

Natural Farming

1. Meaning

Popularly known as “do nothing” farming, natural farming is an environmentally sustainable way of growing food, founded not in technique, but in the principle that an equitable relationship between farmer and nature should form the foundation of the farmer’s actions. The most critical aspect of the natural farming is to let nature play a dominant role to the maximum extent possible. Hence, no-till, farm biodiversity, integration and symbiotic farm components and protection of soil cover all have a place in this process of farming.

Natural farming contrasts starkly with most contemporary forms of farming in that it is premised on developing closer relationships between farmer, land, and consumer, whereas the industrial farming process—including industrial scale organic—requires the fundamental separation of these relationships. While techniques and methods vary widely, natural farmers share common roots in re-connecting themselves and their farming processes to the Earth, and cultivating food that inherently regenerates the health of the natural world and of humanity.

2. The Principles of Natural Farming

- Produce safe and nutritious food that ensures good health.
- Be economically and spiritually beneficial to both producers and consumers.
- Be sustainable and easily practiced.
- Conserve and protect the environment.
- Produce sufficient food of high quality for an expanding world population.
- No chemical fertilizers – this is because adding chemical fertilizers help in the development of the plant but not of the soil, which continues to deteriorate.
- No, till farming – plowing the soil alters the natural environment of the soil and promotes the development of weeds.
- No weeding by tillage or herbicides – weeds are not eliminated however, can be suppressed by spreading straw over freshly sown land and growing ground cover.
- No dependence on chemical pesticides – nature’s balancing act prevent any one species from gaining the upper hand.

3. The Economics of Natural Farming

- The consumption of pure and natural foods for overall health and well-being
- Product of natural farming, which are safe and full of vitality, have saved people suffering from diseases, such as children having atopic dermatitis and adult cancer patients. This is farming process that shows the fundamental way of living to human beings.
- Reducing the cost of operation, no longer have to purchase seeds and fertilizers, and their crop yields are higher. In addition, they are able to increase their seed supply each season.

4. The advantages and disadvantages of Natural Farming

1) The advantages

- Produce nutritious crops. Soil is responsible for providing nutrients to the crops planted in it. Natural farming provides food of good quality due to proper soil management. The use of animal manure to improve the health of the soil supplies the crops with necessary nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.
- Prevent soil erosion. The use of green manure (plants grown specifically to be returned to the soil as fertilizer) is also utilized to bring back nutrients in the soil after the primary crop is harvested. It is also a great way to reestablish the health of the soil which makes it more resilient to soil erosion.
- Preserve biodiversity. Biodiversity can also be developed and nurtured through natural farming. The place where natural farming operates is an ideal habitat for various species because it allows them to breathe clean air that makes them naturally healthy and resistant to illness.
- Mitigate climate change. Natural farming fights against climate change. Admittedly, the use of synthetically made fertilizers and pesticides to cultivate crops and livestock contributes a huge amount of greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide, carbon dioxide, and methane. However, the soil of naturally cultivated farms can store carbon, keeping it from contributing to the worsening problem of global warming.

- Protect water quality. Aside from reducing the impact of climate change, natural farming can also improve the composition of water by decreasing the amount of preservatives which usually contaminates the water.

2) Disadvantages

- The harvesting is far more difficult due to variety of the goods/products is greater, the population of the plants is denser, and the height of the trees is greater.

References:

<https://www.agriculture.com.ph/2020/03/21/five-ways-natural-farming-can-benefit-humans-and-the-environment/>

<https://www.finalstraw.org/what-is-natural-farming/#sdendnote1sym>

Watch this video to learn more: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEC_qqn6epg&t=150s

For more information: <https://shumei-international.org/>