

Zero-budget natural farming

January 3, 2022

In news- The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) has issued a notification to all ICAR institutes and vice-chancellors of agriculture universities to take initiatives for the promotion of zero-budget natural farming in India.

About Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF)-

- Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India.
- It has attained wide success in southern India, especially the state of Karnataka where it first evolved.
- The movement in Karnataka state was born out of collaboration between Mr Subhash Palekar, who **developed it in the mid-1990s** in association with state farmers association Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) as an alternative to the Green Revolution's methods driven by chemical fertilizers, pesticides and intensive irrigation.
- The term **'Zero Budget'** means the **zero cost of production of all crops**.
- This climate-resilient agricultural method, which is **different from organic farming**, aims at promoting agroecology and adopting low-cost agriculture practice wherein **all critical inputs are gathered from the field and nothing is introduced from outside**.
- Under ZBNF, **neither fertilizer nor pesticide is used** and **only 10 percent of water is to be utilized** for irrigation as compared to traditional farming techniques.



Four pillars of ZBNF-

Beejamrutham is a fermented liquid consisting of cow dung, cow urine, lime, cereal powder and some soil from the field, which is used for seed treatment.

Jeevamrutha is a fermented microbial culture containing desi cow dung, cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour and a handful of soil from the farm which acts as a catalyst that promotes the activity of microorganisms in the soil.

Mulching with fallen leaves or dried straw conserves the soil moisture and maintains the root temperature at 25-32 degree and enhances the microbial activity.

Waphasa is soil moisture in vapour form which plants are able to absorb.

- The ZBNF method also promotes soil aeration, minimal watering, intercropping, bunds and topsoil mulching and discourages intensive irrigation and deep ploughing.
- ZBNF **doesn't promote vermicomposting** as it introduces the most common composting worm, the **European red wiggler (*Eisenia fetida*)** to Indian soils. It is claimed that these worms absorb toxic metals and poison groundwater and soil.
- In June 2018, **Andhra Pradesh rolled out an ambitious plan to become India's first State to practise 100% natural farming by 2024.**

- As per revised guidelines of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, both Centrally-sponsored schemes now allow States to use their funds to promote the ZBNF, vedic farming, natural farming, cow farming and a host of other traditional methods.