

## **India raises concerns with EU, Russia over tea exports**

### Synopsis

India has raised concerns at the European Union's decision to classify dye-making chemical anthraquinone as a pesticide, calling it a non-tariff barrier that has hit tea exports to the trade bloc.

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India has raised concerns at the **European Union's** decision to classify dye-making chemical anthraquinone as a pesticide, calling it a non-tariff barrier that has hit tea exports to the trade bloc.

The government has asked the EU to share the scientific basis for setting the maximum residue level for imported tea, its sampling and testing methodology, and the international standards on which such assessment is based.

The EU has set a maximum residue limit (**MRL**) of 0.02 mg per kg for tea. India argued that anthraquinone is a naturally occurring pollutant or a hydrocarbon and not a pesticide, after various tea importers from the EU conducted tests across plantations in India.

"Its strict testing by the EU has affected Indian tea exports to the EU," said a Geneva-based official, who did not wish to be identified.

**TEA CONCERNS**

**EU has** classified anthraquinone as a pesticide

**EU has set** residue level for imported tea, strict checks

**India calls it** a non-tariff barrier, hits exports

**Russia classifies tea as 'fruit & veg', applies mould criteria on import**

The infographic features a central photograph of two women in a tea plantation, one holding a basket. Below the text is a circular image of a cup of tea.

India exported tea worth \$99.5 million to the EU in 2020-21, down from \$101.61 million in the previous year.

At a meeting at the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** last week, India cited a study of the **European Food Safety Authority** that concluded the lack of data did not allow the authority to recommend any enforcement measure for the potential illegal use of anthraquinone. The EU, on its part, said that it wants to ensure that pesticide residues are not present at levels presenting an unacceptable risk to humans and that MRLs should be set at the lowest achievable level consistent with good agricultural practice.

India also expressed concerns about a draft regulation of the European Commission withdrawing the approval of the active substance alpha cypermethrin, an insecticide, and additional separate action on its MRL. Paraguay, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Russia and Kenya had similar concerns about the move.

On tea-related issues, India pointed out that Russia classified tea as “fruits and vegetables”, due to which a higher level of mould parameters was applied to tea. “This is an anomaly as tea is a processed product while fruits and vegetables are not. Also, there is a higher likelihood of direct consumption of fruits and vegetables whereas tea is infused and then consumed,” said the official.

India said that international standards on food products don't apply mould parameters to bulk tea and tea products and that a similar practice is being followed in the EU, the UK and the US.