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June 1st, 2020

Topic:- Agriculture Challenges.

What is the news?

- Alarm as locusts spotted near the border.

What is Locusts?

- Locusts are large herbivorous insects that can be serious pests of agriculture due to their ability to form dense and highly mobile swarms.
- They are species of short-horned grasshoppers that periodically form large populations in dense migrating groups, where individuals differ in several characteristics from those living separately.
- The crop-destroying swarms first attacked Rajasthan and have now spread to Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

According to experts, broadly four species of locusts are found in India – desert locust, migratory locust, Bombay locust and tree locust. The desert locust is considered the

most destructive.

Punjab situation:-

- The Punjab Agriculture University (PAU) has issued an advisory and stated that the movement had started because of rainfall in desert areas.
- Sources in the Agriculture Department said the primary threat was to areas of Fazilka, Muktsar and Bathinda districts, which are located close to Rajasthan. "At present, the locust swarms which entered India from Pakistan have caused losses in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Like Punjab, the governments of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh are also on alert," an official said.

Threat looms large:-

- Locusts can fly about 150-200 km daily. Sources in the state Agriculture Department said the primary threat is to some areas of Fazilka, Muktsar and Bathinda districts, which are located close to Rajasthan.

(Source:- The Tribune)

Topic:- Efficient use of technology in Agriculture.

What is the news?

- 127 LMT wheat procured despite curbs, untimely rain.

One of the most successful operations affected during the lockdown – the procurement of wheat amid the Covid-19 pandemic – came to an end today, with Punjab once again establishing its reputation as the granary of India. More than 127 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of wheat was procured this year.

Use of technology:-

- It is for the first time that right from harvesting of the crop to its arrival in the mandis, and from purchase to its lifting, everything was technology-driven.
- In such difficult times, we managed to procure huge quantities of grain, which will keep the country's food security intact.
- Each farmer was issued e-tokens before he could bring his products to the market, and 17.38 lakh such passes were issued throughout the procurement season

Case study:-

- Though the procurement is less than what was initially targeted (135 LMT) due to the untimely rain in parts of Punjab just before harvesting, the efficient use of technology for the entire operation, which was spread over 45 days, is now a case study for management schools, including the Indian School of Business (ISB).
- Last year, to date, 130.66 LMT of wheat had arrived in the Mandis.

Reason: -

- Reason for less arrival of wheat this year was not just the reduction in yield and shrivelling of wheat in many places in Patiala and Fatehgarh Sahib, but also because this year, the government had not allowed any cross-border arrival of wheat in Punjab's mandis.
- Many farmers (having larger landholdings) had also held back higher amounts of wheat stocks for personal consumption because of the COVID-induced economic uncertainty.

(Source: -The Tribune)

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