Solidaridad SOPA

NEWSLETTER

NARVOS
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR REGENERATIVE VEG OIL SECTOR

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Editorial Foreword

Dear Readers,

As I write this foreword, Madhya Pradesh is at an important moment in its agricultural journey. The state recently hosted the 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting in Indore, bringing global attention to its agriculture. At the same time, farmers are preparing for a delayed monsoon and possible El Niño conditions this Kharif season. The sixth edition of the NARVOS newsletter highlights both the opportunities and the challenges of building a regenerative and climate-resilient vegetable oil sector.

This edition brings stories that a farmer in Rusalpura betting half an acre on a vegetable oil crop, villages in Bhopal and Sehore quietly giving up stubble burning, and ministers from five nations deliberating seed systems and food security in a conference hall. But read together, they tell one continuous story, that regenerative agriculture in Madhya Pradesh is no longer an experiment confined to demonstration plots. It is becoming, field by field, a lived practice.

What strikes me most as I go through this issue is how consistently the same pattern repeats itself farmers convincing farmers. Not through subsidies or mandates, but through visible proof in a neighbour's field. Whether it is Dayaram Patidar's flaxseed harvest in Ratlam or Arun Verma's biochar demonstration in Badjhari, the throughline is the same, trust travels faster than training manuals.

At the same time, our Policy Thought section is a reminder that this momentum needs institutional scaffolding to endure. Farmer Producer Organisations cannot become genuine seed-security anchors without addressing the regulatory, infrastructural, and procurement gaps we outline in this issue. The climate risk outlook adds further urgency the resilience measures we recommend are not contingency plans for an unusual year, but the operating baseline for the years ahead.

NARVOS remains, at its core, a platform built on the belief that regenerative farming and profitable farming need not be in tension and this edition, I hope, makes that case as convincingly through evidence as our farmers make it through practice.

I welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Warm regards,

Dr. Suresh Motwani
Programme Lead, NARVOS

Feature Story

From the soil up: How Regenerative farming is rewriting the story for Madhya Pradesh's vegetable growers

Across the vegetable belts of Dhar and Jhabua, a quiet transformation is taking root literally. For years, smallholder and tribal farmers here, most cultivating just 3 to 5 acres, have leaned heavily on chemical inputs to fight off the pests and diseases that come with intensive vegetable cropping and the region's dominant Soy-Wheat-Cotton rotation. The result was a familiar, exhausting cycle: rising input costs, pesticide resistance from years of repeated use, and mounting concern for both soil and human health.

Solidaridad set out to change that story and today, working with over 3,000 vegetable growers across the two districts, it has real proof that another way is possible.

Building an Island of Success

Three years ago, Solidaridad launched a pilot with 150 lead farmers to test whether regenerative agriculture could hold up under real field conditions not just in theory, but in the soil, the ledgers, and the daily lives of families who had grown weary of climate shocks and shrinking margins.

The results speak for themselves. Farmers who adopted the approach have cut their cost of cultivation roughly in half, while incomes have climbed steadily through diversified, polyculture-based farming. Synthetic chemicals have given way to indigenous bio-inputs like Jivamrit, Kunda Tonic, Dashparni Ark while enriched compost, green manuring, and bio-mulching are rebuilding soil fertility from the ground up. Pest management now follows an integrated approach: sticky traps, pheromone traps, botanical pesticides, and careful surveillance in place of high-end chemical sprays. Together, these shifts have brought cultivation costs down by 30 to 40 percent.

Diversification has proven just as powerful as substitution. Under the Homestead and Poly-Farming approach, farmers are now harvesting three to four crops per season through border cropping, intercropping, and trap cropping maize, green gram, and black gram planted alongside marigold as a trap crop, breaking pest cycles while crop residue is recycled back into the soil through mulching.

More than a method a movement

What makes this shift durable isn't just the economics; it's the community architecture built around it. Bio-resource centres established at each cluster have become hubs of hands-on learning, where farmers pick up the craft of preparing bio-inputs and pass it on through word of mouth. Women farmers, in particular, have emerged as enthusiastic champions of the approach their active involvement is widely seen as the reason this shift is likely to sustain itself long after the pilot ends.

Lead farmers describe regenerative agriculture not as a constraint but as a competitive edge a way to out-compete conventional practices on both cost and income. Solidaridad continues to scale this proof of concept through community-owned platforms: Farmer Field Schools, Field Days, Farmers' Fairs, and Bio-Resource Centres, while aggregating individual growers into Farmer Producer Organisations to strengthen their collective voice and market access.

NARVOS Bulletin

Digital Extension: The NARVOS Krishi Chaupal Platform

EU Krishi Chaupal equips farmers with climate-resilient farming practices for kharif season

The online training session focused on "Climate-resilient farming practices to mitigate the impact of climate change and El Niño on Kharif crops," covering key crops including soybean, maize, groundnut, sesame, and paddy. Conducted by Solidaridad's agri-experts, the session provided practical guidance on adopting resilient cultivation practices that enable farmers to cope with erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and prolonged dry spells.

During the interactive session, farmers learned about climate-smart agronomic practices, efficient water management, timely sowing strategies, integrated nutrient and pest management, and other adaptive measures that help reduce production risks while sustaining crop productivity. The experts also addressed farmers' queries and shared field-tested solutions tailored to local conditions.

The Krishi Chaupals are to strengthen farmers' resilience against climate change by promoting knowledge-based, sustainable agricultural practices. By leveraging digital platforms, the initiative continues to reach farming communities across regions, ensuring timely dissemination of critical advisories and technical support ahead of the cropping season.

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Policy Thought

Empowering FPOs for Local Seed Security in Madhya Pradesh

The Challenge

Certified seed supply under national programs NMEO, NFSM, the Pulses Mission, and Front-Line Demonstrations remains concentrated in NSC, State Seed Corporations, and government agencies. This centralization creates recurring gaps in timely, adequate local seed availability. Private seed companies offer improved varieties, but pricing places them beyond reach for small and marginal farmers, constraining adoption despite demonstrated demand.

Why FPOs are the structural solution

Farmer Producer Organizations hold three advantages that centralized systems lack:

- **Direct access to farmer networks**
- **Localized production capacity**
- **Contextual knowledge of regional crop requirements**

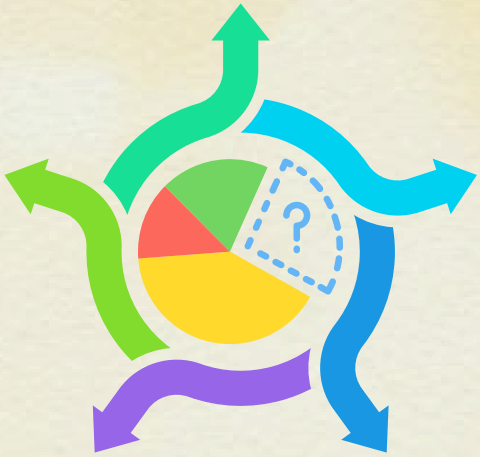
With targeted support, FPOs can transition from passive input recipients to active certified-seed producers for soybean, mustard, groundnut, and pulses directly reducing dependence on external supply chains.




Identified policy gaps

Weak market linkages and absence of buy-back arrangements

Limited technical capacity for seed production and certification



Low institutional procurement volume from FPOs under government schemes

Complex registration, licensing, and documentation procedures

Insufficient access to seed processing and storage infrastructure

NARVOS Policy Recommendations

1	Capacity building	Dedicated training on production, certification, storage, and seed business management
2	Regulatory simplification	Single-window registration, certification, and licensing system
3	Infrastructure support	Financial assistance for processing units, grading, packaging, storage, testing
4	Institutional procurement	Reserved seed procurement quotas for FPOs under NMEO, NFSM, Pulses Mission, FLD
5	Public-private-community partnerships	Structured FPO access to breeder/foundation seed via research institutions and universities

The core policy logic is a shift from a centralized supply model to a decentralized, farmer-led seed system. This aligns directly with NARVOS's regenerative and self-reliance objectives, seed security produced and distributed locally is inherently more climate-responsive and economically resilient than a system dependent on distant, centralized supply chains.

BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting 2026

The 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, hosted in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, brought together Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and newly inducted members to address global agricultural cooperation, food security, and sustainable farming systems.

Key Trade Signal

Russia's Deputy Agriculture Minister, Maxim Markovich, reported that agricultural trade between Russia and BRICS partners grew by more than 5% in 2025, with expectations of continued growth into 2026 a relevant signal for regional oilseed and vegetable trade dynamics.

Four Priority Themes Deliberated

1. Food Security, Nutrition, and Livelihoods
2. Agricultural Trade and Cooperation
3. Regenerative, Climate-Resilient, and Sustainable Agriculture
4. Innovation, Investment, and Future-Ready Food Systems

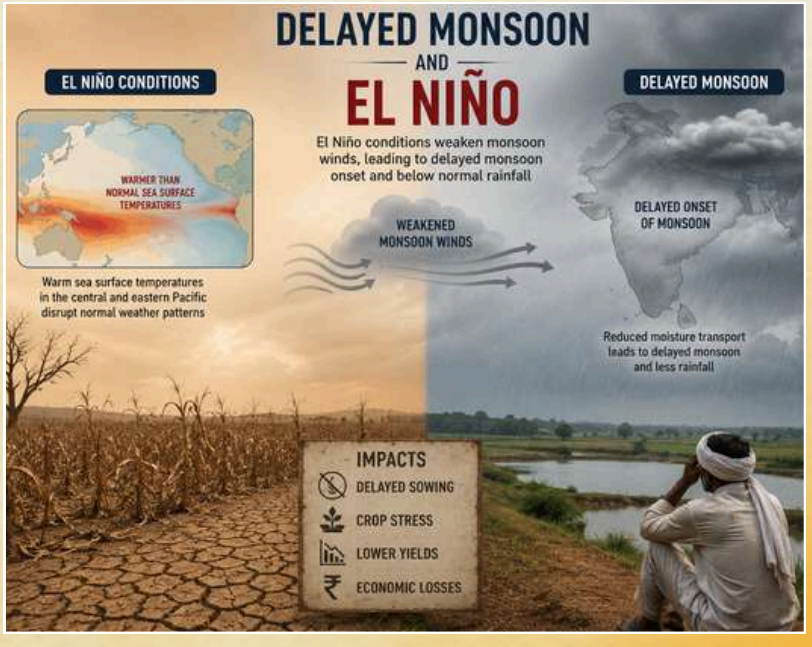
Initiative	Purpose	Coordinating Institution
BRICS Centres of Excellence on Agroecology and	Collaborative network on regenerative and natural	ICAR–IIFSR, Modipuram
BRICS Digital Agriculture Network	AI, geospatial, and data-driven agriculture	IIT Delhi
Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems	Protection of farmers' rights and seed heritage	PPV&FRA
BRICS AGRIN Framework	Cooperation on seeds, agro-inputs, genetic resources	Multilateral

The ministers also agreed to reposition the BRICS Agricultural Research Platform (BARP) as a "Knowledge-to-Action Hub," and advanced discussion on a proposed BRICS Grain Exchange to strengthen grain trade cooperation and market stability.

The Indore declaration's emphasis on regenerative agriculture, digital agri-technology, and seed-system governance directly mirrors NARVOS's own operational priorities demonstration-plot learning, circular input systems, digital extension, and FPO-led seed security. This alignment positions NARVOS's Madhya Pradesh-based work as a potential field-level reference case for the newly established BRICS Centre of Excellence on regenerative agriculture.

Climate Risk Outlook:
Delayed Monsoon and El Niño Conditions

The 2026 southwest monsoon onset has been delayed, and forecasts indicate developing El Niño conditions a combination that raises material risk for rainfed agriculture across Madhya Pradesh during the current Kharif season..



Mechanism

El Niño arises from warming sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific. This warming pattern typically weakens the Indian southwest monsoon, increasing the likelihood of delayed onset, uneven rainfall distribution, and elevated temperatures without guaranteeing outright drought

Crops most exposed include soybean, maize, cotton, pigeon pea, groundnut, and sesame several of which fall directly within NARVOS's vegetable oil and oilseed mandate.

Projected Agricultural Impacts

- Delayed sowing, shortening the effective crop-growing window
- Poor seed germination from inadequate soil moisture
- Elevated crop-failure risk if dry spells follow sowing
- Increased moisture stress affecting crop growth and yield
- Reduced groundwater recharge and lower irrigation water availability
- Higher production costs from re-sowing, supplemental irrigation, and additional crop protection

NARVOS-Aligned Resilience Measures

1. Delay sowing of rainfed crops until rainfall is adequate and consistent
2. Shift to short-duration, drought-tolerant varieties where sowing is delayed
3. Apply seed treatment to improve germination and seedling protection
4. Conserve soil moisture via mulching, ridge-furrow planting, and minimum tillage
5. Expand rainwater harvesting through farm ponds and field bunding
6. Follow weather-based advisories and crop contingency plans
7. Diversify cropping systems by integrating pulses and millets for greater resilience under variable rainfall

Climate variability is no longer a peripheral risk factor but a recurring operating condition for regenerative vegetable oil systems in the region. The recommended response set soil-moisture conservation, cropping diversification, and timely advisory access reinforces rather than departs from NARVOS's existing regenerative agriculture framework, suggesting the Alliance's current programmatic direction is well-positioned to absorb this climate shock without requiring a strategic pivot.

Community Corner

When one field changes, a whole village follows: Regenerative Agriculture takes root in Bhopal and Sehore

Across the villages of Bhopal and Sehore, something quietly powerful is happening. It doesn't look like a single big event no ribbon-cuttings, no large rallies. It looks like a farmer choosing not to burn his stubble. It looks like a smoky kitchen turning smoke-free. It looks like neighbours gathering at the edge of a field to watch a demonstration, then going home to try it themselves.

Taken one at a time, these might look like individual choices. Taken together, they are something else entirely: a community shifting, field by field and household by household, toward regenerative agriculture.

From individual fields to a shared practice

In Khokariya village, Mr. Akhilesh Verma sowed his soybean crop this season without setting a single stubble fire. Using the low tillage technique, he kept crop residue on the field instead locking in soil moisture, building organic carbon, and cutting the smoke that once drifted over the region every harvest season. What he also cut was his own cost, labour, and time in preparing the land proof that sustainable farming and practical farming can be the same thing.

Not far away, in Badjhari village, Mr. Arun Verma took residue management a step further. Rather than burning his leftover crop material, he converted it into biochar and worked it back into his soil improving its structure, its water-holding capacity, and its long-term fertility. He didn't stop at his own field. Mr. Verma hosted a demonstration for nearly 25 neighbouring farmers, walking them through how biochar is made and why it matters, turning his farm into a living classroom for the practice.

And the shift isn't confined to the fields alone it's reaching into homes. In Bilkisganj village, Mrs. Anita Parmar's household of ten to twelve members no longer cooks over a smoke-choked wood stove; a new biogas plant has made her kitchen smoke-free, easing the eye irritation and health strain she and her family once lived with daily. The same clean-energy shift has taken hold in Khurchani and Narela villages (Bhopal), where Mr. Kamendra Verma and Mr. Rahul Verma have each installed biogas units at their homes three plants in total, each one turning cattle dung and organic waste into safe, sustainable fuel.

The bigger picture

These efforts across Khokariya, Badjhariya, Bilkisganj, Khurchani, and Narela reflect the same underlying momentum:

1. Cleaner air and lower emissions, as stubble burning gives way to zero-tillage and biochar.
2. A visible model for climate-resilient farming, one that neighbouring villages are already beginning to notice and replicate.
3. Reduced cost, labour, and time for farmers adopting these practices.
4. A growing peer network, with farmer-led demonstrations turning individual adopters into community educators.
5. Safer, smoke-free homes, especially for the women managing household cooking.
6. Healthier, more fertile soil, through higher organic carbon and better water retention.

What began as a few farmers making different choices is becoming a community-wide practice one field, one household, and one demonstration at a time. That is the real story here: not three farmers, but a community learning, together, what regenerative agriculture can look like when it's lived rather than just taught.

Voices from the Stakeholders

India is one of the world's largest consumers of edible oils, and meeting this growing demand sustainably is both an economic and environmental imperative. While we have built significant processing and refining capacity, the future of the sector depends on strengthening domestic production through resilient and regenerative farming systems. When NARVOS was launched, it set out to create a collaborative platform where industry, research institutions, civil society, and farmers could jointly address these challenges.

Vijay Data
Managing Director, Vijay Solvex Limited

It is encouraging to see the platform evolve into a credible forum for knowledge sharing, innovation, and collective action. Such partnerships will be instrumental in improving productivity, enhancing farmer livelihoods, and reducing India's dependence on edible oil imports while ensuring sustainability remains at the core of growth.

Sanjay Patel
Regenerative Farmer, Bhopawar, Dhar

Around 2010, I began noticing that my soil was becoming hard and less productive. At that time, I didn't understand what was causing it. It was only after I joined the regenerative agriculture programme that I realised years of intensive cultivation and excessive chemical use had affected the health of my land. I started making gradual changes adopting light ploughing, growing soybean along with border crops such as pigeon pea, marigold, and maize, and significantly reducing the use of chemical fertilizers.

Today, I can clearly see the difference. My soil has become healthier, the quality and yield of my crops have improved, and my input costs have come down considerably. For me, it has truly been a win-win approach.

Bharat Soil Health Policy Consultation- Building Momentum for Regenerative Agriculture

Healthy soils are the foundation of regenerative agriculture. As part of the development of the Bharat Soil Health Policy (BSHP), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) convened the Fourth Regional Stakeholder Consultation at ICAR-IISS, Bhopal, participated by experts from government, research institutions, civil society, and the private sector across Central and Western India

The consultation provided a platform for stakeholders to deliberate on regional soil health challenges, sustainable soil management, scopes of adoption of regenerative agriculture, balanced nutrient use, and policy priorities for strengthening soil health in India.

Representing the field experience of regenerative agriculture initiatives, Solidaridad actively contributed to the consultation. The team participated in expert panel discussions, shared policy recommendations based on on-ground implementation of regenerative agriculture, the regenagri standard, Bio-Resource Centres (BRCs), and Farmer Producer Organization (FPO)-led models, while highlighting practical pathways for scaling sustainable soil management.

The consultation reinforced the importance of collaborative action in shaping policies that promote climate-resilient agriculture.

Ground Story

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The Half-Acre Bet That Changed a Village

Two years ago, Dayaram Patidar planted flaxseed on half an acre of land his family had only ever used for wheat and soybean. Neighbours in Rusalpura, a village in Jaora block, Ratlam district, thought he was wasting good soil. "People wondered whether crops like flaxseed could even grow here," he says.

He harvested 7 quintals. At nearly Rs. 8,000 a quintal, that came to about Rs. 56,000 roughly Rs. 17,000 more than he'd have made growing wheat on the same land. That number is the reason the rest of this story happened.

Betting on an unfamiliar crop

Dayaram and fellow farmer Sunil Patidar were among the first in Rusalpura to volunteer as demonstration farmers under the EU-India Partnership Programme's push for regenerative agriculture. For years, the village had leaned hard on chemical fertiliser soil fertility was sliding, costs were climbing, and nobody wanted to gamble on a crop they'd never grown.

The two men did anyway. They trained in regenerative methods, swapped raw cattle dung for vermicompost, balanced nutrient use, and took on flaxseed a crop with almost no local track record.

It wasn't a quiet decision. "The programme didn't just introduce us to a new crop," Dayaram says. "It gave us the confidence and technical knowledge to cultivate it successfully."

From skepticism to imitation

What convinced the village wasn't a training session it was Dayaram's field. Farmers who'd come to watch out of curiosity started asking how to start their own.
The shift moved fast. Dayaram's elder brother, Babulal Patidar, set up his own vermicompost unit. Around 20 families formally adopted regenerative practices, and many more began composting at home and cutting back on chemical fertiliser without waiting for a formal programme to tell them to. Area In-charge Rahul Gehlod says almost every household in Rusalpura now runs a vermicompost unit.

"The change happened because farmers trusted farmers," he says. "When Dayaram and Dinesh demonstrated the results in their own fields, the entire village gained confidence."

The numbers back up the shift on the ground: fields that once absorbed close to 30 sacks of urea across 15–16 bighas now use a fraction of that, with vermicompost doing the work instead. Groundnut is expanding into land where soybean yields had started to slip.

What Actually Spread

Ask Dayaram what he's proudest of, and it isn't the Rs. 56,000. It's that people stopped just watching. "When we started, people came only to observe," he says. "Today, they come to share experiences. We learn from each other. That's the biggest success."
Rusalpura is now cited as a model for India's edible oil self-reliance push but that framing undersells what actually happened here. A village didn't adopt a policy. Two farmers took a risk on half an acre, made it visible, and let the results do the persuading.

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