

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2116
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 13/12/2024

QUALITY DEGRADATION OF SOIL HEALTH

2116. SHRI M SHANMUGAM

SHRI VAIKO

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the fact that experts have expressed concern on soil quality degradation that is affecting 30 per cent of the country's land;
- (b) if so, whether any urgent measures have been suggested to maintain soil quality for sustainable farming;
- (c) whether any awareness campaigns have been launched to arrest the deteriorating soil health by educating the farmers about balanced use of fertilizers, encouraging organic farming and proper soil management practices; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

(SHRI RAMNATH THAKUR)

(a) to (b): Government is aware of concern on soil quality degradation. To address the same, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) recommends soil test based balanced and integrated nutrient management. ICAR has suggested combined use of both inorganic and organic sources (manure, biofertilizers etc.) of plant nutrients and location specific soil & water conservation measures for preventing deterioration of soil health and fertility. Government is implementing Soil Health and Fertility Scheme to assist State Governments to issue Soil Health Cards (SHCs) to farmers in the country. SHCs assist in promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) through judicious use of chemical fertilizers including secondary and micro nutrients along with organic manures & bio-fertilizers, for improving soil health and fertility. 24.60 crore Soil Health Cards have been generated under the Scheme till date.

ICAR is promoting use of organic fertilizers to improve / sustain soil health viz. farm yard manure, compost, vermicompost, green manure, oil / concentrated cakes, biofertilizers, biogas wastes etc. are usually used in agriculture through demonstrations, public campaigns, training and media. In order to promote biofertilizer use, ICAR has developed improved and efficient strains of biofertilizers specific to different crops and soil types under Network project on Soil Biodiversity-Biofertilizers. Government is promoting organic farming on priority in the country for improving soil health and water retention through of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) in all the States/UTs and Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER). Financial assistance is provided for on-farm/off farm organic inputs majority biofertilisers under the schemes.

Union Cabinet has approved National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) on 25.11.2024 to promote livestock integrated farming, involving practices such as use of biomass mulching, multi-cropping system, use of on-farm made natural farming bio-inputs for improving soil organic content, soil structure, nutrition, enhancing soil water holding capacity.

(c) to (d): Under Soil Health & Fertility Scheme, 7 Lakh demonstrations, 93,781 farmer's training programmes and 7,425 farmer's mela have been organized on the balanced use of fertilizers to improve soil quality. Advisories are issued to farmers through Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). In addition, 70,002 Krishi Sakhis are trained to issue soil health card advisories.

Apart from above, National Centre of Organic Natural Farming (NCONF) regularly organises training programs, exposure visits, workshops (Kisan Melas) etc. to sensitize farmers on soil conservation techniques such as crop rotation, residue management, and sustainable farming practices. These initiatives encourage farmers to adopt organic and natural farming methods to enhance soil health and long-term agricultural productivity.
