

Subhash Palekar

March 11, 2021

About Subhash Palekar

- He is an Indian agriculturist who practiced and wrote many books about Zero Budget Natural Farming(ZBNF)
- **Birth:** He was born on 2nd February 1949 in Belora in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra
- His concept of NBNF is based on the cultivation without using pesticides
- Award: Padma Shri in 2016
- Education: He has a bachelor's degree in Agriculture from the College of Agriculture, Nagpur
- During college education he was working with tribal people in Satpuda Tribal region. In 1972 he joined the family farm with his father, a natural farmer
- Subash was attracted to the philosophy (Indian ancient thinking) of the Vedas, Upanishads, and all ancient Granthas.
- His Spiritual background was inspired by Saint Dnyaneshwar, Saint Tukaram and Saint Kabir. Searching for truth, he studied Gandhi and Karl Marx comparatively.

Subash Palekar's concept of Zero Budget Natural Farming(ZBNF)

The word 'budget', here, refers to credit and expenses, thus the phrase 'Zero Budget' means without using any credit, and without spending any money on purchased inputs.

NBNF has attained wide success in southern India, especially the southern Indian state of Karnataka where it first evolved. The movement in Karnataka state was born out of collaboration between Mr Subhash Palekar, who put together the ZBNF practices, and the state farmers association Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), a member of La Via Campesina (LVC)

Four pillars of ZBNF

- **Jeevamrutha(fermented microbial culture):** It is a mixture of fresh desi cow dung and aged desi cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour, water and soil on farmland. It provides nutrients, but most importantly, acts as a catalytic agent that promotes the activity of microorganisms in the soil, as well as increases earthworm activity. It also helps to prevent fungal and bacterial plant diseases.
- **Bijamrita/beejamrutha:** It is a treatment used for seeds, seedlings or any planting material. Bijamrita is effective in protecting young roots from fungus as well as from soil-borne and seedborne diseases that commonly affect plants after the monsoon period. It is composed of similar ingredients as jeevamrutha – local cow dung, a powerful natural fungicide, and cow urine, a strong anti-bacterial liquid, lime, soil.

Acchadana – Mulching:According to Palekar, there are three types of mulching:

- **Soil Mulch:** This protects topsoil during cultivation and does not destroy it by tilling
- **Straw Mulch:** Straw material usually refers to the dried biomass waste of previous crops, but as Palekar suggests, it can be composed of the dead material of any living being (plants, animals, etc).
- **Live Mulch (symbiotic intercrops and mixed crops):** According to Palekar, it is essential to develop multiple cropping patterns of monocotyledons (monocots; Monocotyledons seedlings have one seed leaf) and dicotyledons (dicots; Dicotyledons seedlings have two seed leaves) grown in the same field, to supply all essential elements to the soil and crops.
- **Whapasa – moisture:** According to him, what roots need is water vapor. Whapasa is the condition where there are both air molecules and water molecules present in the

soil, and he encourages reducing irrigation, irrigating only at noon, in alternate furrows ZBNF farmers report a significant decline in need for irrigation in ZBN

Other important principles of ZBNF

- Intercropping – This is primarily how ZBNF gets its “Zero Budget” name
- Contours and bunds
- Local species of earthworms. Palekar opposes the use of vermicompost

Cow dung– According to Palekar, dung from the *Bos indicus* (humped cow) is most beneficial and has the highest concentrations of microorganisms as compared to European cow breeds such as Holstein