



## Zero Budget Natural Farming in India

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Zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) promotion was one of Budget 2019's most significant announcements. The Finance Minister made a compelling case for the adoption of ZBNF, referring to it as "getting back to basics". The reaction to this plan has been divided, however some experts have hailed it as a historic choice that will revive the struggling farm economy. The Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog claimed that ZBNF is one of the most effective ways to increase farmers' income by 2022, last year. The NABARD Chairman applauded the idea and stated that it will assist millions of farmers reduce their input costs and engage in sustainable agriculture. Some experts, however, doubt the ZBNF's effectiveness and have flatly rejected the policy, claiming that it is unrealistic to expect ZBNF to even slightly increase farmers' income, much less double it.

The grassroots peasant movement known as Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a set of farming techniques that has expanded to several Indian states. In particular, the southern Indian states have seen significant success especially Karnataka, where it originated. The state farmers group Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), a member of La Via Campesina, and Mr. Subhash Palekar, who developed the ZBNF techniques, collaborated to create the movement in Karnataka (LVC).

All knowledge produced by agricultural universities, in Mr. Palekar's opinion, is untrue. He addresses Liebig as "Mr. Lie Big". He portrays cross-bred cows as "demonic species," chemical fertilisers and pesticides as "demonic substances," and tractors and biotechnology as "demonic technologies". Mr. Palekar also has criticism for organic farming at the same time. According to him, "organic farming" is "worse than [an] atom bomb" and "more deadly than chemical farming". *Eisenia foetida*, the red worm used to produce vermicompost, is referred to by him as the "destructor beast" and vermicomposting is referred to as a "scandal". Steiner's biodynamic farming is also referred to as "bio-dynamite farming" by him. Thus, he opposes both organic and inorganic farming with his own ZBNF alternative.

According to Palekar, 50 lakh farmers have begun using his farming method. The Indian government awarded him the Padma Shri honour in 2016. He is currently being asked to train the farmers of Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarkhand, Kerala, and Karnataka.

### Important principles of ZBNF

1. Intercropping — This is the dominant contributor of ZBNF's "Zero Budget" label. It doesn't mean that the farmer will have no expenses at all; rather, it means that any expenses will be covered by the revenue from intercrops, making farming essentially expense free. Palekar provides a thorough explanation of the crop and tree associations that perform well for the south Asian context.
2. Contours and bunds – Palekar provides detailed instructions on how to create contours and bunds that would store rainwater and maximise its effectiveness for various crops.

3. Local earthworm species. Palekar is against using vermicompost. He asserts that it is most advised to boost organic matter in order to revive local deep soil earthworms.
4. Cow faeces. According to Palekar, when compared to European cow breeds like Holstein, the excrement from the *Bos indicus* (humped cow) contains the largest concentrations of microorganisms and is most useful. The Indian cow, which traditionally has been a part of Indian rural life, is at the centre of the ZBNF system as a whole.

### **The following items must be found nearby to build the four wheels of zero-budget natural farming:**

1. Condensation of water vapour to improve soil moisture.
2. Seed treatment with products based on cow dung and urine.
3. For good soil conditions, mulching and soil aeration.
4. Use mixtures made from cow dung and urine to ensure soil fertility.

### **Zero Budget Natural Farming in India**

- ZBNF is a grassroots peasant movement, as well as a set of farming practises.
- In southern India, particularly in the state of Karnataka where it originated, it has achieved widespread success.
- ZBNF has been used by farmers in Andhra Pradesh with positive results.
- To expand agriculture, the Himachal Pradesh government has launched the ZBNF project.
- Farmer income and crop production by 2022.

### **Features of Zero Budget Natural Farming**

- It is a method of farming that relies on the natural growth of crops rather than the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.
- The Bijamrita, Jiwamrita, Mulching, and Waaphasa are the ZBNF's four wheels.
- Jiwamrita is prepared using water, local cow dung, local cow urine, jaggery, dal flour, and soil.
- The aeration of the soil is known as waaphasa.
- ZBNF is distinct from organic agriculture.
- Intercropping is a crucial component of ZBNF.
- Composting practises on the farm itself boost soil organic matter.
- Keeping water in the agricultural ponds for usage during adverse weather.
- Neem leaves, neem pulp, and green chillies are used to control insects and pests.
- Creating farmer federations and self-help organisations, putting farmers at the forefront of knowledge generation, and disseminating knowledge

### **Advantages of Zero Budget Natural Farming**

- Encourage regenerative farming, enhance soil productivity and biodiversity.
- Assure smallholder farmers a good livelihood.
- Through a variety of multi-layered cropping methods, restore ecological health.
- Anyone with a half-acre plot of land may establish ZBNF.
- Even the most barren terrain can become fertile with ZBNF procedures.
- Nutrition and women's empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

- Indian agricultural scientists must revise their tactics to make farming compatible with the ecosystem.
- A transition to a more resilient and sustainable agriculture that relies less on agrochemicals and more on natural biological and ecosystem processes is required on a global scale.