

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.5213
TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.04.2025

SAFETY AND QUALITY CONCERNS IN SPICE EXPORTS

5213. SHRI BENNY BEHANAN:

Will the Minister of **CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION** be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of export consignments of Indian spices rejected due to quality concerns in the last year;
- (b) the measures implemented to improve quality control and testing standards for exported spices; and
- (c) the steps taken to strengthen food safety regulations to prevent quality-related export rejections in the future?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI B.L. VERMA)

(a) to (c) : During FY 2023-24, India has received a total of 183 rejection/recall alerts from importing countries /regions due to noncompliance of spices and spice products with applicable food safety and quality parameters. The total number of consignments of spices and spice products exported from India to these countries during the period is estimated to be 31813, of which 183 alerts have been raised, amounting to an alert rate of 0.58 % only. Countries across the world have different standards / levels for contaminants, residues, toxins etc. Failure of spice export consignments with the applicable standards of the importing country, recall of export consignments etc, are common instances in the export- import sector and are directed towards specific export consignments and do not constitute a general ban of the produce from the exporting country.

Spices Board is mandated with the Export Promotion of spices and quality evaluation of spices exported from India (52 scheduled spices and its products) & Research and Development of Cardamom (Small & Large). The Board, in line with its mandate, has been undertaking quality evaluation of export consignments of select spices to select destinations based on previous rejections and non-compliances as well as the requirements of the importing countries.

Under the Board's quality evaluation system for exports, the export consignments are subjected to mandatory pre-shipment sampling, testing and clearance. The list of spices and parameters under mandatory testing are revised by the Board periodically based on the regulatory requirements, emerging risks, recalls by the importing countries etc so as to ensure that the spices exported from India complies with the applicable standards of quality and safety.

The Board has established state of the art, NABL accredited quality evaluation laboratories (QELs) across the major exporting centers, viz., Cochin in Kerala, Mumbai in Maharashtra, Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, Chennai and Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, Narela in New Delhi, Kandla in Gujarat and Kolkata in West Bengal which undertake quality evaluation of export consignments of spices. Further testing facilities have been established at Idukki in Kerala and Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

Also, the Board has empanelled 19 NABL accredited private laboratories across various States of India whose services are availed for analysis of spice export consignments, as required. The Board's QELs also participate in standard setting activities, undertaken by various national and international organizations. During FY 2023-24, the Board's QELs have analysed 1,50,004 parameters in samples from export consignments of spices. The export consignments are screened for known and emerging quality and safety concerns.

Also, the Board has put in a system to handle the cases export alerts, the details of which are given below:

1. The Board has constituted a 'Techno-Scientific Committee' comprising of technical and scientific officials, for conducting a detailed assessment of such failure / recall.
2. The Committee collects all relevant information, analyses the documents related to the alert, including the root cause analysis and if found necessary, inspects the facilities / laboratories involved in the processing and regulatory testing of the recalled consignment.
3. The findings during the inspections are analysed by the Committee and accordingly the committee comes up with recommendations, to the exporters whose products were marked with alerts and to the spice industry.
4. Based on the Committee's recommendations as well as the reports receiving from various sources on the emerging issues/risks in the export of Spices, the Board issues Comprehensive Guidelines, Circulars, Advisories etc for sensitizing the exporters on the relevant issues, so as to ensure compliance of the export consignments of spices with the applicable standards.
5. Also, Spices Board takes up with Indian Embassy/Mission in the countries which have recalled / spices and spice products from India, informing the effective steps taken by the Board for addressing the alert, for taking up the same with the authorities concerned. Further, if found necessary, the Board engages in technical discussions with regulatory bodies of the importing country through the Indian Embassy/Mission, so as to address the issue.

Further, Spices Board had taken the initiative for the establishment of a new Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) under the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) for development of harmonised quality standards in spices and culinary herbs. CCSCH has successfully developed 14 Codex standards for 16 spices— viz. black/white/green pepper, cumin, thyme, garlic, cloves, oregano, basil, ginger, nutmeg, chilli pepper & paprika, saffron, cardamom, turmeric, allspice, star anise & juniper berries.
