National Agriculture Code

Why in News?

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has begun the process of formulating a National Agriculture Code (NAC), on the lines of the existing National Building Code and National Electrical Code.

What is National Agriculture Code (NAC)?

> *The BIS is the national body which sets standards for different products across various economic sectors.*

- **NAC** – It is a standard for agriculture practices like preparation of fields, micro irrigation and water use.
- It will cover the entire agriculture cycle, and will also contain a guidance note for future standardisation.
- It will incorporate emerging agricultural technologies, novel farming practices, and varying regional conditions across India.
- **Nodal Authority** - Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)
- **Objectives -** The NAC will serve as a guide for farmers, agriculture universities, and officials involved in the field.
- To promote quality and best practices in the agriculture sector.
- To create an implementable national code covering recommendations for agriculture practices taking agroclimatic zones, crop type, till agrifood value chain into consideration.
- To act as an enabler of quality culture in Indian agriculture by providing the required reference to policy makers.
- To create a comprehensive guide for the farming community to ensure effective decision making in agricultural practices.
- To integrate relevant Indian Standards with recommended agricultural practices.
- To address the horizontal aspects of agriculture such as SMART farming, sustainability, traceability and documentation.
- To aid in the capacity building program organized by agriculture extension services and civil society organisations.
- **Features** – It will incorporate emerging agricultural technologies, novel farming practices, and varying regional conditions across India.
- **Two Parts of NAC**
    - The first will contain general principles for all crops.
    - The second will deal with crop-specific standards for the likes of paddy, wheat, oilseeds, and pulses.

- **Coverage of NAC** - It will cover all agriculture processes and post-harvest operations from Crop selection, Land preparation to Harvesting/threshing and Record maintenance
- **Input Management Standards** - Use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and weedicides, as well as standards for crop storage and traceability.
- **Emerging areas -** Natural farming, organic farming, as well as the use of Internet-of-Things in the field of agriculture.
- **Standardized Agriculture Demonstration Farms**- These are experimental sites for testing and implementing various agricultural practices and new technologies in accordance with Indian Standards.
- They will be created in selected agriculture institutes in the country.
- **Developed by** - Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

What are the benefits of NAC?

- **Improve Agri Processes** -It will ensure best practices from crop selection to the storage of agricultural produce.
- **Enhance Efficiency** - Optimum utilization of resources & latest technologies.
- **Better Standardization** - Areas which are lacking standardization will be identified and standards will be developed for them.
- **Improve Quality** – It would act as an enabler of quality culture in Indian agriculture by providing the required reference to policy makers and guidance to the farming community.
- **Agricultural Transformation** - It holds immense potential to transform India's agricultural sector by creating a more conducive environment for farmers to thrive.
- **Improve Rural Livelihood** - By addressing the challenges faced by farmers and promoting efficient and sustainable agricultural practices, the NAC can significantly improve the livelihoods of millions of people in rural India.
- **Environmental Impact** - Development of new and innovative methods of crop production will reduce the environmental impact of agriculture.

What are the challenges in implementing NAC?

- **State-Level Autonomy** – Since Agriculture is a state subject, implementing a national level code for agriculture might have resistance from states.
- **Diverse Regulations -** Harmonizing diverse state agricultural regulations with the NAC can be challenging.
- **Limited Warehousing and Cold Storage –**A lack of adequate warehousing and cold storage infrastructure can hinder the implementation of the NAC.
- **Poor Transportation Networks -** Inefficient transportation networks can increase the cost of transporting agricultural produce, affecting farmers' profitability.
- **Farmer's Illiteracy -** Many farmers may not be aware of the NAC's provisions or how they can benefit from it.
- **Digital Divide -** Many farmers, especially in rural areas, lack access to modern technology and this can hinder the adoption of digital tools and platforms that are essential for the NAC's success.

What lies ahead?

- Promote collaborative effort among central government, state governments, farmers, and other stakeholders.
- Provide training to farmers on the NAC and its standards.
- Giving financial assistance to institutes for providing training to farmers.

References

1. The Indian Express | National Agricultural Code
2. PIB | National Agricultural Code