

NATURAL FARMING

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Context:

The Finance Ministry has shot down a proposal from the Agriculture Ministry to provide a one-time incentive of Rs 20,000 per hectare to farmers who adopt natural farming, saying it was much higher than what was earlier approved.

Background:

The Agriculture Ministry had circulated a Cabinet note in July last week seeking the Finance Ministry's approval for the incentives to be provided to farmers under the proposed National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF).

Key takeaways:

The Agriculture Ministry defines natural farming as a "chemical-free" farming system that uses only inputs produced using livestock and plant resources.

Natural farming works with the natural biodiversity, encouraging the soil's biological activity and managing the complexity of living organisms, both plant and animal to thrive along with food production system.

Important practices, essential for adoption of natural farming includes:

1. No external inputs
2. Local seeds (use of local varieties),
3. On-farm produced microbial formulation for seed treatment (such as bijamrita),
4. On-farm made microbial inoculants (Jivamrita) for soil enrichment,
5. Cover crops and mulching with green and dry organic matter for nutrient recycling and for creating a suitable micro-climate for maximum beneficial microbial activity in soil.
6. Mixed cropping,
7. Managing diversity on farm through integration of trees
8. Management of pests through diversity and local on-farm made botanical concoctions (such as neemastra, agniastra, neem ark, dashparni ark etc);
9. Integration of livestock, especially of native breed for cow dung and cow urine as essential inputs for several practices and
10. Water and moisture conservation

Additional Information:

1. The Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF), a State government's initiative launched through Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) seven years ago, has won the 2024 Gulbenkian Prize.
2. APCNF is recognized as the world's largest agroecology programme, benefiting over a million smallholder farmers across 5,00,000 hectares in Andhra Pradesh. The APCNF

programme empowers small farmers by enabling them to switch to natural farming methods.

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