

What is Gum Arabic?

May 1, 2023

In news- Ongoing conflict in Sudan has affected supply of Gum Arabic, a key ingredient in everything from fizzy drinks to candy and cosmetics around the world

About Gum Arabic-

- It is a natural gum originally consisting of the hardened sap of two species of the Acacia tree, *Senegalia senegal* and *Vachellia seyal*.
- The term “gum arabic” does not legally indicate a particular botanical source.
- **It is** harvested commercially from wild trees, mostly in Sudan (80%) and throughout the Sahel, from Senegal to Somalia.
- The name “gum Arabic” (al-samgh al-‘arabi) was used in the Middle East at least as early as the 9th century.
- Gum arabic **first found its way to Europe via Arabic ports**, so retained its name.
- It is a **complex mixture of glycoproteins and polysaccharides, predominantly polymers of arabinose and galactose**.
- It is soluble in water, edible, and used primarily in the food industry and soft-drink industry as a stabilizer, with E number E414 (I414 in the US).
- It is a **key ingredient in traditional lithography and is used in printing, paints, glues**, cosmetics, and various industrial applications, including viscosity control in inks and in textile industries, though less expensive materials compete with it for many of these roles.