India gets rules for export of shisham products eased

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In what could be a relief for handicraft exporters, India has got rules for export of timber-based products made of shisham or North India Rosewood (Dalbergia Sissoo) eased under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES) during its ongoing meeting in Panama.

Relief for trade will be applicable for certain weight categories of such timber-based furniture and handicrafts. India during the ongoing 19th meeting of the Convention argued that the species Dalbergia Sissoo is found in abundance in the country and is not treated as an endangered species. However, concerns were expressed regarding the challenges in distinguishing different species of Dalbergia in their finished forms as many countries expressed that there was an urgent need for developing advanced technological tools for distinguishing the finished wood of Dalbergia, especially at the customs point.

Considering this aspect and in the absence of a clear technology for distinguishing the finished wood, the countries during the meeting did not agree to delist the species from CITES Appendix:II. "However, the relief given in terms of weight of each item will solve the problem of Indian artisan communities to a great extent and will give a tremendous boost to exports of articles produced by them," said the environment ministry in a statement on Monday.

Getty Images/iStockphoto



Relief for trade will be applicable for some weight categories of such timber-based furniture and handicrafts

The Convention during its 17th meeting at Johannesburg, South Africa in 2016 included all species of Genus Dalbergia in Appendix II of the CITES, thereby requiring it to follow certain regulations for the trade of the species.

Due to this restriction, exports of furniture and handicrafts made of Dalbergia Sissoo from India have been continuously falling from an estimated Rs 1,000 crore per annum before 2016 to Rs 500-600 crore per annum after the listing (post-2016).

Since the decrease in exports of Dalbergia Sissoo products has affected the livelihoods of around 50,000 artisans who work with the species, Indian representatives during the ongoing meeting intervened and got the rules relaxed.

"After sustained deliberations by Indian representatives, it was agreed upon that any number of Dalbergia Sissoo timber-based items can be exported as a single consignment in a shipment without CITES permits if the weight of each individual item of this consignment is less than 10 kg," said the ministry.

22-11-2022
Ind Exp Pg 06

For more information visit
University Library Website
Web - uasbagrilibindia.org
E-mail- librarian@uasbangalore.edu.in

Climate change is expected to cost the industry dearly, up to $2.2 bn in the US alone

Cows are too stressed out to keep up with global dairy demand

ELIZABETH ELKIN & PRATIK PARIJA

Heat and drought are inflicting perilous strain on dairy cows across the globe, drying up their milk production and threatening the long-term global supply of everything from butter to baby formula.

Volumes of dairy are forecast to sink by nearly half a million metric tons this year in major exporter Australia as farmers exit the industry after years of pressure from heat waves. In India, small-scale farmers are contemplating investing in cooling equipment they'd have to stretch to afford. And producers in France had to pause making one type of high-quality cheese when parched fields left grass-fed cows with nowhere to graze.

Some of the world's biggest milk-making regions are becoming less hospitable to these animals due to extreme weather brought on by climate change: Cows don't yield as much milk under the stress of scorching temperatures, and arid conditions and storms compound the problem by withering or destroying the grass.

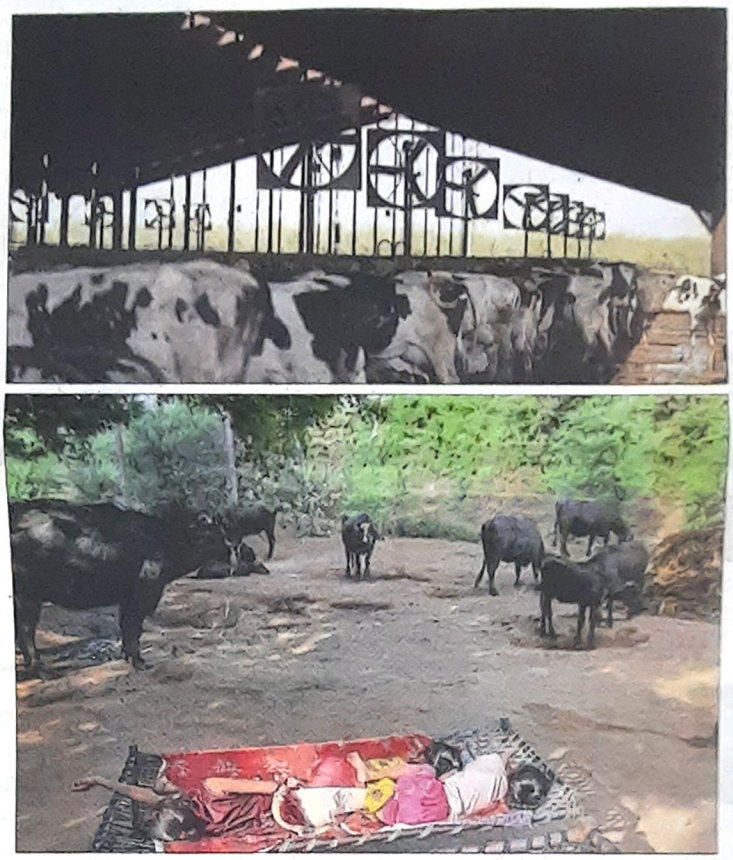
In the US alone, some scientists estimate climate change will cost the dairy industry $2.2 billion per year by the end of the century — a financial hit not easily shouldered by a sector that already struggles to make money. If greenhouse gas emissions remain high, one study estimates that the dairy and meat industries will lose $39.94 billion per year to heat stress by that same date.

At the same time, a swelling middle class in many developing nations is adding to demand for dairy items, while policies aimed at helping the environment are discouraging farmers in some areas from expanding their production. That collision portends higher prices and potential shortages of grocery-list staples such as cream cheese or yogurt. "Climate change adds to the volatility or the variation in your supply, and the knock-on effect to that can be increased food insecurity," said Mary Ledman, global dairy strategist at Rabobank.

Despite expensive efforts to keep their cattle cool, dairy farmers can't escape the impact heat has on their herds. Tom Barcellos, who has been raising and milking the animals for 45 years in Tipton, California, has a complex cooling system at his farm. Complete with fans and misting machines, it even plans around the direction of the wind. But he finds warm nights can sap production.

"If you have higher temperatures in the evening, and it's a little more stressful on the cows, there's a potential to lose 15%, or maybe even 20%, in the most extreme cases," said Barcellos, who has 1,800 cows.

It's a similar story on the other side of the world, where Sharad Bhai Harendra Bhai Pandya and his brother have more than 40 cows in the western Indian state of Gujarat.



(Top) The cattle at a California farm are kept cool with fans and misting machines. (Above) India, the world's biggest milk producer, has millions of small farmers who maintain modest numbers of animals, mostly with trees for shelters. BLOOMBERG

Pandya houses his cattle in a shed with a fogger system, which pumps in water and converts it to mist. But he still sees milk production at his farm decline more than 30% during the sweltering heat of summer.

Rising temperatures are likely to make such conditions a reality for more farmers, for longer stretches of time. That makes for difficult investment decisions.

Ranu Bhai Bharvad, a dairy farmer in India, for his herd of 35 animals, has the shade of a neem tree to fend off heat stress.

"I can't afford to build a shed for my cattle," said Bharvad, who supports his family of 15 with the profits from his farm.

Bharvad is hardly unique: India is by far the world's biggest milk producer, accounting for almost a quarter of all supplies. Its massive volumes are produced in large part by tens of millions of small farmers who maintain modest numbers of animals. Amul Dairy, which buys milk from Bharvad and other farmers like him, is responding to the challenging conditions by taking steps to protect supply.

"During winter when production is more, we conserve extra milk in (the form) of powder and use that in case of deficit during the summer," said RS Sodhi, the managing director of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd, which owns the Amul brand.

Australia's Drought

Australia, the driest inhabited continent on Earth, offers a preview of how the global dairy industry could crack under the pressure of climate change.

The country was once a heavyweight in the business, but milk production has trended sharply downwards and its share of global dairy trade has dropped from 16% in the 1990s to around 6% in 2018.

The downscaling was fuelled by a succession of extreme heat waves, including a drought that lasted from 1997 to 2010 and another that spanned 2017 to 2020. The more recent one was the nation's worst on record, and the pressure it put on prices for water and cattle feed squeezed farmers' bottom lines. Those difficult business conditions added to a mass exodus from the sector: The number of dairy farms Down Under shrunk by almost three quarters from 1980 to 2020.

Now, dairy farmers still face the risk of punishing weather, but fresh pressures have been layered on that are driving still more of them out of the business. In 2022, Australia's milk volumes are forecast to sink by more than 4% to 8.6 million metric tons, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

The USDA says, that reflects dry conditions in key milk-producing regions, but also challenges associated with worker shortages, including some farmers opting to switch to beef cattle production, which is less labour-intensive.

Government policies, too, could end up weighing on global dairy production. In New Zealand, the world's biggest dairy exporter, farmers will start paying a levy on agricultural emissions by 2025. While dairy farmers have done much to mitigate emissions, necessities such as manure, fertiliser and feed production still make them heavy emitters of greenhouse gases. Farm groups are sounding the alarm that the tax might nudge dairy producers to repurpose their land for forestry or other uses.

French Cheese

The challenges facing dairy farmers are already affecting availability of certain products. In France, a type of premium cheese called Salers isn't being produced this year. It must be made using milk from cows that are grass-fed — a hurdle when pastures were destroyed as a heat wave swept the country this year.

While the absence of fancy cheese is hardly an emergency, similar production issues could roil the market on a grander scale amid extreme temperatures.

"If you're talking about a five- to 15-year time horizon, we will probably see production peak and flatten out in regions with a lack of water," said Nate Donnay, director of dairy market insight at StoneX Group. "In the 15- to 30-year horizon, we could see production trend lower in those regions."

All of this could mean higher prices or even shortages of some dairy products.

Melvin Medeiros, a farmer in the leading US dairy producer, California, says extreme weather is likely to reshape farming operations in his state over the next decade. He expects to see fewer cows and a reduction in farmable land — a dynamic he partially chalks up to a lack of government intervention.

Bloomberg

We are confused.

Are these chips now healthy?



Fssai's Proposed Changes To The Labelling Regulations May End Up Misleading Consumers Rather Than Helping Them Make Informed Choices

S Saroja

The Food safety and standards authority of India (Fssai) recently issued the draft Food safety and standards (labelling display) Amendment Regulations 2022, which provides for Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling (FoPNL) of pre-packaged foods. According to the World Health Organisation, the principal aim of FoPNL is to provide clear, easy and readily understood nutrition information on food packs, to help consumers make informed and quick food purchases and healthier eating choices.

But some of the suggested provisions under the FoPNL regulations appear to be against the public interest. For example, the rating system used in the country is termed India Nutrition Rating (INR). It rates the overall nutritional profile for packaged food by assigning it a rating from half a star (least healthy) to five stars (healthiest).

THE PROPOSAL EXEMPTS FOOD LIKE SANDWICH SPREADS, WHICH ARE HIGH IN SALT



Grading the products this way gives the wrong message that all processed foods are healthy at some level, while we know that very often it is not so. Several products are downright unhealthy, and that is not reflected in the regulations. There is no option of a "zero". On the whole, the scoring system is highly complex and could easily mislead consumers. A product which may otherwise get a half-star for an increased presence of negative nutrients may get one or two stars if fibre and proteins are added to it.

Their proposal to include positive nutrients adds to the confusion. While in math, adding a positive and negative gives you a negative result, with the Fssai, adding positive to negative results in a positive. To illustrate, the draft regulations suggest that apart from the four health risk-increasing factors of total sugars, sodium, saturated fat and energy, positive nutrients like fruits, vegetables, nuts, millets, fibre, and protein present also be included in the labelling to rate the overall nutritional value of the food product. This means that as per the suggested regulations, an aerated tetra-pack juice, which has high sugar and fruit extracts in it, could get a 1.5 star because of the presence of the fruit extracts. This shows that the product is healthy at some level while actually, it is high in sugar.

This defeats the purpose of the FoPNL system. It ought to provide clear and easy-to-understand information about products that contain excessive amounts of nutrients of concern, such as sugars, total fats, saturated fats and sodium, to promote healthier choices.

The inclusion of positive nutrients is not the best way to achieve that purpose because they can create a "health halo effect" or "positive bias". Products containing positive ingredients can have a great number of nutrients of concern as well, but due to this health halo effect, they may stimulate excessive consumption leading to an unhealthy diet.

Additionally, it is easy for the industry to manipulate a system that includes positive nutrients. Companies can for instance add positive ingredients to improve product ratings rather than reduce sodium, saturated fats and/or sugars, which again will mislead consumers into excessive consumption.

Providing clear, interpretative warnings about the presence of health risk-increasing factors is the best form of FoPNL that would benefit consumers in safeguarding their health.

In the draft regulation, Fssai proposes using a combination of symbols, graphics or text to provide information about the overall nutritional value of the food or nutrients. This unfortunately leaves room for misinterpretation of nutritional contents to consumers. Science-based representation needs to be uniform. Providing overall nutritional information on the front of the pack is likely to mislead consumers into believing an unhealthy food is healthy.

The draft surprisingly exempts certain processed food products from the purview of the regulations like lassi, flavoured milk, diet sodas and sandwich spreads, which are high in salt, sugar and fat, clearly suggesting the list needs to be revisited.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development adopted by the United Nations recognises non-communicable diseases as a significant challenge to sustainable development.

With India experiencing a shift in dietary patterns and people increasingly consuming more processed and ultra-processed foods that are often high in salt, sugar and saturated fat and are the major contributors to non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, hypertension, obesity and cancer, we must have a simple, clear, interpretative, FoPNL policy that discourages consumers from consuming unhealthy food and nudge them towards healthier food choices.

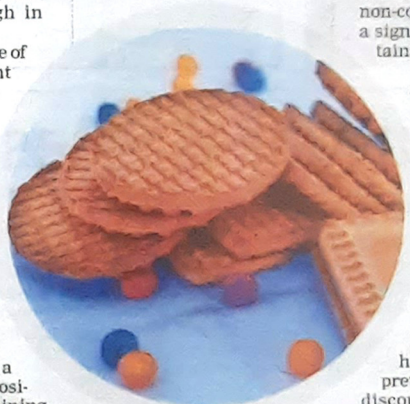
The present draft regulations unfortunately do not appear to achieve any of this.

The writer is the executive director of the Citizen consumer and civic action group

Email your feedback to southpole.toi@timesgroup.com

VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY?

The draft provides for a 48-month voluntary period before the FoPNL becomes mandatory. A voluntary period of four years dilutes the purpose of the regulations. Voluntary regulations can easily be manipulated by the industry as there will be zero compliance. The government will also lack the authority to enforce such voluntary regulations. Regulations such as this, which concern public health should be implemented as quickly as possible as they are directly related to the increase in non-communicable diseases in India.



22-11-2022
Ind Exp Pg 08