

FORMALIN IN FISH

Prelims- Environment- Pollution & Waste Management

Mains: GS-III- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

- ▶▶ **Context:** Government has banned the import of fish in view of the scare of formalin, a cancer inducing chemical used to illegally preserve fish being found in it.

Background:

- ▶▶ Over the last few days, the word formalin or formaldehyde is on the lips of most fish-loving Goans, after the state Food and Drugs Administration cracked down on consignments of fish from other states laced with the chemical.

Issue in Goa:

- ▶▶ In July last year, the government banned the import of fish in view of the scare of formalin, a cancer inducing chemical used to illegally preserve fish being found in it.
- ▶▶ The ban was later lifted and the government launched stringent checking measures on all fish stock brought to the State.
- ▶▶ The Directorate of Food (FDA) has been regularly testing samples of fish brought to Goa from outside and sold in local markets.

SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT IT		HOW TO DEAL WITH IT?
<p>WHAT IS FORMALIN?</p> <p>▶ Formalin (chemical formaldehyde in water), is a common adulterant used by traders and suppliers to extend the storage life of fish</p> <p>▶ There is increasing use of formalin in freshwater fish sent from AP to northeastern states</p> 	<p>ITS DANGERS</p> <p>Ingesting large amounts of formaldehyde can cause abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury and possible death</p> 	<p>▶ Wash fish thoroughly with running tap water</p> <p>▶ Cook fish to a temperature of 75 degrees C</p> <p>▶ Check fish for adulteration with a paper strip-based kit, 'CITest'</p> 
		<p>SOME STATES AT SEA</p> <p>Goa, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, TN, Kerala & Meghalaya</p>

What is Formalin?

- ▶▶ Formalin is derived from formaldehyde which is a known cancer-causing agent. It is used to preserve bodies in mortuaries.
- ▶▶ It can also increase shelf life of fresh food.
- ▶▶ While formalin can cause nausea, coughing and burning sensation in eyes, nose and throat in the short term, it can cause cancer if consumed over a long period of time.

Why is Fish Laced with Formalin?

- ▶▶ Fish is a highly perishable commodity.
- ▶▶ If it isn't maintained at the proper temperature of 5 degree Celsius, it gets spoilt.
- ▶▶ To avoid that and **increase its shelf life**, the sellers now use chemicals such as formalin and ammonia.
- ▶▶ If the point of sale is far from the place of catch, formalin is used as a preservative. Meanwhile, ammonia is mixed with the water that is frozen to keep fish fresh.

The Approaching Fish Famine:

- ▶▶ Pollution, the overkill of fish for export and to cater to the hospitality industry in the tourism-oriented state, as well as rising sea temperatures, have already triggered a fish famine of sorts in the waters off Goa, driving prices of locally consumed staple fish through the roof.

Operation Sagar Rani:

- ▶▶ In June 2018, Kerala food safety department officials seized nearly 9,600 kg of fish preserved in formalin at a border check post in Kollam district.
- ▶▶ The seized fish included 7,000 kg of prawns and 2,600 kg of other species. The seizure was part of 'Operation Sagar Rani' launched by the state.