



Zero Budget Natural Farming in india: Present Scenario, Performances and Challenges

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ZBNF (Zero Budget Natural Farming) is a collection of farming techniques as well as a grassroots peasant movement that has grown across India. It has had widespread popularity in southern India, particularly in the state of Karnataka, where it originated. Mr Subhash Palekar, who put together the ZBNF practises, and the state farmers association Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), a member of La Via Campesina, collaborated to start the movement in Karnataka.

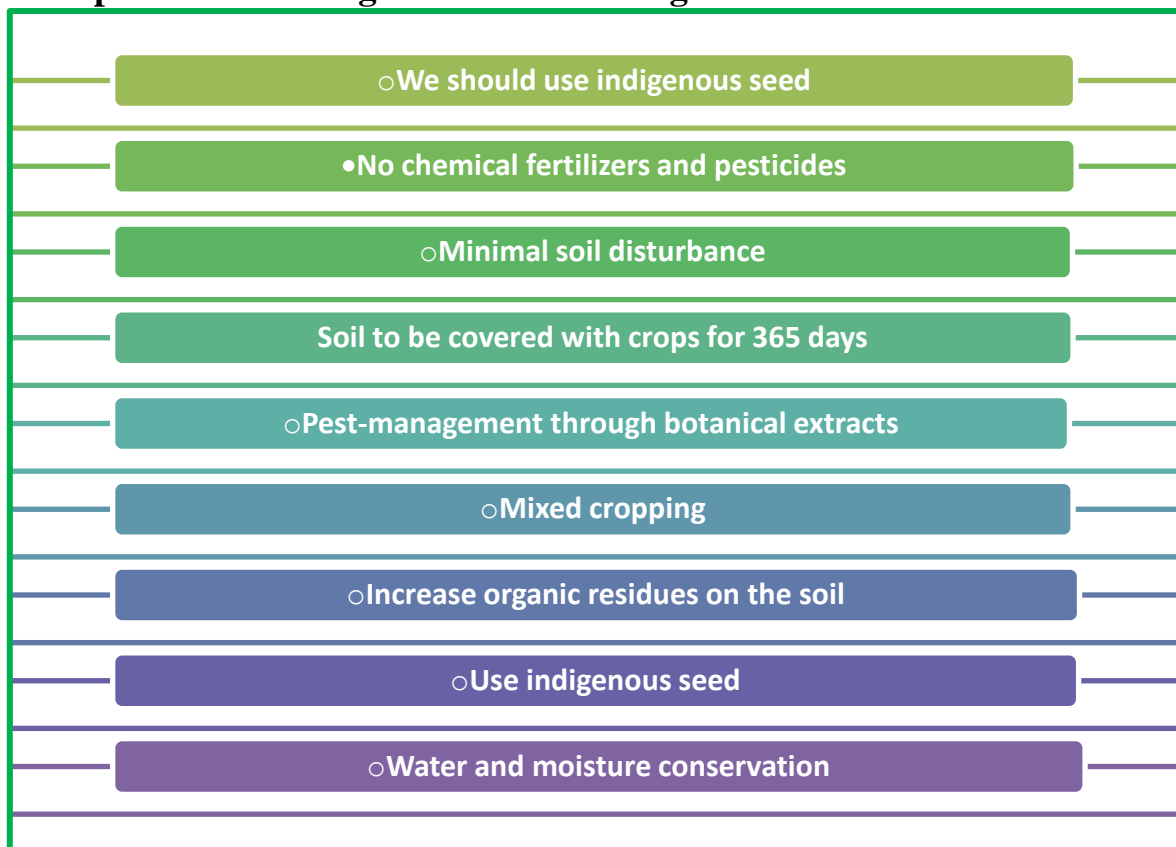
The neoliberalization of the Indian economy has resulted in a severe agrarian crisis, rendering small-scale farming unprofitable. For peasants, privatised seeds, inputs, and markets are inaccessible and expensive. Because of high cost, high interest rates on loans, unpredictable market prices for commodities, rising expenses of fossil fuel-based inputs, and private seeds, Indian farmers are increasingly trapped in a debt trap. In India, debt is a problem for producers of all sizes. In such circumstances, 'zero budget' farming has the potential to eliminate reliance on loans and substantially reduce production expenses, effectively breaking the debt cycle for desperate farmers. The term 'budget' refers to credit and expenses, hence a 'Zero Budget' signifies that no credit is used and no money is spent on purchased inputs. 'Natural farming' refers to farming that is done in harmony with nature and without the use of chemicals.

It discusses the advantages and drawbacks of Zero-Budget Natural Farming. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told a United Nations conference on desertification that India is concentrating on Zero-Budget Natural Farming. ZBNF was also included in the 2019 budget, which aims to treble farmer income by 2022. Scientists from the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, on the other hand, believe that the government should not promote ZBNF unless it has been scientifically validated.

Zero Budget Natural Farming

- Natural farming on a small budget is a chemical-free farming method based on traditional Indian practises.
- It was established in the mid-1990s by agriculturist Subhash Palekar as an alternative to the Green Revolution's practises, which are based on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, as well as heavy irrigation. It is a one-of-a-kind model that is based on agro-ecology.
- It aspires to reduce production costs to practically nil and return farming to its pre-green revolution state.
- It says that expensive inputs such as fertilisers, herbicides, and heavy irrigation are unnecessary.

Principles of Zero Budget Natural Farming



ZBNF is based on 4 pillars

- 1) **Jeevamrutha:** Fresh cow manure and old cow urine (from both India's indigenous cow breed), jaggery, pulse flour, water, and soil are mixed together and spread on farms.
- 2) **Bijamrita:** It's an insect and pest-control mixture made from neem leaves and pulp, tobacco, and green chilies which can be used to protect seeds.
- 3) **Acchadana (Mulching):** It preserves soil surface during farming and prevents tilling from destroying it.
- 4) **Whapasa:** It refers to a situation in which the soil contains both air and water molecules. As a result, the need for watering is reduced.

Advantage of ZBNF

- Farmers are becoming increasingly indebted and suicidal as the cost of external inputs (fertilisers and pesticides) rises. Nearly 70% of agricultural households spend more than they make, according to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), and more about half of all farmers are in debt.
 - ✓ Because ZBNF requires spending money or taking out loans for external inputs, the cost of production might be minimised, and farming could become a "zero budget" activity.
 - ✓ For many small farmers, this would stop the debt cycle, allowing them to double their revenue by 2022.
- A zero-cost eco-friendly farming system is surely a relevant attempt at a time when chemical-intensive farming is causing soil and environmental deterioration.
- Soil aeration, limited watering, mixed cropping, bunds, and topsoil mulching are all encouraged in the ZBNF approach, while excessive irrigation and deep ploughing are discouraged.

- It is suitable for all crops and agro-climatic zones.
- In June 2018, Andhra Pradesh announced an ambitious plan to become India's first state to follow 100 percent natural cultivation by 2024, citing the advantages of ZBNF.

Issues Related to ZBNF

- ✓ Following the switch to organic farming, yields in Sikkim (India's first organic state) have decreased.
- ✓ After witnessing their ZBNF returns diminish after a few years, many farmers have reverted to conventional farming.
- ✓ While ZBNF has undoubtedly aided in the preservation of soil fertility, its contribution to increased production and farmer income has yet to be proven.
- ✓ The ZBNF promotes the need for an Indian breed cow, whose populations are rapidly decreasing. According to the Livestock Census, the total number of indigenous and nondescript cows in the country has decreased by 8.1 percent.
- ✓ The government spends very little money. The government introduced the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, a flagship Green Revolution program, last year, with a budget of Rs 3,745 crore for budget year 2019-20. However, just Rs 325 crore has been given to the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, which was created to encourage organic agriculture and improves soil health.

Future prospects

Before attempting to fulfil ZBNF's ambitious goal, dozens of new structural marketing challenges must be solved first. Consider the following scenario:

- Improving the infrastructure of agricultural markets.
- Including all grain crops and non-food grain crops in the procurement mechanism for all states.
- Implementation of a price deficiency payment scheme for a limited number of crops
- Setting minimum support prices (MSP) in line with agricultural costs.
- Eliminating the minimum export price for agricultural products.
- Immediate action is required to enact laws on the "right to sell at MSP."
- MGNREGS should be connected to farm work in order to lower the cost of agriculture, which has risen at a higher rate in recent years.

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