



## Weed-Induced Crop Losses

**For Prelims:** [kharif crops](#), [rabi crops](#), [Krishi Vigyan Kendras](#), [herbicides](#), [mechanization](#), [weed management](#), [organic and sustainable farming practices](#), [precision agriculture](#).

**For Mains:** Weed control strategies and government initiatives to mitigate weed problems.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

According to a study by **the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII)**, **weeds** are causing Rs 92000 crore (USD 11 billion) worth of **loss in crop productivity** each year.

- The report highlights the need for **technology-led weed control strategies** to mitigate this growing problem.

### What are the Key Points of the Study?

- **Yield Loss Statistics:** Weeds account for approximately **25-26%** of yield losses in [kharif crops](#) and **18-25%** in [rabi crops](#) across India.
- **Diverse Crops and Regions:** The study covered **seven major crops—rice, wheat, maize, cotton, sugarcane, soybean, and mustard**, across 30 districts in 11 states.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** Researchers interviewed 3,200 farmers, 300 dealers as well as officials from, [Krishi Vigyan Kendras](#), and Agriculture Department.
- **Average Expenditure:** The average weed control expenditure ranges from Rs 3,700 to Rs 7,900 per acre.
- **Weed Management Strategies:** The study recommends herbicides, mechanization, crop rotation, cover cropping, and biological control, which could reduce costs by 40-60% compared to traditional methods.

### Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII)

- FSII is a 40-member association **representing the R&D-driven plant science industry** in India.
- It is involved in the production of high-quality seeds for food, feed, and fibre, supporting the country's agricultural sector.
- FSII promotes the adoption of technology-driven farming solutions that improve agricultural productivity while reducing both pre-harvest and post-harvest losses in a sustainable manner.
- It is affiliated with international bodies like the **International Seed Federation (ISF)** and the **Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA)**, enhancing its global outreach and collaboration.

## What are Weeds?

### ▪ About:

- Weeds are typically unwanted plants that thrive in ecosystems where they disrupt agricultural or ecological balance. Examples include **nut grass, portulaca, common couch, and leucaena**.

### ▪ Characteristics:

- They are characterized by their ability to **aggressively compete with cultivated crops** and other vegetation for essential resources.
- Weeds exhibit significant **resilience and adaptability to diverse environmental conditions**, allowing them to colonize various habitats rapidly.
- Weeds often grow quickly and reproduce in large numbers, primarily through **seeds, rhizomes, or other vegetative structures**, facilitating their spread.

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## Common Weeds



## What are the Challenges Posed by Weeds?

- **Reduction in Agricultural Productivity:** Beyond costs, **weeds are a leading cause of crop loss**, competing for resources from the preparatory tillage stage to the post-harvest stage.
  - Weeds compete with crops for essential resources such as water, nutrients, **sunlight, and space** which can result in lower yields and reduced crop quality.
- **Increased Farming Costs:** Weed management requires significant investments in terms of **labour, herbicides, and other control methods** which can increase the overall expenses of farming operations.
- **Herbicide Resistance:** Continuous **use of herbicides** has led to the development of herbicide-resistant weed species. This **complicates control efforts and** necessitates the use of alternative or more expensive methods to manage resistant populations.
- **Depletion of Soil Health:** Some weed species can degrade soil quality by **altering its nutrient balance or increasing soil erosion**. Their aggressive root systems may also hinder the growth of other plants, leading to long-term soil degradation.
- **Increased Pest and Disease Risks:** Weeds often serve as hosts for various pests and pathogens, providing **breeding grounds for insects and diseases** that can then spread to nearby crops, further aggravating agricultural challenges.

## What are the Benefits of Weed?

- **Habitat and Food for Wildlife:** Weeds provide **habitat and food sources for various insects, birds, and small animals**. They play a role in maintaining biodiversity by supporting ecosystems with secondary species that rely on their presence.
- **Medicinal and Nutritional Uses:** Some weeds have medicinal properties or are used as **natural remedies in traditional medicine**. For example, plants like **dandelion and nettle** are known for their health benefits. Certain weeds are also edible and provide nutrients when used as food.
- **Natural Pollinator Attractants:** Many weeds **produce flowers that attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects**. By supporting pollinator populations, weeds indirectly enhance the productivity of nearby crops and plants.

## What are the Challenges in Implementing Effective Weed Management Strategies?

- **Weed Resistance:**
  - Over Reliance on herbicides can lead to the development of herbicide-resistant weed strains, making it more difficult to control them over time.
- **Labor Shortages:**
  - With a declining agricultural labor force and increased rural-to-urban migration, **manual weeding is becoming less feasible**.
- **High Costs:**
  - Although technological solutions like **herbicides and mechanization** can reduce costs, the initial investment for these technologies may be **prohibitive for small-scale farmers**.
- **Environmental and Health Concerns:**
  - The excessive use of chemical herbicides can lead to **environmental degradation, water contamination, and potential health risks** for both farmers and consumers.
- **Integration with Organic and Natural Farming:**
  - There is a challenge in aligning chemical and mechanical **weed management** techniques with **organic and sustainable farming practices**, which aim to minimize external inputs like herbicides.

## What are the Government Initiatives Related to Agriculture?

- **[Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi \(PM-KISAN\)](#)**

- [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana \(PMFBY\)](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana \(PMKSY\)](#)
- [National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture](#)
- [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana \(PKVY\)](#)
- [Unified Farmer Service Platform \(UFSP\)](#)
- [National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture \(NeGP-A\)](#)
- [Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region \(MOVCDNER\)](#)

## Way Forward

- **Technological Integration:** The study recommends a comprehensive, technology-driven weed management framework to enhance agricultural productivity. For
  - example, **in Direct Seeded Rice (DSR)**, seeds are directly drilled into the fields, which helps conserve groundwater. Similarly, **Zero-Tillage (ZT)** wheat technology involves sowing seeds without disturbing the soil.
- **Public-Private Collaboration:** Experts emphasize the need for **collaboration between the public and private sectors** to tackle weed-related challenges.
- **Innovative Solutions:** Adoption of **herbicide-tolerant traits**, and [precision agriculture](#) are seen as key strategies to overcome labour shortages and resource constraints.
- **Crop Rotation:** It is the **practice of growing a series of different types of crops in the same area** across a sequence of growing seasons and can lower weed infestation.
- **Holistic Framework:** According to the Ministry of Agriculture, an **integrated approach combining traditional, mechanical, chemical, and organic farming solutions is critical** for effective weed management.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Discuss the major challenges in implementing effective weed management strategies and suggest potential solutions.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. Consider the following kinds of organisms: (2012)**

1. Bacteria
2. Fungi
3. Flowering plants

**Some species of which of the above kinds of organisms are employed as biopesticides?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (d)**

