

INDIA LOSING 5,334 MILLION TONNES OF SOIL ANNUALLY DUE TO EROSION: GOVT

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

A farmer at his barren agricultural land near Bikaner. Photo: PTI

India is losing 5,334 million tonnes of soil every year due to soil erosion because of indiscreet and excess use of fertilisers, insecticides and pesticides over the years, Parliament was told today.

About one millimetre of top soil is being lost each year with a total loss of 5,334 million tonnes annually due to soil erosion, Minister of State for Agriculture K. V. Thomas said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.

The rate of loss is 16.4 tonnes per hectare every year, the minister said while quoting from a study conducted by Central Soil Water Conservation Research and Training Institute (CSWCRTI), Dehradun.

Experiments conducted by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) indicated that non-judicious and imbalanced use of inorganic fertilisers (NPK) over years may result in deterioration of soil fertility/nutrient deficiencies, Mr. Thomas said.

On whether wrong irrigation practices were also responsible for this, the minister said excessive use of irrigation water in canal command may lead to secondary salinisation, affecting, thereby, the soil and crop productivity.

Detailing about corrective steps taken by the government, he said in order to promote judicious use of chemical fertilisers the government is advocating soil test based balanced and Integrated Nutrient Management (INM).

INM relies on conjunctive use of both inorganic and organic sources of plant nutrients like Farm Yard Manure (FYM), compost, bio-fertilisers and green manuring.

The government has launched “National Project on Management of Soil Health & Fertility” during 2008-9 to promote soil test based judicious use of fertilisers for improving soil health and its productivity, Mr. Thomas added.

Besides location specific bio-engineering measures developed by the CSWCRTI Dehradun for controlling soil erosion vis-a-vis top soil, the government has launched several programmes during different plan periods including Integrated Wasteland Development Programme and National Watershed Development Programme for rain-fed areas, he said.

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