

# SOIL HEALTH CARD DAY TO BE OBSERVED TOMORROW

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Agriculture Issues and related constraints

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

## Soil Health Card Day to be Observed Tomorrow

### Deteriorating Soil Health Leads to Stagnation in Agricultural Productivity

### Soil Health Leads to Sustainable Farming

Posted On: 18 FEB 2020 6:41PM by PIB Delhi

The Soil Health Card Day will be observed tomorrow. It commemorates the day Soil Health Card Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on February 19, 2015 at Suratgarh, Rajasthan. Coincidentally, the International Year of Soils was celebrated the same year.

The objectives of the Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme are to issue soil health cards to farmers every two years so as to provide a basis to address nutritional deficiencies in fertilization practices. Soil testing is developed to promote soil test based on nutrient management. Soil testing reduces cultivation cost by application of right quantity of fertilizer. It ensures additional income to farmers by increase in yields and it also promotes sustainable farming.

The scheme has been introduced to assist State Governments to issue SHCs to all farmers in the country. SHC provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.

Deterioration of soil chemical, physical and biological health is considered as one of the reasons for stagnation of agricultural productivity in India.

The challenges are enormous: Indian soils are working with negative nutrient balance to the tune of 12-14 million tons per year and the negative balance is likely to increase in future even after using the full potential of fertilizer industry. The Nutrient deficiency in India is in the order of: 95, 94, 48, 25, 41, 20, 14, 8 and 6% for N, P, K, S, Zn, B, Fe, Mn and Cu respectively. The limiting nutrients do not allow the full expression of other nutrients, lower the fertilizer response and crop productivity.

Improving fertilizer/nutrient use efficiency is important rather than applying more fertilizer in Indian agriculture. Nutrient use efficiency presently is low ranging from 30-50% (Nitrogen), 15-20% (Phosphorus), 60-70% (Potassium), 8-10% (Sulphur) and 1-2% (micronutrients).

The overall strategy for increasing crop yields and sustaining them at a high level must include an integrated approach for managing soil health along with other complementary measures which have a major impact on soil quality, plant growth, crop productivity and agricultural

sustainability.

The Government under the component of Soil Health Management of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) is promoting soil test based balanced and integrated nutrient management in the country through setting up/strengthening of soil testing laboratories, establishment of bio-fertilizer and compost unit, use of micronutrients, trainings and demonstrations on balanced use of fertilizers etc.

SHC scheme was launched during 2015 to evaluate soil fertility of every farm holdings across the country in every two years. During cycle – I (2015-17), 10.74 crore Soil Health Cards and during cycle – II (2017-19), 11.74 crore Soil Health Cards have been distributed to farmers. The Government has spent more than Rs.700 crores on the SHC scheme since its launch five years ago.

So far 429 new static Soil Testing Labs (STLs), 102 new mobile STLs, 8752 mini STLs and 1562 village level STLs have been sanctioned under the scheme since 2014-15. Out of these sanctioned labs, 129 new static Soil Testing Labs (STLs), 86 new mobile STLs, 6498 mini STLs and 179 village level STLs are already established.

The Government is also implementing the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme and promoting customized and fortified fertilizers for balanced use of fertilizers. The recommended subsidy rates (in Rs./Kg) fixed during the year 2019-20 for N, P, K & S are Rs.18.901, 15.216, 11.124 and 3.562 respectively. In order to overcome the deficiency of micronutrients in soil and to encourage their application along with primary nutrients, additional subsidy on Boron and Zinc has also been provided @ Rs.300/- and Rs.500/- per tonne respectively.

So far, 21 fertilizers have been brought under the NBS scheme. Presently, 35 customized and 25 fortified fertilizers notified by the Government are in use.

During 2019-20, a pilot project 'Development of Model Villages' has been taken up where soil samples collection has been taken up at individual farm holding with farmer's participation instead of sample collection at grids.

Under the pilot project, one village per block is adopted for holding based soil testing and organization of larger number of demonstrations up to a maximum number of 50 demonstrations (1 ha each) for each adopted village.

So far 6,954 villages have been identified by the States in which against the target of 26.83 lakh samples / Soil Health Cards, 21.00 lakh samples have been collected, 14.75 lakh samples analysed and 13.59 lakh cards distributed to farmers. Apart from this 2,46,979 demonstrations and 6,951 Farmer Melas approved to States.

During the next five years, it is proposed to cover four lakh villages under individual farm holding soil sampling & testing, organize 2.5 lakh demonstrations, setting up of 250 village level soil testing labs, strengthening 200 soil testing labs with Intensively Coupled Plasma (ICP) spectrophotometer and promotion of micro-nutrients in 2 lakh hectare area.

Given that more than half of India's 1.27 billion population depends on agriculture for their livelihood, the declining productivity of soil should be a matter of grave concern for all especially the fact that 86% of these farmers are marginal and small category.

Soil is a vital resource for achieving food, nutritional, environmental and livelihood security and thereby managing soil resource and conserving this vital natural resource base for future

generations without any deterioration is the major challenge in 21st century.

Soil Health Card provides two sets of fertilizer recommendations for six crops including recommendations of organic manures. Farmers can also get recommendations for additional crops on demand. They can also print the card as their own from SHC portal. SHC portal has farmers database of both the cycles and is available in 21 languages for the benefit of the farmers.

Awareness among farmers is being stepped up by coordinated efforts of the Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare and the Department of Fertilizers, backed by technology and network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Indian Council of Agriculture Research. Farmer can track their samples, print their Cards etc at Common Service Centres also at the Farmers Corner of [www.soilhealth.gov.in](http://www.soilhealth.gov.in) and fulfil the mantra of Swastha Dhara to Khet Hara (if the soil is healthy, the fields will be green).

A 2017 study by the National Productivity Council (NPC) found that the SHC scheme has promoted sustainable farming and led to a decrease of use of chemical fertilizer application in the range of 8-10%. Besides, overall increase in the yield of crops to the tune of 5-6% was reported due to application of fertilizer and micro nutrients as per recommendations available in the Soil Health Cards.

\*\*\*\*

APS/PK

(Release ID: 1603569) Visitor Counter : 543

Read this release in: [Hindi](#)

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

