NEWSLETTER

NARVOS
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR REGENERATIVE VEG OIL SECTOR

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THIS EDITION AT A GLANCE

- *Summer Support to Farmers*
- *Stubble Burning prevention*
- *Ground Story*
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Editorial Forward

Dear Readers and Fellow Change-Makers

The rabi harvest is done. For many, this is when farming takes a pause. For us and for the farmers we work with, it is anything but.

This month, stubble burning has been our biggest concern. After wheat harvest, burning leftover stalks is common because it is fast and easy. But it destroys the very soil health we have spent seasons building. Our teams have been on the ground reaching over 35,000 farmers with simple, affordable alternatives like bio-decomposers and composting. The message is straightforward: don't burn what can become your next season's fertiliser.

We are also seeing real results from farmers who have stayed with regenerative practices. Chunnilal Vagul from Dhar district harvested nine quintals of soybean on one acre up from his usual six or seven. His input costs dropped by 20-30%. More than the numbers, he told us the soil simply feels different now. Easier to work. That is what recovery looks like.

With kharif just around the corner, farmers are already preparing vermicompost at home three months ahead of sowing. They are not waiting to be told. That ownership is exactly what this programme has always been working toward.

There is still much to fix especially in how farming credit reaches those doing the right things. But the direction is clear, and the people leading this change are the farmers themselves.

Dr. Suresh Motwani
Programme Lead, NARVOS

What The Fields Are Telling Us

April Field Advisory

With rabi harvest now complete across most demonstration plots, April marks the transition to kharif season planning. Soybean, sesame, and groundnut are the primary oilseed crops that the programme will focus on in the coming months, alongside intercropping systems designed to maximise biodiversity and soil recovery.

April field visits across the project areas have assessed soil conditions post-harvest, residue management practices, and farmer readiness for kharif planting.

Post-Harvest Soil Condition Assessment

Plots that followed regenerative practices through the rabi season are showing measurably improved soil conditions heading into kharif:

- Higher soil organic carbon content noted in fields where Vermicompost and Jeevamrit were consistently applied
- Visible improvement in soil friability the compacted, clod-heavy soils of earlier seasons are becoming more workable
- Earthworm presence confirmed in multiple demonstration plots a strong indicator of recovering soil biology
- Reduced surface crusting, allowing for better rainwater infiltration ahead of the monsoon

Field Training Update: Promoting Sustainable Stubble Management

A training session on stubble management was conducted in project areas where farmers were sensitized to the harmful impacts of stubble burning and the benefits of sustainable alternatives. The sessions also introduced farmers to the Waste Decomposer, with detailed guidance on its application for effective in-situ crop residue management.

Key Results, Impact & Achievements

- More than 10,000 farmers participated in a focused training on sustainable agricultural practices, showing strong interest in adopting the Waste Decomposer and understanding its benefits, procurement, and usage. These farmers across programme locations received hands-on training on preparing the Waste Decomposer solution, along with step-by-step guidance for its use in crop residue decomposition.
- Krishi Chaupals were organized during the month, engaging more than 2200 farmers through online platforms. Discussions focused on stubble management, crop diversification, and the importance of bio-inputs in regenerative agriculture.

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Summer Support to Farmers

Regenerative agriculture is a continuous, year-round approach that extends across cropping seasons rather than being limited to a single crop cycle. With the harvesting of rabi crops, farmers are preparing their fields for summer cultivation, particularly focusing on seasonal vegetables suited to high temperatures.

Given the challenges of water scarcity during the summer months, farmers are being encouraged to adopt efficient irrigation practices such as drip irrigation. This not only optimizes water use but also supports better crop health and productivity.

At the same time, the principles of regenerative agriculture remain central to farming practices. Farmers are increasingly reducing their dependence on chemical inputs and adopting natural formulations. Preparations such as Kanda Toni and Panch Patti Ark are being used to enhance soil health, improve plant resilience, and promote sustainable crop growth.

Through these practices, farmers are strengthening their capacity to manage seasonal challenges while maintaining productivity in an environmentally responsible manner.

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Field Update

Farmers get a head start with Vermi-Compost

With the Kharif season just around the corner, our farmers are not waiting they have already begun preparing vermi-compost, and the enthusiasm on the ground is truly encouraging.

Vermi-compost takes approximately three months to be ready for use. With Kharif crop sowing set to begin in June, the timing could not be better. Farmers have recognised this window and have proactively started their compost preparation a sign of growing awareness and ownership over sustainable farming practices.

What is especially heartening is that farmers are not waiting for formal infrastructure. Several have set up vermi-bag units right in the yards of their own homes turning everyday space into a source of natural fertility.

Vermi-compost, produced through earthworm activity, is rich in nutrients and beneficial microbes. It improves soil structure, enhances water retention, and reduces dependence on chemical fertilisers making it one of the most valuable inputs a farmer can prepare at home, at low cost.

Why these matters

Farmers preparing vermi-compost now will have it ready just in time for Kharif sowing giving their crops a strong, natural foundation from day one of the season.

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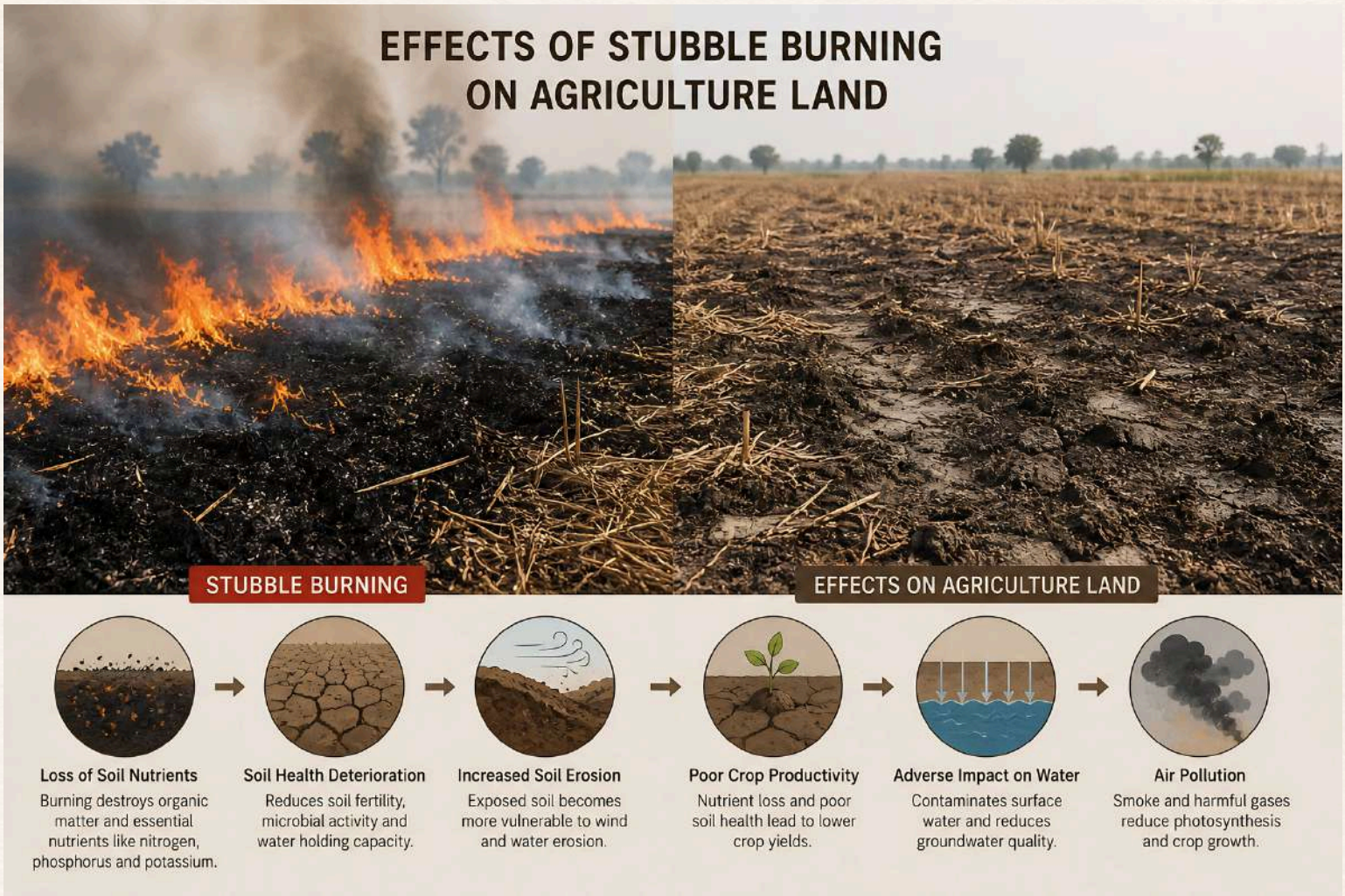
Monthly Focus

Stubble Burning & Its Impact on Farmland

Every year after harvest, many farmers burn the leftover crop stubble to quickly clear their fields. While it seems like a fast and easy solution, stubble burning causes serious and lasting damage to the very land farmers depend on.

What is stubble burning?

Stubble burning is the practice of setting fire to the stalks and roots left in a field after crops like wheat and paddy are harvested. It is common across many farming regions in India, especially where time between crops is short.



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How it harms the land

- **Loss of soil nutrients -** Fire destroys organic matter and key nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium that crops need to grow.
- **Weaker soil health -** Burning kills beneficial microbes in the soil, reducing its fertility and ability to hold water.
- **More erosion -** Bare, burnt soil is easily washed away by rain or blown away by wind.
- **Lower crop yields -** Over time, poorer soil means smaller harvests and greater dependence on chemical fertilisers.
- **Water contamination -** Ash and residue run off into streams and groundwater, affecting drinking and irrigation water.
- **Air pollution -** Smoke from burning fields reduces air quality and harms the health of nearby communities.

Stubble burning is a short-term solution with long-term consequences. The damage builds up silently, season after season.

What NARVOS is doing about it

This month, a special emphasis was given on practical, farmer-friendly alternatives to stubble burning through our field training programmes. We are actively covering these methods with our farming communities:

Covered in our training this month

- **Bio-decomposers -** Microbial solutions sprayed on stubble that break it down naturally into the soil within weeks, adding nutrients instead of destroying them.
- **Rotavator -** A machine that churns the stubble directly into the soil, preparing the field quickly for the next crop without any burning.
- **Composting & mulching -** Residue is composted or spread as mulch, returning organic matter and moisture back to the soil.

These methods are practical, cost-effective over time, and protect the health of the soil for future seasons. NARVOS strongly encourages all farmers to adopt these alternatives and is committed to providing hands-on training and support to make this transition possible.

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Earth Day Special EU Chaupal

EU Chaupal: Renewable Energy in Regenerative Agriculture

22 April 2026 · Online Farmers' Forum · Facilitated by Solidaridad Agri Experts

On the occasion of Earth Day 2026, a special EU Chaupal - an online gathering of farmers across the region organised, bringing together voices from the field with knowledge from the lab, focused on a future where agriculture and clean energy grow together.

The event centered on the theme "Renewable Energy in Regenerative Agriculture - Benefits & Applications," a timely and pressing subject as farming communities across the EU navigate the twin imperatives of climate resilience and sustainable productivity.

The session was felicitated by experts from Solidaridad, who guided participants through a rich dialogue on how renewable energy technologies from solar-powered irrigation and biogas systems to wind energy integration and agrivoltaics can be woven into regenerative farming practices to reduce input costs, lower carbon footprints, and enhance long-term soil and ecosystem health.

Key Focus Areas

- Solar energy for farm operations
- Biogas & biomass utilisation
- Agrivoltaic system integration
- Energy efficiency in irrigation

Regenerative Linkages

- Soil carbon sequestr-ation
- Reduced chemical inputs
- Biodiversity enhance-ment
- Water conservation synergies

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Policy Thought - NARVOS Editorial Desk

Credit must find the regenerative farmer, not the other way around

India's agricultural credit architecture was built for a different era one of high-input, high-volume farming that demanded large seasonal loans for fertiliser and pesticide procurement. As the farming model begins to shift, the credit system has not kept pace. Regenerative farmers, whose input costs are demonstrably lower but whose transition period creates temporary yield variability, find themselves poorly served by institutions designed for the conventional farming they are leaving behind.

The gap is particularly acute for women farmers. With fewer than 13% holding land title and only 7.4% of agricultural credit reaching women, the financial architecture of Indian farming systemically excludes the very people whose practices are most aligned with the regenerative transition.

Three interventions deserve immediate policy attention:

1. Transition-Phase Credit Products

The first two to three seasons of regenerative conversion carry genuine yield risk as soil biology recovers. Standard agricultural credit products, which assess repayment capacity against current-season yield, penalise precisely this transition period. A dedicated transition-period credit product with flexible repayment aligned to the three-season recovery curve would enable more farmers to make the shift without financial distress.

2. SHG-Linked Agricultural Credit for Women

Self-Help Groups have demonstrated, across India, their capacity for disciplined financial management. Where women's SHGs are already active in regenerative agriculture as demonstrated by Deepika Singh in Bankhedi and Sunita Bai in Khajuri linking SHG credit lines to agricultural input and market access creates a pathway that bypasses the land-title barrier entirely. Expanding SHG-based agricultural credit for regenerative practices should be a policy priority in every state where the model is operational.

3. Carbon Credit Access for Smallholder Farmers

Regenerative agriculture is increasingly recognised as a carbon sequestration strategy of genuine global significance. India's smallholder farmers who collectively manage hundreds of millions of acres represent an enormous, underutilised carbon sink. Developing accessible, low-documentation pathways for smallholder farmers to participate in voluntary carbon markets would create an additional income stream that rewards soil-building directly. Currently, the complexity and scale requirements of carbon certification effectively exclude smallholders.

Policy reform here is not complex it is a matter of will.

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Practice highlights this month
Seed Treatment for Kharif

Preparing Soybean Seed for a Regenerative Season

As kharif planting approaches, one of the highest-impact and lowest-cost interventions available to farmers is regenerative seed treatment. The practice enhances germination, strengthens early root development, introduces beneficial soil microbes directly at the plant root zone, and significantly reduces the crop's vulnerability to early-season soil-borne diseases.

The Standard Regenerative Seed Treatment Mix

Under the programme, farmers are trained to prepare a seed treatment mixture that combines three categories of biological agents:

- Trichoderma viride or Trichoderma harzianum (5g per kg of seed) - a beneficial fungus that protects seeds and early roots from damping-off and root rot pathogens
- Pseudomonas fluorescens (5ml per kg of seed) a plant growth-promoting bacterium that solubilises soil phosphorus and suppresses certain fungal diseases
- Rhizobium japonicum (10g per kg of seed) - nitrogen-fixing bacteria that colonise soybean roots and reduce the crop's dependence on synthetic nitrogen inputs by up to 30%
- Jeevamrit solution (as a carrier, 20-25ml per kg of seed) - provides a microbially rich binding medium that keeps biological agents viable during application

How to Apply

The mixture is prepared fresh on the day of sowing. Seeds are spread on a clean surface, the liquid mixture is applied and gently coated by hand or with a clean cloth, and the treated seeds are dried in the shade for 20-30 minutes before sowing. The process takes approximately 45 minutes for a standard sowing batch and requires no equipment beyond a clean container and cloth.

What Farmers Report

Farmers who adopted seed treatment in the 2025 kharif season consistently reported earlier and more uniform germination, reduced seedling mortality in the first two weeks, and critically a visible reduction in root rot incidence that previously required reactive pesticide spraying. Several lead farmers have now integrated seed treatment into their standard pre-sowing routine without programme prompting.

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STORIES FROM THE GROUND

The soil remembered how one farmer in Madhya Pradesh stopped fighting his land and started listening to it

Twenty-one years ago, Chunnilal Vagul's village had one tractor. One was enough.

Today, Moudipada has more than twenty and the fields still feel unfinished. The soil has grown stubborn over the decades, packed hard by years of chemical inputs, resistant to the blade, slow to yield. "It takes a lot of effort and time for the soil to soften," Chunnilal says. He isn't just describing inconvenience. He's describing a wound.

Chunnilal farms five bigha about two and a half acres to support a family of six in Moudipada Village of Dhar district. He has been farming for over twenty years, long enough to remember when the land felt different under his feet. He was there when the village's first tractor arrived, young enough to help operate it, old enough to understand what it meant.

What followed, for Chunnilal and farmers across the region, was a quiet unraveling. Chemical fertilizers. Pesticide dependency. Yields that looked fine until they didn't. By around 2010, the signs were undeniable: the soil was producing less, and it was costing more to push it.

He kept farming the same way. Most people do, until something shifts.

The shift came through an EU-India partnership programme focused on regenerative agriculture. During the Kharif 2025 season, Chunnilal tried something he had never done before he farmed differently.

He planted soybean as his main crop, but surrounded it with pigeon pea, marigold, and maize as living borders. He treated his seeds with NPK and Trichoderma. Before sowing, he worked vermicompost and biochar into the soil not as supplements, but as investments. Where he once reached for imidacloprid to fight whitefly, he reached for neem oil. Where he once bought chemical fertilizers by the sack, he cut DAP use down to one a fraction of what he'd used before. These weren't dramatic gestures. They were quiet corrections, made season by season, row by row.

On roughly one acre of that reworked land, Chunnilal harvested nine quintals of soybean. His previous average had been six to seven. The increase somewhere between 25 and 40 percent wasn't what surprised him most. What surprised him was the soil.
It was easier to work. It held moisture longer. It felt, in some small but undeniable way, like it was returning to something.
His input costs fell by an estimated 20 to 30 percent. But the more important accounting is harder to quantify: a farmer who had watched his land harden over two decades now has reason to believe it can soften again.

VOICES FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS

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Oilseeds are far more than crops they are the backbone of both nutritional security and rural livelihoods in India. As they contribute significantly to our agricultural economy and provide essential dietary fats, energy, and vital nutrients, oilseeds play a crucial role in addressing hidden hunger, especially among vulnerable populations. Strengthening the oilseed sector means not only improving national health outcomes but also ensuring sustainable incomes and resilience for millions of farmers.

Dr. Vijaya Khader,
Former Dean, Acharya NGRA University, Hyderabad
Member Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World
Convener of Hyderabad Branch, Indian Woman Scientist Association (IWSA)

Ramesh Amaliyar
Associate Farmer
Village Ahamad, Sardarpur, Dhar

Krishi Chaupal is Transforming Farming Practices

I began practicing regenerative agriculture on one bigha of land, avoiding urea, DAP, and weedicides, and relying on NPK along with vermicompost to prepare my field for wheat. Encouraged by the positive results in the very first year, I expanded cultivation to nearly 3.5-4 bighas and harvested around 16 quintals.

The Krishi Chaupal sessions have played a crucial role in this journey helping me learn how to prepare bio-fertilizers and better understand the principles of regenerative agriculture. I am committed to continuing my participation in these sessions.

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