

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1318

ANSWERED ON:05.03.2013

SOIL HEALTH

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Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in its latest document "Vision 2030" has pointed out that about 120.72 million hectares of the country's arable land is degraded;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether such degradation/deterioration in soil health is present in all dimensions viz., physical, chemical and microbial;

(d) if so, the details and the reasons therefor; and

(e) the remedial measures taken by the Government to improve soil health and productivity including subsidies/aids to promote vermiculture?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI TARIQ ANWAR)

(a) Yes, Madam. As per the latest estimates (NAAS, 2010) based on harmonized database, around 1204.4 M ha of total land of the country is degraded out of which 104.19 Mha is arable.

(b) Deforestation, overgrazing, shifting cultivation, inappropriate land use and faulty management practices, poor water and nutrient management, developmental activities like mining & road construction and lack of adoption of proper soil & water conservation measures are the major causes of land degradation.

(c) & (d): Yes, Madam. Loss of top fertile soil through water & wind erosion, physical degradation through water logging, compaction, crusting etc. and chemical degradation like salinization, alkalization, acidification and nutrient depletion and loss of soil biota and organic matter are the major reasons attributing to such degradation/deterioration of soil health.

(e) The ICAR has developed several location specific bio-engineering measures of soil and water conservation which are implemented through National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Areas (NWDPA) of Ministry of Agriculture, Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) of Ministry of Rural Development and others to prevent erosion of top fertile soil and restore soil health. The Council has also developed cost effective technologies for reclamation of acid and salt affected soils which are promoted through Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Reclamation and Development of Alkali and Acid Soils. The Council organizes trainings for field functionaries on these issues. The Government under a National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility (NPMSHF) promotes soil test based balanced and integrated nutrient management to improve soil health and productivity in the country.

The Council has developed improved technology for preparation of vermicompost from various organic wastes and imparting training, organizing Front Line Demonstrations (FLDs) to educate farmers on this aspect. The Government through National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility (NPMSHF), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) is promoting vermiculture throughout the country.