

Natural Farming in India: Emerging Policy, Gender-Based Livelihoods, and Community-Centric Transformation

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The regulation of Natural Farming through the dispatch of the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) in 2024 marked a clear approach move towards mission-mode advancement of chemical-free, low-external-input cultivating framework.



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ABSTRACT

India's agricultural sector is undergoing a significant transition toward Natural Farming as a strategic response to rising input costs, deteriorating soil health, and climate-induced vulnerabilities. The evolution of Natural Farming policy in India, tracing the shift from early initiatives like the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY, 2015) and Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP, 2020) to the institutionalization of the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF, 2024). Through a mission-mode approach, Natural Farming aims to reduce chemical dependency and enhance the economic viability of small and marginal farmers. A central pillar of this transition is the empowerment of women, who play a critical role in seed management and bio-input preparation through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and decentralized Bio-Input Resource Centres. Natural Farming fosters socio-cultural transformation by integrating indigenous ecological knowledge with scientific validation, thereby strengthening community-led decision-making. Furthermore, the direct

contributions of Natural Farming to household nutrition and food security through crop diversification and kitchen gardens. Using Odisha as a compelling regional model, the analysis demonstrates the effectiveness of adaptive zoning and community-centric implementation. It concludes that the convergence of robust policy frameworks, gender-responsive entry points, and local knowledge systems positions Natural Farming as a transformative pathway for achieving equitable, resilient, and sustainable agricultural development in India.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Natural Farming in India

Natural Farming emerged as a simple approach for India's agricultural move. It responds to rising input costs, declining soil health, climate risk, and food security issues. The regulation of Natural Farming through the dispatch of the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) in 2024 marked a clear approach move towards mission-mode advancement of chemical-free, low-external-input cultivating frameworks (Government of India, 2024). This change shows national agreement that agro-ecological approaches are key to sustainable, resilient, and inclusive agricultural development (Indian Express, 2024).

Evolution of Policy for Natural Farming

The approach of Natural Farming was established some time ago, and the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF), through activities advancing conventional and natural farming improvements. The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), launched in 2015, advanced cluster-based non-chemical farming and collective certification, subsequently making an empowering environment for the appropriation of Natural Farming (Government of India, 2015). This was encouraged by the Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP) presented in 2020, which clearly centered on Natural Farming based on on-farm biomass reusing and locally

arranged bio-inputs (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2020). Complementary encounters from the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER) illustrated the financial and organizational practicality of community-led, chemical-free agribusiness connected to value chains (Government of India, 2018).



Building on these initiatives, the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) was allocated ₹2,481 crore through 2025-26 to expand Natural Farming via organized clusters, large-scale capacity building, and Bio-Input Resource Centres (PM India, 2024). Increased allocations in the Union Budget 2025-26 further strengthen the national commitment to Natural Farming as a central component of climate-resilient agribusiness (Down To Earth, 2025). By reducing dependence on external agrochemicals, the mission directly enhances efficiency and lowers financial risk for small and marginal farmers (NITI Aayog, 2023).

Empowerment of Women in Natural Farming

Women constitute a significant, however the under-recognized section of the agricultural workforce in India, especially in smallholder frameworks. Natural Farming closely aligns with Women's roles in seed management, bio-input preparation, mixed cropping, and family nourishment systems, in this manner reinforcing their useful interest and decision-making organization (Down To Earth, 2024). Reduced input costs and lower introduction to showcase instability upgrade the financial achievability of Natural Farming for farmwomen, who regularly confront basic imperatives in access to land, credit, and expansion administrations (Drishti IAS, 2025).

Economic Viability and Community Enterprises

From a financial point of view, Natural Farming illustrates solid potential to move forward with net cultivation returns by bringing down development costs, while supporting efficiency through moving forward soil wellbeing and biodiversity (NITI Aayog, 2023). The foundation of Bio-Input Resource Centres underneath the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) has made unused agri-business openings, especially for Women's Self-Help Groups, locked in decentralized generation and showcasing of common inputs (PM India, 2024). These community-owned activities advance comprehensive cooperation and nearby value retention.

The socio-cultural impacts of Natural Farming are similarly critical. Selection of Natural Farming improves and encourages intergenerational information exchange by coordinating inborn biological information with logical approval through preparation and

expansion frameworks (MANAGE, 2025). Collective approaches fortify community decision-making and can progressively address caste and gender-based disparities when strengthened by comprehensive regulation components (NITI Aayog, 2023). Youth engagement is moreover improved through enterprise connected to value expansion and local input activities (Indian Express, 2024).

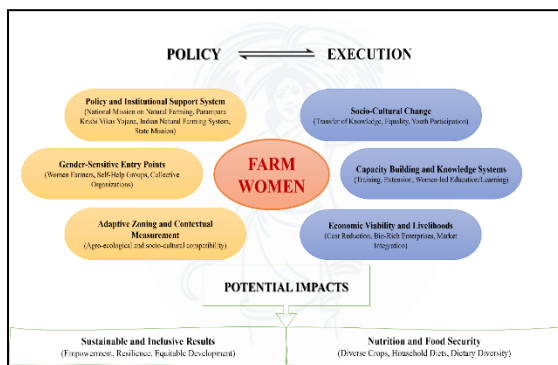
Advances In Household Nutrition and Food Security

Natural Farming specifically contributes to advancing family nourishment and food security by advancing crop diversification, mixed farming systems, and kitchen gardens. More significant accessibility of diverse, chemical-free nourishments improves dietary diversity, especially for women and children (NITI Aayog, 2023). Adaptive zoning of Natural Farming zones based on agro-ecological and socio-cultural conditions empowers region-specific methodologies that fortify strength (Government of India, 2024).

Adaptive Zoning and Regional Implementation

Odisha offers a compelling territorial illustration of Natural Farming execution through joining with national programs and support from Krishi Vigyan Kendras and community resource persons. The state's emphasis on rainfed, tribal, and women-intensive cultivating places underscores the suitability of Natural Farming for job security and biological sustainability (Odisha Diary, 2024). Developing approach bearings underline organization union, women-led schemes, nutrition-sensitive agribusiness, and adaptive zoning to extend Community proprietorship (NITI Aayog, 2023).

Interpretive Framework for Emerging Policy, Gender-Based Livelihoods, And Community-Centric Transitions in Natural Farming



1. Policy and Institutional Ecosystem

- Anchored in NMNF (2024), PKVY (2015), BPKP (2020), and Odisha State missions.
- Provides financial support, technical guidelines, and institutional legitimacy for Natural Farming adoption.
- Ensures alignment with national sustainability and climate-resilience goals.

2. Capacity Building and Knowledge Systems

- Capacity building acts as the bridge between policy intent and field-level adoption.
- Natural Farming is knowledge-intensive. Therefore, sustained skill development is critical, particularly for women farmers.

3. Gender-Responsive Entry Points

- Women farmers, SHGs, and women-led Bio-Input Resource Centres form the primary agents of change.
- Recognises women's roles in seed selection, composting, mixed cropping, and nutrition gardens.
- Strengthens decision-making agency and inclusive participation.

4. Economic Viability and Livelihood Security

- Focuses on reducing external input costs, improving net returns, and emerging agri-business opportunities.
- Supports women-led community enterprises in bio-input production and local marketing.
- Aligns with project objectives on cost-benefit analysis and community ownership.

5. Socio-Cultural Transformation

- Facilitates intergenerational knowledge transfer, integrating indigenous and scientific practices.
- Encourages collective decision-making and reduces caste- and gender-based inequalities.
- Promotes youth engagement through entrepreneurship and value addition.

6. Nutrition and Household Food Security

- Promotes crop diversification, kitchen gardens, and mixed farming.
- Improves dietary diversity for women and children.
- Links production practices directly to household nutrition outcomes.

7. Adaptive Zoning and Contextual Scaling

- Adapts Natural Farming practices to agro-ecological conditions, rainfed areas, and tribal regions, with Odisha as a model.
- Enables region-specific strategies, ensuring climate resilience and sustainability.
- Ensures policies are context-sensitive rather than "one-size-fits-all".

8. Sustainable and Inclusive Outcomes

- Women's empowerment, improved household nutrition, resilient agro-ecosystems, and community ownership.
- Establishes long-term socio-economic and ecological sustainability, fully aligned with the Government of India's objectives.

CONCLUSION

The advancement of Natural Farming arrangements in India up to 2025 speaks to a coherent move from divided activities to a mission-driven system grounded in supportability, value, and adaptivity. The meeting of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP) into National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) has reinforced regulation Back for chemical-free farming, while empowering large-scale appropriation through community-led instruments. When actualized through gender-responsive and locally adjusted approaches, Natural Farming improves financial practicality, engages women, advances family sustenance, and fortifies agro-ecological flexibility. Odisha's encounter highlights the basic part of versatile zoning, collective activity, and women-centric education in interpreting the approach's aim into quantifiable results. Supported open venture, comprehensive expansion frameworks, and community possession will be urgent in situating Natural Farming as a transformative pathway for equitable and sustainable agricultural advancement in India.

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