exports through policy support, infrastructure development, and stakeholder engagement. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, high logistics costs, quality compliance issues, and limited value addition need urgent redressal. Strengthening cold chains, streamlining regulations, diversifying markets,

and building farmer capacity are key to making Indian agricultural exports globally competitive. With coordinated efforts between the Centre, States, and organisations like APEDA, India can realise its vision of becoming a global hub for agricultural and processed food exports.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
2. It promotes the export of scheduled agricultural and processed food products.
3. It is responsible for the implementation of the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS

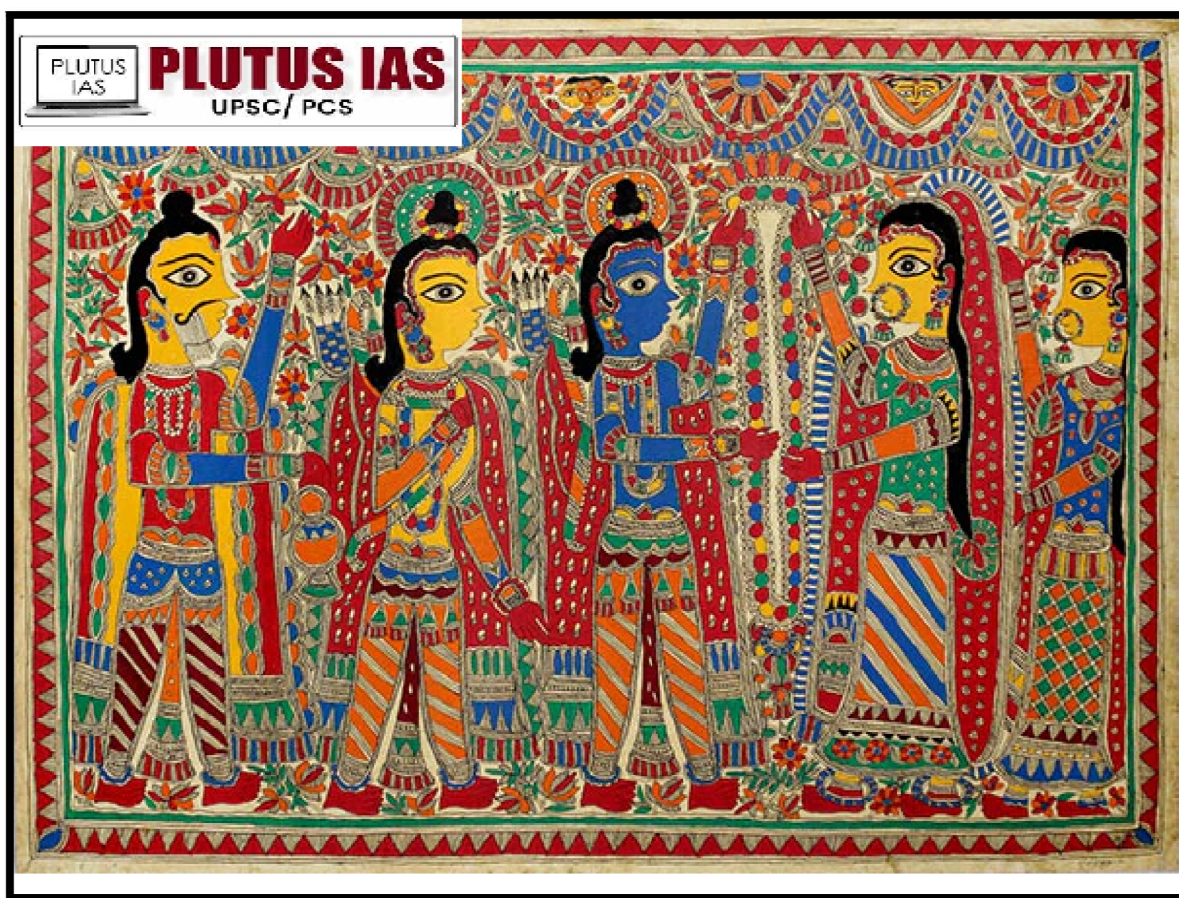
Q. Discuss the role of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in promoting agricultural exports from India. Examine the challenges faced by Indian agri-exports and suggest measures to enhance global competitiveness.

(250 words, 15 marks)

MADHUBANI PAINTING: A CULTURAL CANVAS FROM MITHILA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Bihar recently made headlines as two remarkable Guinness World Records were achieved in distinct categories—Madhubani painting and singing bowl ensemble performances by Buddhist monks. The records were officially recognized when Guinness World Records officials presented certificates to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar at the Pataliputra Sports Complex in Patna. This achievement not only highlights the cultural richness of Bihar but also emphasizes its growing presence in the global arena of cultural heritage and artistic excellence.



ORIGIN OF MADHUBANI PAINTING

The origins of Madhubani painting are deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the Mithila region. According to legend, King Janaka of Mithila commissioned artists to create paintings for his daughter Sita's wedding to Lord Rama, marking the inception of this art form. Initially, women from various communities practiced this art on the walls and floors of their homes during festivals, religious events, and significant life milestones like marriages and births. Over time, the art transitioned from walls to handmade paper and canvas, gaining wider recognition and appreciation.

FEATURES OF MADHUBANI PAINTING

- 1. Use of Natural Dyes and Pigments:** Madhubani artists traditionally utilize natural dyes and pigments derived from plants and other organic sources. For example, black is obtained by mixing soot with cow dung, yellow from turmeric, blue from indigo, and red from the kusum flower. These natural colors not only provide vibrancy but also ensure the eco-friendly nature of the art.
- 2. Intricate Geometric Patterns:** A hallmark of Madhubani painting is the use of intricate geometric patterns and borders. These patterns often consist of repeated motifs like circles, triangles, and lines, which add depth and complexity to the artwork. For instance, mandalas are commonly used to evoke love among newlyweds.
- 3. Symbolic Representation:** Symbols play a significant role in Madhubani paintings, each carrying specific meanings. For example, fish symbolize fertility and prosperity, peacocks represent love and romance, and the sun and moon are depicted for their life-giving qualities. These symbols are deeply rooted in the cultural and religious beliefs of the region.

4. Depiction of Mythological Themes: Madhubani paintings often depict scenes from Hindu mythology, including stories of deities like Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. These narratives are portrayed with rich symbolism and intricate detailing, reflecting the artists' devotion and storytelling prowess.

5. Distinctive Human and Animal Figures: The human and animal figures in Madhubani art are stylized and often feature exaggerated physical traits. For example, faces are shown in profile with prominent, bulging eyes painted frontally. Such distinctive features contribute to the unique aesthetic of the art form.

6. No Empty Spaces: A characteristic feature of Madhubani paintings is the complete absence of empty spaces. Artists fill gaps with motifs like flowers, animals, birds, and geometric patterns, ensuring that every inch of the canvas is adorned, which enhances the visual richness of the artwork.

7. Double Line Borders with Intricate Fillings: Figures and elements in Madhubani paintings are often outlined with double lines, and the space between these lines is filled with intricate patterns like cross-hatching or tiny lines. This technique adds depth and texture to the paintings, making them more engaging and detailed.

THEMES OF MADHUBANI PAINTING

1. Religious and Mythological Narratives: Madhubani paintings frequently depict scenes from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. For instance, artists illustrate the wedding of Sita and Rama, the exploits of Lord Krishna, and tales of deities such as Shiva, Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. These narratives are portrayed with intricate patterns and vibrant colors, reflecting the region's deep-rooted spiritual traditions.

2. Nature and Celestial Bodies: Nature holds a significant place in Madhubani art. Common motifs include the sun, moon, stars, rivers, and sacred plants like the tulsi. These elements symbolize life, fertility, and the harmonious relationship between humans and the environment.

3. Love and Fertility: Themes of love and fertility are central to Madhubani paintings. Artworks often depict couples, such as Radha and Krishna, surrounded by symbols like fish, lotus flowers, and bamboo groves, all representing prosperity and procreation. These paintings are traditionally created during weddings and other auspicious occasions.

4. Social and Cultural Events: Madhubani art captures various social and cultural events, including weddings, festivals, and daily village life. Scenes of rituals, dances, and communal gatherings are illustrated, providing a visual record of the community's customs and traditions.

5. Flora and Fauna: The depiction of animals and plants is prevalent in Madhubani paintings. Common subjects include elephants, peacocks, fish, and trees, each symbolizing different virtues like strength, beauty, and abundance. These elements are intricately woven into the artwork, showcasing the artists' reverence for nature.

6. Tantric and Symbolic Imagery: Some Madhubani paintings incorporate tantric symbols and motifs, representing spiritual concepts and practices. These artworks often feature geometric patterns, mandalas, and depictions of deities in meditative poses, reflecting the mystical aspects of the culture.

7. Dualism and Philosophical Concepts: Madhubani art explores philosophical themes like dualism, illustrating the balance between opposing forces such as day and night, life and death, or joy and sorrow. These concepts are expressed through contrasting colors, symmetrical designs, and symbolic representations, conveying deeper meanings within the artwork.

TECHNIQUE OF MADHUBANI PAINTING

1. Surface Preparation: Traditionally, walls or floors were coated with a mixture of mud and cow dung. Today, artists use handmade paper, canvas, or cloth as a base, sometimes treated for texture.

2. Natural Color Usage: Colors are made from natural sources—turmeric for yellow, indigo for blue, kusum flower for red, and soot mixed with cow dung for black.

3. Drawing Tools: Artists use twigs, bamboo sticks, matchsticks, brushes, and even their fingers or nib pens to draw and fill colors.

4. Outline and Borders: Figures are first outlined using fine lines, often double-lined, and then filled with color. The space between the double lines is filled with detailed motifs.

5. No Empty Spaces: A defining feature is the absence of blank space. Empty areas are filled with geometric patterns, flora, fauna, or symbolic motifs.

6. Symmetry and Balance: Paintings maintain strong symmetry and balance. The compositions are well-aligned and often follow a central axis.

7. Fine Detailing: Cross-hatching, dots, and fine lines are used to add texture and detail, particularly in clothing, backgrounds, and borders.

RECENT EVOLUTION OF MADHUBANI PAINTING

1. Shift from Walls to Commercial Mediums: Traditionally practiced on mud walls and floors, Madhubani painting has now found expression on handmade paper, canvas, fabric, pottery, home décor, and apparel. This transition has made the art form more marketable and accessible to a global audience. Example: Artisans now produce Madhubani-printed sarees, stoles, cushion covers, and wall hangings for urban and international markets.

2. Inclusion of Contemporary Themes: Modern Madhubani artists are increasingly addressing current issues such as climate change, women's rights, and COVID-19 awareness. Example: Padma Shri awardee Dulari Devi created a series of paintings highlighting social distancing and mask-wearing during the pandemic.

3. Rise of Women Artists as Cultural Ambassadors: Once confined to rural homes, many women artists have gained national and international recognition. Their participation in exhibitions, collaborations with designers, and governmental awards have boosted the visibility of Madhubani art. Example: Women from Ranti and Jitwarpur villages have showcased their work in exhibitions in Japan, France, and the USA.

4. Government and NGO Support: Various initiatives by the Government of India and NGOs have helped in promoting and preserving Madhubani art. This includes skill development programs, GI tag recognition (2007), and support through the KVIC and TRIFED platforms. Example: The Government's "One District One Product" (ODOP) scheme promotes Madhubani art as a signature craft of Madhubani district.

5. Digital and E-commerce Expansion: Platforms like Amazon Karigar, Flipkart Samarth, and dedicated art portals like Gaatha, Okhai, and Memeraki have allowed Madhubani artists to sell their works directly to global customers. According to TRIFED, online sales of tribal arts (including Madhubani) have increased by over 60% between 2020 and 2023.

6. Integration with Modern Design and Fashion: Designers are integrating Madhubani motifs into modern fashion, jewelry, and interior design, making it popular among younger, urban audiences. Example: Fashion designer Anita Dongre has used Madhubani prints in her ethnic collection to fuse tradition with modernity.

7. Madhubani in Public and Environmental Spaces: In recent years, artists have painted railway stations, government offices, and public walls with Madhubani murals, combining cultural promotion with beautification efforts. Example: The Madhubani Railway Station in Bihar is decorated entirely in Madhubani murals and won acclaim as India's most artistic station in 2018.

CONCLUSION

Madhubani painting stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and artistic excellence of the Mithila region. Its distinctive features, symbolic depth, and thematic diversity have not only preserved traditional narratives but have also adapted to contemporary contexts. As it continues to evolve and gain global recognition, Madhubani painting remains a vibrant and enduring expression of India's folk art traditions.

Today, it serves as both a livelihood source for rural artisans and a medium for cultural diplomacy. With growing support and innovation, its legacy is set to inspire future generations of artists worldwide.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to Madhubani painting, consider the following statements:

1. It is traditionally practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar.
2. Only synthetic paints are used to create these paintings.
3. It is known for its geometric patterns and mythological themes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

ANSWER:B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. Discuss the historical origin, stylistic features, and thematic diversity of Madhubani painting. How has the art form evolved in the modern era? (15 marks, 250 words)

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