

2. The Clean Plant Programme – Environment

The Clean Plant Programme is a government initiative to provide farmers with certified, virus-free planting material for key fruit crops. It aims to boost crop yields, farmer income, and horticultural exports while promoting sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture.

The Clean Plant Programme (CPP)

The Clean Plant Programme (CPP) is a significant initiative that is now transitioning from its conceptual phase to practical, on-ground implementation. It involves key actions such as nursery certification, training for authorities, developing crop-specific diagnostic protocols, and establishing funding guidelines.

Conceptualization and Implementation

Core Objective – The CPP is a novel program designed to guarantee the availability of healthy, disease-free planting material for crucial fruit crops in India.

Collaborating Bodies – It was conceptualized by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Executing Agencies – The National Horticulture Board (NHB) acts as the primary implementing and executing agency. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is associated with the program to oversee its technical progress, facilitate capacity building, and provide scientific guidance.

Key Features and Benefits for Stakeholders

The program is designed to deliver benefits across the entire horticultural value chain.

For Farmers – It ensures access to virus-free, high-quality planting material. This directly contributes to boosting crop yields and significantly enhancing income opportunities for farmers.

For Nurseries – The program provides streamlined certification processes and offers crucial infrastructure support. This enables nurseries to efficiently propagate clean planting material, thereby promoting their growth and long-term sustainability.

For Consumers – It results in the delivery of superior quality produce that is free from viruses. This improves the overall taste, appearance, and nutritional value of the fruits available in the market.

For Exports – By focusing on higher-quality, disease-free fruits, the CPP aims to strengthen India's position as a leading global exporter in the horticulture sector.

Equity and Inclusivity

The CPP is designed with a strong focus on ensuring that its benefits are widely and fairly distributed.

Affordable Access – It works to ensure that clean and healthy plant materials are accessible and affordable for **all farmers**, regardless of their scale of operation.

Women's Participation – The program actively promotes the participation of women in the horticultural sector by providing targeted training and resources.

Regional Adaptation – It supports the development of region-specific crop varieties that are well-suited to India's diverse agro-climatic conditions, ensuring broader success and adoption.

Importance and Strategic Alignment

Boosting Horticulture – The CPP is poised to provide a major boost to India's horticultural sector.

Alignment with National Missions – It aligns with Mission LiFE by promoting sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices. It supports the One Health initiative by acknowledging the link between plant health, environmental health, and human well-being.

Climate Change Adaptation – Through effective plant health management, the CPP helps farmers adapt to the impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures influence pest and disease behaviour, and healthy plants are more resilient to these stresses.

Complementing Existing Schemes – The CPP complements the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2014–15 for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector.

Concerns Addressed by the Programme

Threats to Agriculture – Climate change and plant diseases, particularly those caused by viruses, are responsible for major agricultural losses in India.

Impact of Diseases – These threats significantly reduce crop yield, quality, and the productive lifespan of plants. Viral infections are especially difficult to manage once symptoms appear.

Effective Solution – The programme is based on the principle that using certified disease-free planting materials from the outset is the most effective and economical solution to this problem.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The Clean Plant Programme is progressing steadily with several on-ground initiatives.

Future Focus – The next phase will concentrate on tangible actions to expand its impact.

Planned Initiatives – Conducting broader consultations with nurseries for certification. Developing comprehensive training modules for relevant authorities. Creating a hazard analysis protocol specifically for citrus crops. Formulating diagnostic protocols for other key crops like mango, guava, litchi, avocado, and dragon fruit.

Associated National Initiatives

Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) – This is an India-led global mass movement introduced by PM Narendra Modi at COP26 in Glasgow (2021). It aims to encourage individual and community actions to protect and preserve the environment, drawing inspiration from India's cultural heritage of living in harmony with nature.

National One Health Mission – One Health is a multidisciplinary approach that integrates human, animal, and environmental health sectors. This is particularly relevant for India, given its large livestock population, dense human population, and rich biodiversity, where the interface between these sectors presents both opportunities for coexistence and risks of disease transmission.

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