

Govt. seeks feedback on draft Bill to regulate pesticides, promote 'safe and effective' use

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The Union Agriculture Ministry has invited public comments on the draft Pesticides Management Bill that aims to repeal the Insecticides Act of 1968. According to the draft, the new Bill will regulate manufacture, import, packaging, labelling, storage, advertisement, sale, transport, distribution, use and disposal of pesticides to “ensure availability of safe and effective pesticides”.

The Bill strives to minimise risk to human beings, animals, living organisms other than pests, and the environment, and promote pesticides that are “biological and based on traditional knowledge”.

It defines “pesticide” as a substance or mixture of substances, including a formulation, of chemical or biological origin intended to prevent, destroy, attract, repel, mitigate or control any pest in agriculture, industry, pest control operations, public health, storage or for ordinary use. The definition includes any substance intended for use as a plant growth regulator, defoliant, desiccant, fruit thinning agent, or sprouting inhibitor and also any substance applied to crops either before or after harvest to protect them from deterioration during storage and transport.

The draft provides for constituting the Central Pesticides Board to advise the central government and State governments on scientific and technical matters on administering the proposed Act. It will advise the Union Government in making criteria for good manufacturing practices, including processes for pesticide manufacturers, best practices for pest control operators, procedure for the recall of pesticides, the criteria for the disposal of pesticides and packages in an environmentally sound manner and standards for the advertisement of pesticides in all forms of media.

As per the draft Bill, the Union government can appoint a registration committee to make decisions on registration of pesticides, specify conditions subject to which a certificate of registration is granted, periodically review the safety and efficacy of registered pesticides and amend or cancel certificates of registration and review the registration of pesticides.

“Any person desiring to import or manufacture any pesticide for ordinary use, use in agriculture, storage, industry, pest control operations or public health, shall make an application to the Registration Committee in digital form for a certificate of registration,” the Bill said. The Registration Committee shall also maintain a national register of pesticides in digital form.

The Bill provides for a punishment of imprisonment up to five years, or fine from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh or with both for manufacture, import, sale, exhibit for sale, transport, distribute, use or cause to use of pesticide in “death or grievous hurt of another.”