



## Government Efforts on Improving, Empowering and Stabilizing Natural Farming by Centrally Sponsored Scheme

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### Introduction

Natural Farming is a farming approach characterized by its reliance on livestock and the absence of chemical inputs. Rooted in the principles of agro-ecology, this method constitutes a holistic farming system that seamlessly integrates crops, trees, and livestock, thereby optimizing the use of functional biodiversity. Natural Farming holds tremendous potential for bolstering farmers' incomes while concurrently offering a multitude of benefits. These advantages encompass the restoration of soil fertility, the enhancement of environmental health, and the effective mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. Its core philosophy hinges on harnessing and amplifying natural and ecological processes that naturally occur in and around farming environments. To foster the adoption of Natural Farming practices across the country, the Government of India has initiated various programs and schemes. Notable among these initiatives are the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP). India, according to a report published

by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Statistics 2022, stands at the fourth position globally in terms of certified organic farming areas. Launched in 2015, PKVY represents an expanded facet of the Soil Health Management (SHM) project, a significant component of the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). The primary aim of PKVY is to advocate and support organic farming practices with a central focus on enhancing soil health. Funding for this program is shared in a 60:40 ratio between the central and state governments with Union territories benefiting from full financial support while North Eastern and Himalayan states receive a 90:10 central-state funding distribution. During the fiscal year 2020-21, the Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP) was introduced as a sub-scheme under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY). This sub-scheme is specifically designed to promote traditional indigenous agricultural practices, including Natural Farming, in select states. These states include Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala,

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Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.

According to a study by Singh and Thakur conducted in 2022, farmers have increasingly embraced organic farming through the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) due to the escalating costs associated with conventional, inorganic inputs. This cost burden has emerged as a primary driver motivating farmers to transition to organic farming practices. During their survey, approximately 43.33 percent of the respondents highlighted the pivotal role played by the Department of Agriculture in reshaping farmers' perceptions and encouraging the adoption of organic farming methods. Furthermore, the survey revealed that the predominant reason cited by respondents for engaging in organic farming was the significantly reduced cultivation expenses, primarily because they did not need to purchase inputs from the market, with 21.67 percent of respondents citing this as a key motivator.

In 2017, as documented by Yadav, the Indian government introduced several key initiatives to promote organic farming. These included the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP), the Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana - a national project focusing on organic farming, and the National Mission for

Sustainable Agriculture. Notably, in the 2016–17 budget, two new schemes were launched: the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana and the Organic Value Chain Development in the North-eastern Region. The Indian government has consistently recognized the significance of the agriculture sector as the "foundation of the country's food security." This commitment is clearly demonstrated by the substantial budget allocation of Rs. 35,984 crores in that year. An especially forward-looking and well-placed move by the government was the allocation of Rs. 412 crores from the total agriculture budget specifically dedicated to the organic farming sector. This allocation reflects the government's vision and foresight in harnessing the growth potential of organic crop production in India.

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## PRACTICES UNDER NATURAL FARMING IN INDIA

- i. In June 2018, the government of Andhra Pradesh unveiled an ambitious plan aimed at achieving a significant milestone: to transform the state into India's pioneer in 100% natural farming by the year 2024. This transformation involved a monumental task of transitioning the state's six million farmers to adopt the Zero Budget Natural Farming method.
- ii. The government of Uttar Pradesh has put forth a proposal encompassing 98,670 hectares of land across 35 districts for the promotion of Natural Farming. This initiative comes with a budget allocation of Rs. 19,722 lakhs, aimed at benefiting a total of 51,450 farmers. Notably, this proposal encompasses the Prayagraj district, encompassing an area of 1000.2 hectares, which stands to benefit 913 farmers.
- iii. Starting from the fiscal year 2019-20, the Government of Rajasthan has been proactively advocating Natural Farming as a pilot project within the Tonk, Sirohi, and Banswara districts. This initiative has received financial support from the state budget. This initiative gained further momentum during the 2020-21 financial year when it expanded its reach to include 15 districts across the state. These districts are Ajmer, Bansawara, Baran, Barmer, Bhilwara, Churu, Hanumangarh, Jaisalmer, Jhalwar, Nagaur, Tonk, Sikar, Sirohi, and Udaipur. Under this program, which has been in operation since 2019-20, a total of 7,213 farmers have received training through Gram Panchayat level training programs, encompassing various aspects of Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF). Additionally, in the Banswara district of Rajasthan, 2,080 farmers have benefited from subsidies on input-units as part of this endeavour.
- iv. The Government of Himachal Pradesh introduced a scheme known as the 'Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana,' which is based on the

principles of 'Subhash Palekar Natural Farming' (SPNF), also commonly referred to as Zero Budget Natural Farming techniques. As of October 31, 2021, a significant number of 1,46,438 farmers in Himachal Pradesh have adopted and are actively practicing Zero Budget Natural Farming.

Practices in Diverse Agro-ecological Zones." This study encompassed all the fundamental components of natural farming, including concoctions like Beejamrit, Jeevamrit, Ghanjeevamrit, intercropping, mulching, and Whapasa. It was conducted under the All-India Network Programme on Organic

**Table No. 1: - State –wise details of funds released and area covered and crops grown under (BPKP)**

Sl. No.	States	Area in Ha	Amount released (Rs. in lakh)	No of farmers (in nos.)	Crops under natural farming
1.	Andhra Pradesh	100000	750.00	6,30,000	Maize, Groundnut Cashew, Citrus, Palmoil, Tomato, Cotton, Paddy
2.	Chhattisgarh	85000	1352.52	-	Rice, Wheat, Pulses
3.	Kerala	84000	1336.60	2,10,348	Paddy, Banana, Leafy Vegetables, Cucurbits, Solanaceous varieties, Bhindi, Cool Season Vegetables, Spices and Condiments, Tubers Coconut based inter crops garden like cocoa, nutmeg, coffee, Cashew, Pepper, Coconut, Arecanut
4.	Himachal Pradesh	12000	286.42	1,71,654	Wheat, Maize, Peas, Apple, Stone fruits, Pulses, paddy, coriander and other leafy vegetables
5	Jharkhand	3400	54.10	4000	Paddy, Wheat, vegetables, pulses, oilseeds
6.	Odisha	24000	381.89	22691	Rice, Turmeric, Ginger and Pulses
7.	Madhya Pradesh	99000	787.64	-	Wheat, Rice, Pulses, Soyabean,
8.	Tamil Nadu	2000	31.82	70	Vegetable crops
<b>Total</b>		409400	4980.99	1,038,763	

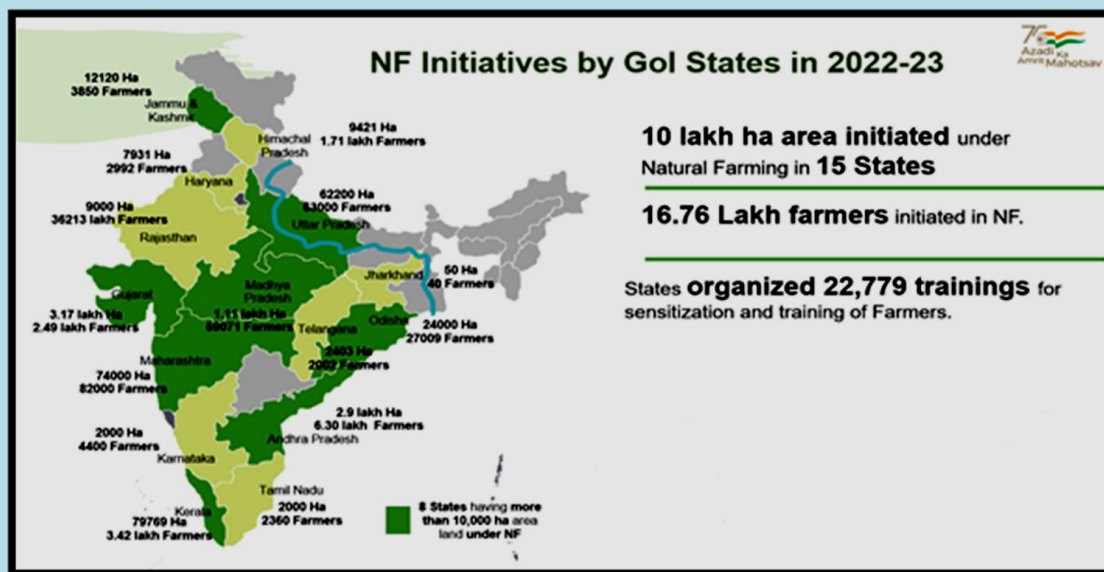
(SOURCE: - Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare)

v. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, in collaboration with ICAR-Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research, Modipuram, launched a comprehensive study titled "Evaluation and Validation of Natural Farming

Farming, commencing from the Kharif season of 2020. The study spanned 20 different locations across 16 states to gain insights into the effectiveness of these natural farming practices.

- vi. A multi-location assessment is currently underway, involving the evaluation of eight distinct cropping systems across various regions. These cropping systems include:
  - g. Cowpea + maize (fodder) - Fennel + cabbage (Gujarat, Rajasthan)
  - h. Soybean + maize for grain - vegetable pea + green coriander (Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand)

**Figure 1: - Details of State-wise area and farmers under natural farming**



(SOURCE: - Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare MoA & FW, GoI.

- a. Maize + cowpea (fodder) - wheat + chickpea (Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand)
  - b. Cotton + green gram - rabi sorghum + chickpea (Tamil Nadu and Karnataka)
  - c. Soybean + maize - wheat + mustard (Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh)
  - d. Rice + dhaincha - maize + cowpea (fodder) (Jharkhand and Maharashtra)
  - e. Turmeric + cowpea - green gram (Kerala and Meghalaya)
  - f. Cassava + vegetable cowpea - greengram (Kerala)
- This comprehensive assessment involves the active participation of 11 State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), eight ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) institutes, and a special heritage university. The objective is to thoroughly study and analyze the performance of these cropping systems across diverse regions

### CONCLUSION

Natural farming represents a comprehensive farming system that harmoniously incorporates crops, trees, and livestock, harnessing the full potential of functional biodiversity. In India, the



government actively promotes natural farming through centrally sponsored initiatives such as PKVY (Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana) and BPKP (Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati). In the current global landscape, numerous countries have adopted natural farming due to its myriad advantages, including enhanced yields, improved health outcomes, increased farmers' incomes, and the reduction of synthetic chemical inputs. Several Indian states have embraced natural farming practices, reflecting the success of government efforts in this regard. However, the true measure of success lies in the widespread adoption of these schemes by farmers, as well as their continued commitment to these sustainable farming practices in the years to come.

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