



"POLICY SHIFTS AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT: BOOSTING ZERO BUDGET NATURAL FARMING INITIATIVES"

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Introduction:

Natural farming is a system developed in the 1980s by Indian farmer, agricultural scientist and extension agent Subhash Palekar who established Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) after a period of self- study of vedas, organic farming and conventional agricultural science, testing methods on his own farm. To motivate farmers to adopt chemical free farming and enhance the reach of natural farming, the Government has formulated National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) as a separate and independent scheme from 2023-24 by upscaling the Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP). The success of NMNF will require behavioural change in farmers to shift from chemical-based inputs to cow based locally produced inputs and thus requires continuous creation of awareness, training, handholding and capacity building of farmers in the initial years.

Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati Program

This scheme as a sub-mission under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)

has been launched in eight states of India. BPKP aims at promoting traditional indigenous practices, which give freedom to farmers from externally purchased inputs. It focuses on on-farm biomass recycling with major stress on biomass mulching; use of cow dung–urine formulations and exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs either directly or indirectly. The scheme has a total outlay of Rs 4645.69 crore for the period of six years (2019-20 to 2024-25).

Under BPKP, financial assistance of Rs. 12200/ha for 3 years is provided for cluster formation, capacity building and continuous handholding by trained personnel, certification and residue analysis with a vision of covering 12 lakh ha in 600 major blocks of 2000 hectare in different states. Each cluster shall comprise 50 farmers or more with 50 ha land and also each cluster can fall in one village or spread across 2-3 nearby villages under the same gram panchayat. Additionally, an assistance of Rs. 8800/ ha for 3 years was allowed from PKVY funds for marketing, value addition and publicity of Natural farming products.

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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	Crops under natural farming
1	Andhra Pradesh	100000	750	630000	Maize, Groundnut, Cashew, Citrus, Tomato, Cotton, Paddy
2	Chhattisgarh	85000	1352.52	-	Rice, Wheat, Pulses
3	Kerala	84000	1336.60	210348	Paddy, Banana, Leafy Vegetables, Cucurbits, Solanaceous, Bhendi, Cool Season Vegetables, Spices and Condiments, Tubers, Coconut Based Inter-crops like Fruit Plants, Cocoa, Nutmeg, Coffee, Cashew, Pepper, Coconut, Arecanut
4	Himachal Pradesh	12000	286.42	171654	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
		409400	4980.9	1038763	

Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana

The Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana is a scheme launched by the Government of Himachal Pradesh to promote sustainable agriculture through natural farming. The objective of this initiative is to encourage farmers to adopt non-chemical, low-cost, climate-resilient, and environment-friendly natural farming practices. Under the scheme, farmers receive financial aid for various aspects of natural farming, including up to Rs. 8000 per farmers for lining cattle sheds to facilitate cow urine collection, purchasing drums (limited to Rs.

750 per drum, three drums per farmer), and

50% subsidy for Desi cow's purchase (up to Rs. 25,000) and additional Rs. 5000 for transportation. The impact has been significant, with over 1.65 lakh farmers adopting natural farming techniques across the state. The scheme aims to bring 50,000 bighas of land under natural farming by 2023-24, contributing to sustainable agriculture and the welfare of farmers.

Pilot project by government of Rajasthan for promoting natural farming

Government of Rajasthan has been promoting Natural Farming since 2019-20 as a

pilot project through State budget. During financial year 2020-21, the scheme was executed in 15 districts (i.e. Ajmer, Bansawara, Baran, Barmer, Bhilwara, Churu, Hanumangarh, Jaisalmer, Jhalwar, Nagaur, Tonk, Sikar, Sirohi and Udaipur) of the State. Under the scheme since 2019-20, 7,213 farmers were trained at gram panchayat level training programme on different components of Zero Budget Natural farming (ZBNF) & 2,080 farmers were benefited through subsidy on input-unit in Banaswara district of Rajasthan.

Gujarat model and scheme for promoting natural farming

In the 2020–21 budget, the Gujarat government introduced special financial assistance to promote natural farming practices. As part of this initiative, two schemes were launched on 17 September 2020.

- 1. Sat Pagla Khedut Kalyanna:** Provides a monthly subsidy of Rs 900 for the maintenance cost of one cow to farming families practicing natural farming.
- 2. Pagala for Natural Farming:** Offers a subsidy of Rs 1248 to farmers for purchasing a natural farming kit to prepare Jeevamrutham.

A.P. Community Managed Natural farming (A.P.C.N.F)

Before 2020, this programme was called as A.P. Zero budget natural farming programme which was started in the year 2016 by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RYSS) established in 2014. The number of farmers who practice Natural Farming has gone up from 40,000 in 2016 to around 7,50,000 farmers and farm workers in 2020-21- an increase of 17 times in the last 4 years. The programme has been recognized as the world's largest agroecology programme in terms of the number of farmers enrolled. By 2024 Andhra Pradesh Govt. to convert state's 60 lakh farmers to chemical free agriculture/ ZBNF.

Significant Event Leading to the Rise of Modern Natural Farming in India

- ✓ Government of Uttar Pradesh has proposed 98,670 ha. area in 35 districts for Natural Farming with budget of Rs. 19,722 lakhs. This would benefit 51,450 farmers. This also includes the Prayagraj district covering 1000.2 ha. area with 913 farmers.
- ✓ Prime Minister Shree Narendra Modi ji has been emphasizing on the importance of chemical free natural farming and said that “we need not only to re-learn the ancient knowledge of agriculture but also to shrapen it for modern times.
- ✓ Karnataka recently initiated implementation of zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) on a pilot basis in 2,000 hectares in each of the 10 agro-climatic

zones of the state. Only a few farmers have been doing it at individual scale in other states.

- ✓ Three Experiential Learning Units (ELU) on Natural Farming have been established at CAU, Imphal and MPAUT, Udaipur during 2021-22 and at SKAUST, Jammu during 2022- 23 for hands on training and developing entrepreneurial skills on natural farming among undergraduate students in agriculture in SAUs/ CUs.
- ✓ Under All India Network Programme on Organic Farming, ICAR- Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research, Modipuram started a study on “Evaluation and Validation of Natural Farming Practices in different Agro- ecologies” at 20 locations covering 16 states.
- ✓ Hon'ble Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made announcements in her budget speech 2022, about promotion of chemical free natural farming throughout the country, with focus on farmers' land in 5 km wide corridors along the river Ganga in the first stage. Budget also mentions that states will be encouraged to revise the syllabus of agriculture universities to meet the needs of natural, zero-budget and organic farming, modern day agriculture, value addition and management.
- ✓ ICAR constituted a committee to overview, accelerate and monitor the

research and area expansion under natural farming. The committee will also guide and streamline the standard protocol for the promotion of natural farming.

