



Saffron Bowl Project

For Prelims: Saffron, Saffron Bowl Project, North East Center for Technology Application and Reach, Other Government Initiatives for Saffron.

For Mains: Government Policies & Interventions, Saffron Cultivation and its Importance.

Why in News ?

[North East Center for Technology Application and Reach \(NECTAR\)](#) under **Saffron Bowl project** has identified a few locations in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya for **saffron cultivation**.

- The total cost of the whole project is **Rs. 17.68 lakhs for Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya**.
- **NECTAR** is an autonomous body under the [Department of Science & Technology \(DST\)](#), which supported a pilot project **to explore the feasibility of growing saffron in the North East region** of India, with the same quality and higher quantity.

What is the Reason for Extending Saffron Cultivation to the North- East?

- Initially, **Saffron production was confined to very few and specific regions of Kashmir**.
- Though the National Saffron Mission brought in several measures, **the area of production was too low**. There were not enough bore wells in the saffron growing regions.
- India **cultivates about 6 to 7 tonnes of saffron while the demand is 100 tonne**.
- To meet the growing demand of saffron the Ministry of Science and Technology, through the **DST**, is now looking at **extending its cultivation to some states in the Northeast (Sikkim now, and later to Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh)**.
- There is a **huge similarity of climate and geographical conditions between Kashmir and few regions of Northeast**.
 - In Arunachal Pradesh, there is a good growth of organic saffron with flowers. In Meghalaya, sample plantations were grown at Cherrapunji, Mawsmai and Lalingtop sites.
- It will also **diversify agriculture and provide new opportunities to the farmers** in the North-East.

What is Saffron and Why is it Important?

- **Saffron:**
 - Saffron is a **plant whose dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower)** are used to make **saffron spice**.
 - Saffron cultivation is believed to **have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants** around the 1st Century BCE.
 - It has been **associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine** and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.
 - It is a **very precious and costly product**.
 - In ancient Sanskrit literature, **saffron is referred to as 'bahukam'**.
 - It is cultivated and harvested in the Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir.

▪ **Importance:**

- It **rejuvenates health and is used in cosmetics** and for medicinal purposes.
- It has been **associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine** and represents the rich cultural heritage of the region.

What are the Seasons and Conditions of Cultivation ?

▪ **Season:**

- In India, saffron Corms (seeds) are cultivated during the **months of June and July** and at some places in **August and September**.
- It starts flowering in October.

▪ **Conditions:**

- **Altitude:** Saffron grows well at an **altitude of 2000 meters above sea level**. It needs a photoperiod (**sunlight**) of **12 hours**.
- **Soil:** It grows in many different soil types but thrives best in **calcareous** (soil that has calcium carbonate in abundance), **humus-rich and well-drained soil** with a pH between 6 and 8.
- **Climate:** For saffron cultivation, we need an explicit **climatological summer and winter** with temperatures ranging from no more than 35 or 40 degree Celsius in summer to **about -15 or -20 degree Celsius in winter**.
- **Rainfall:** It also requires adequate rainfall that is **1000-1500 mm per annum**.

What are the Major Saffron Producing Regions in India ?

- Saffron production has long been restricted to a limited geographical area in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Pampore region, commonly known as Saffron bowl of Kashmir, is the main contributor to saffron production.
 - Pampore Saffron Heritage of Kashmir is one of the **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage systems (GIAHS)** recognised sites in India.
- Other districts producing saffron are Budgam, Srinagar, and Kishtwar districts.
- Recently, the **Kashmir saffron got Geographical Indication (GI) tag status**.

What are Other Initiatives to Promote Saffron Cultivation ?

- The **National Saffron Mission** was sanctioned by the central government in the year 2010 in order to extend support for creation of irrigation facilities through tube wells and sprinkler sets which would help in production of better crops in the area of saffron production.
- Recently, the **Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT) and the Government of Himachal Pradesh**, have jointly decided to increase the production of the two spices namely, Saffron and Heeng (asafoetida).
 - Under this plan, IHBT will be introducing new varieties of saffron and heeng from the exporting countries and will be standardized under Indian conditions.

Source: PIB