

National mission on edible oils- Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

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The Union government has recently planned to cover an area **larger** than the entire state of **Sikkim** with palm oil plantations in **6 northeastern states** (NER) as part of a “**National mission on edible oils**”.



[ref-nature]

About the National mission on edible oils- Oil Palm (NMEO-OP):

- The NMEO-OP is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** that aims to enhance edible oil production through area expansion and **Crude Palm Oil (CPO) production** of oil palm and to reduce import burden on edible oils.
- It was launched in **2021-22**.
- It is being implemented in **15 states** of the country including **6 NER-** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
 - **Meghalaya** has **not** joined the mission due to their impact on **biodiversity** and **opposition** by farmers.
- It will help increase production of **seedlings** by establishment of **seed garden, nurseries** of oil palm to assure **domestic availability** of seedlings as per target fixed under NMEO-OP.

Implementation of NMEO-OP:

- It will be implemented in a **mission mode** by many stakeholders prominent being- the State Department of Agriculture, Horticulture, Central University, ICAR-Institutions, etc.
- Its implementation will be monitored by **General Council (GC)** and **Executive Council (EC)** at **national level** and **State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC)** at **state level**.

Targets of National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO-OP):

- To increase area of oil palm to **10 lakh hectares** by **2025-26**, where **3.22 lakh hectares** for

general state and **3.28 lakh ha** in **NER** with targeted FFBs production of **66.00 lakh tonnes**.

- To increase the **Crude Palm Oil** production from **0.27 lakh tonnes** during 2019-20 to **11.20 lakh tonnes** by 2025-26.
- Increase consumer awareness to maintain consumption level of **19.00 kg/person/annum** till 2025-26.

About Oil Palm:

- Oil Palm is an **edible vegetable oil** derived from the **mesocarp** of the fruit of the oil palms.
- Its tree is also known as **African oil palm** or **macaw-fat**.
- It had **originated** from **West Africa** and is comparatively a new crop in India.
- It has **highest** vegetable oil yielding capability per ha.
- It produces two distinct oils- **palm oil** and **palm kernel oil**
 - Palm oil is derived from the **fleshy mesocarp** of the fruit, which contains about **45-55%** of oil.
 - **Palm kernel oil** is obtained from the **kernel** of oil palm, and is the source of **lauric oils**.
- It is used in **beauty** products, as a **biofuel** and for **edible purposes** in the form of cooking oil, shortenings, **margarines**, **blending** with other oil, and in the **manufacturing** of several food products.

Advantages of Palm oil plantations:

- Standing crops like **oil palm** can serve as **net accumulators** of **carbon**, thus offsetting **carbon emissions** arising mainly from fossil fuel consumption.
- An oil palm plantation can "**sequester**" up to **15 tonnes** of **carbon dioxide** from the **atmosphere** for each hectare **planted**, thus mitigating the greenhouse effect like a planted forest.
- Palm oil is devoid of **cholesterol** like other vegetable oils.
- Its plantations in India will **reduce** the cost to the **exchequer** on account of imports and thus reduce the imbalance in **exchange rates** and help maintain **balance of payment**.

Impacts of Palm oil plantations:

- Palm oil is a **water intensive crop** so its **monoculture** may impact the biodiversity of rich forested sites.
- Palm oil has historically produced dire circumstances for regions in terms of **monocropping**, water guzzling tendencies, human- animal conflicts, and soil health deprivation, and can turn a land into **biological deserts**.
- Palm oil plantations had destroyed the **biodiversity** in parts of **Indonesia** and **Malaysia**.
- Many **monocrop oil palm plantations** have displaced **tropical forests** across Asia, Latin America and West Africa.
- About **90%** of the world's oil palm trees are grown on a **few islands** in **Malaysia** and **Indonesia**.
 - **Indonesia** is an island with the **most biodiverse tropical** forests found on Earth.
- According to the **WWF** (World Wide Fund for Nature) in both these countries, there is a **direct relationship** between the growth of **oil palm estates** and **deforestation**.

Cultivation of oil palm in India:

- In **Southeast Asia palm oil plantations** are being done in **large estates** but for India **100%** implementation is done by **small farm holders**.
- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala are the **major Oil palm growing States** and account for 98% of the total production.
- In India, **Oil Palm** is generally grown in **agricultural lands** (all over India) or **jhummed lands** (NER) as against other countries wherein it is grown by **clearing the forest lands**.
 - Hence the Oil Palm cultivation in India **doesn't** affect the **biodiversity**.
- The present policy of oil palm development programme in India is to promote **oil palm cultivation** purely in **agricultural lands**, by either **replacing** low value crop with high value crop like oil palm or in the land **newly** brought under **irrigation** for raising **garden land crops**.