Issues with Zero Budget Natural Farming

What is the issue?

- A dramatic policy shift towards Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) was announced in the Budget, 2019.
- This emphasis on ZBNF must be analysed critically and holistically.

What are some concerns?

- **Cost -** ZBNFs ability to reduce the cost of production and raise farmers' net returns from cultivation is yet to be proved.
- Little research has been done on these so far.
- **Yield -** There is a concern whether there will be more yield under this practice in comparison to chemical farming as there are varied agro-ecological conditions across states.
- As the demand for high-value commodities is increasing by the day, there is a doubt whether ZBNF would be appropriate for this.
- **Training -** Farmers aren't equipped with appropriate training to make the shift.
- The availability of livestock for urine and dung is doubtful.
- Farmers might go back to a system followed by their parents during **pre-Green Revolution period**.

What are the other measures to be taken?

- **More investment in irrigation is needed.**50% of net sown area is rain-fed.
- Farmers cannot remain dependent on rain.
- The government expenditure is more on the operation and maintenance of operational dams in the country and less towards capital intensity.
- The government should encourage private investment through provision of subsidised credit and subsidy on capital.
- **Farmers are unaware of tech interventions and new farming practices**. The NSSO 70th round (2012-13) noted that government extension programmes have not been able to reach most farmers.
- **Marketing of agricultural commodities has hardly progressed**. Farmers receive a small share of the consumer rupee due to a long chain of intermediaries in marketing.
- Sale of produce in APMC-run regulated markets hardly provides solace.

- A survey says that a majority of farmers prefer to sell their produce to village traders and they receive prices below MSP for wheat and rice in most states.

Source: Financial Express

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