

# NAGPUR TIMES

## Soil Survey Bureau project identifies fallow land to expand agriculture base

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**Nagpur:** In probably the first-of-its-kind attempt in the country, Nagpur-based ICAR-National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP) has identified 13,408 hectares of fallow land in Goa on which contract farming will be introduced by the state government. When cultivated, the land, which is around 10.3% of the area used for food crops in the state, is expected to increase Goa's agricultural production.

Satisfied with the project, the bureau now plans to conduct a similar exercise in other parts of the country, including Maharashtra.

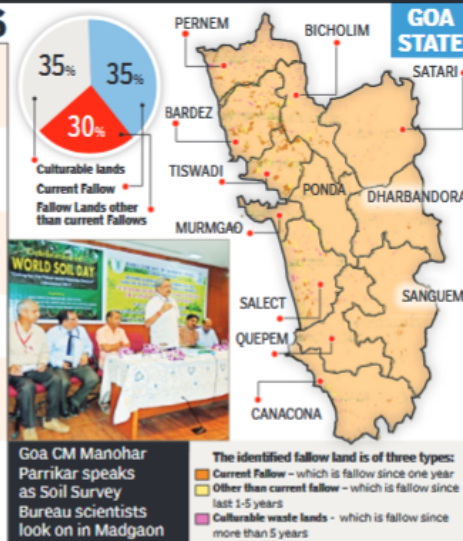
After the project got sanctioned in 2015, a special task force of the bureau constituted in Nagpur carried out an extensive study for one-and-a-half years using remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS). Based on the bureau's report 'Characterization and mapping of land resource of Goa' submitted this year, the Goa government is planning to introduce contract and organic farming to boost the state's farmers and overall agricultural produce.

### LAND REFORMS

- 13,408 hectares of fallow land identified in Goa by National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning
- Fallow lands are those which were once used for farming but is left with no crops to let it recover its fertility
- The bureau carried out an extensive study for one-and-a-half years using remote sensing and Geographic Information System
- The identified fallow land area is part of the Khajan land (lying between the sea and the hills)
- It is affected by extensive erosion taking place due to rivers Mandovi and Zuari and mining sediments
- The mapped fallow land in Goa is equal to its 10.3% area used for food crops, 117% area of the garden crops and 186.4% of the area of the vegetable crops

te's farmers and overall agricultural produce.

The identified fallow land area is part of the 'khajan' land (lying between the sea and the hills). "This is an area which time and again is affected by seawater and fresh water of Mandovi and



Zuari rivers draining the state from hills to the coast. Khajan land is considered as the best potential area for rice cultivation but currently is not being used by the farmers to its full potential," said Surendra Kumar Singh, the director of NBSS&LUP.

As per the mapping, most of the fallow land lie in Tiswadi, Bardez and Salcette talukas of the state.

Singh added that the land is affected by extensive erosion taking place due to the two rivers. "The productivity of these lands has also de-

clined due to flow of sediments from mining," he said.

During the release of the report on Dec 5, which was also the World Soil Day, Goa CM Manohar Parrikar announced that introducing contract farming in fallow lands will increase the state's agricultural production and double farmers' income by 2022.

For this, the bureau is also preparing a land use plan. "For contract farming, the government will be calling corporate investors. The contractor, will raise the crops and also provide employment to landless farmers," added Singh.

Now, the bureau envisages to investigate and map fallow lands in different parts of the country. "There is a lot of potential in North-Eastern states, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and many other places. With good data and management plan, fallow lands could be used to expand land for agriculture purposes," said Singh.

Recently, the bureau had prepared a geo-spatial digital map identifying areas holding high potential for organic farming in the country.