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Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) System for Seed Health

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Introduction:

The sanitary and phytosanitary system (SPS) refers to the regulations of the public authorities (governments) intended at ensuring the safety of human beings, animals, and plants when they are imported, exported, or transported across the borders. Some of these measures may include the inspections, certifications, and quarantines, whereas the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and the agricultural inputs will be governed by specific rules.

Seed health is one of the SPS measures' most significant factors because seed is a starting point of plant generation and the spread of a seed-borne disease can lead to unimaginable consequences in agriculture and food security. The goal of seed health protection during SPS has been attained by many countries via SPS measures that cover the regulations on the import and export of seed as well as production and sale of seeds within the country.

Example of SPS measure that deals with seed health is the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) which is a treaty signed by countries to cooperate on avoiding pests and diseases in crops and plants. IPPC sets the international recognition standards for the certification of seeds as well as other plant products, and then lack of systems in the country is made a barrier-breaking condition to the importations and exportations of seed.

Another case is the EU seed health regulation itself that controls seed without the territory of the EU and governs their production and dissemination as well. The rules propose seed imported into the EU been subject to certain commercial seed health regulations such as seed health testing, seed health certification, inspection of seed production and processing facilities.

Actually, it is each country who has its own phytosanitary legislation and regulations at the national level. Seed industry considers government-controlled seed health testing technology laboratory to control health of seeds for planting and for exporting according to the number of rules and less national regulation and international standard.

SPS Measures:

- Plant and animal pests and diseases, and disease-carrying and causing organisms in seeds, germplasm (e.g., fire blight, brown rot, canker, potato wart, and fungus in plants etc.).

- Post-harvest treatment and mitigation requirements (e.g., chemical and other treatment options, including fumigation and quarantine).

- Import bans on products from specific producing areas (e.g., because of specific pest or disease concerns particular to a region).

- Food additives, residues, and contaminants (e.g., maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticide residues.

- Product and/or processing specifications (e.g., restrictions on the use of antimicrobials, sulfur dioxide, sorbic acid, potassium sorbate, biotech and genetic materials, wax coating, etc.).

- Agricultural biotechnology (e.g., genetically engineered plants).

- Various overlapping technical requirements, such as labeling and standards, including Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or land-use practices, use of third-party auditors, etc.

SPS System in India:

In India, the Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order, 2003 is the principal legislation that regulate the entry of plants and plant products like seeds. Certificate of Plant Protection (CPP) is issued by the Plant Quarantine Organization (PQO) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Department with the purpose of permitting the import of seed or other plant products that are free from pests and diseases.

As per the order, all imports of seeds and other plant products should be accompanied by a Phytosanitary Certificate certified as having passed the inspection carried out by the authority in their country and free from pests and diseases.

SPS measures for seeds:

The seeds which are imported to India are subject to quality control measures, and Seed Certification (quality) Order, 1983 is applied in State level following a similar order by State Seed Certification Department.

National Seeds Corporation (NSC) is also the regulator of seed health and quality in the areas of plant treatment and seeds. The NSC is one government organization that takes the following tasks: the producing and the supply of seed of diverse crops. NSC assumes the role of ensuring the purity and standards of the seed it manufactures or procures for distribution and that the seed satisfies the health and quality standard set by the government through State Seed Certification Agencies

The institutions in India also parallel the regulatory frames, and their contribution includes Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) or the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR). Such institutions carry on research on seed health and supply technical assistance to interested clients, among them PQO, state governments and seed companies to enhance seed health in the country.

Conclusion:

To put it in a nutshell, SPS systems are used for seed health as to shield plant health, enable trade, and achieve food security. Such measures are imposed by national, local, and international governments through regulations on the import/export/sowing of seed and seed planting. In addition, there are inspections, certifications, and quarantines that come into play. Importing of seed is governed by some sure laws and legislations in India which are Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order 2003 and Seed Certification (Quality Control) Order, 1983 respectively. The Plant Quarantine Organization (PQO) plays a key role among other agencies in regulating the import of seed and other types of plant products to ensure they are free from pests and diseases and they are managed by the State seed certification agencies.