ICAR-NBSS&LUP and Govt. of Maharashtra sign a historic MoU for implementation of NEERANCHAL Programme.

On 20th June 2018, Govt. of Maharashtra through its Watershed Development Agency namely “Vasundhara” entered into an agreement worth Rs. 1.26 crores with ICAR-NBSS&LUP. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has two main components (i) Land resource inventory (LRI) at 1:10000 scale for optimum utilization and conservation, (ii) Resource based land use planning and management including watershed development plan.

Ten watersheds of approximately 5000 ha area each in Amravati and Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra have been identified for implementation of this partnership programme. The programme is unique in the way that the land use plans prepared by the Bureau scientists will be implemented jointly by development departments in consultation with ICAR-NBSS&LUP. The programme is funded by the World Bank. Department of Land Revenue (DOLR), Govt. of India is executing this programme in nine different states of India. Govt. of Rajasthan has also submitted such proposal to World Bank through DOLR for approval.

Director, Dr. S.K. Singh has hailed the achievement and thanked the Govt. of Maharashtra and the Bureau scientists for convincing the state administrators about utility of LRI at 1:10000 scale and thereby proving expertise of the Bureau.

He also informed that a separate NEERANCHAL Cell will soon be set at the HQrs., Nagpur.
Soil bureau joins state govt to implement ‘Neeranchal’

Nagpur: The state government has joined hands with Nagpur-based ICAR-National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP) to implement ‘Neeranchal’, the World Bank-assisted national project on integrated watershed management. It will be implemented in two districts of the state — Amravati and Ahmednagar.

According to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the state government’s Vasundhara Watershed Development Agency (VWDA) and the bureau, five watersheds will be developed in each district. "The area of a watershed will be around 5,000 hectares," said Surendra Kumar Singh, director of NBSS&LUP.

In 2015, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gave its approval to implement Neeranchal in nine states — Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. In every state, two districts were identified for the project’s implementation.

The programme, which is a part of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayai Yojana, aims at reducing surface run-off of rainwater, increasing groundwater recharge and better availability of water in rain-fed areas to increase agriculture productivity.

As a knowledge partner, the bureau plans to demonstrate an effective watershed management based on scientific technology.

Apart from undertaking land resource inventory and resource-based land use planning, the bureau will also provide solutions for salinization, ravines (a form of soil erosion) and mine-affected soil.

"The first step will be scientific collection of data using high resolution remote sensing, digital elevation model, geographic information system (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) to determine slope length and direction, water harvesting potential, run-off, sediment loss and other geographical factors. Based on this, we will select the sites for developing water harvesting structures," said Singh.

Once the structure is ready, rainwater will be harvested to ensure that farmers do not face water shortage during dry spells, said bureau’s principal scientist NG Patil, who is the project’s nodal officer. The bureau will also prepare a soil conservation programme for the two districts. "We are aiming to avoid siltation and enhance crop productivity," he said.

The bureau will also provide advisory on crop suitability depending on the type of soil.

"The conservation plan will include identifying whether land is suitable for BT cotton or not, fertilizer management, irrigation techniques and other components," said Singh.

The Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Rahuri, Dr Pranjubao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola and Maharashtra Remote Sensing Applications Centre, Nagpur, are the implementing partners of the project.