

National Agricultural Education Policy

The National Agricultural Education Policy is the first in India where academic credit banks and degree programmes with multiple entry and exit options will be brought to 74 universities, focussing on crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy training and research.

This agricultural education project is in continuation with the National Education Policy (NEP) launched by the Government of India. This concept is especially important for candidates preparing for the upcoming [IAS exam](#) for GS II & III papers.

In this article, we shall discuss in detail the objectives of the National Agricultural Education Policy, the Institutes/ Universities included, and the importance of this project with reference to agricultural awareness of the people of the country.

What is the National Agricultural Education Policy?

The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had announced the introduction of agricultural education at middle school level in the [National Education Policy 2020 \(NEP\)](#). This National Agricultural Education Policy has been implemented as an effect of the same.

It is the first of its kind project in India and aims at bringing academic credit banks and degree programs with entry-exit alternatives to Universities focussed on crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy preparation and research.

With the entry-exit options available, the National Agricultural Education Policy opens up the opportunity for students to continue with their diploma and advanced diploma as and when they are able to resume their studies and earn themselves a full-time college degree.

The Universities which have been included as a part of the National Agricultural Education Policy have been divided into 4 parts:

1. **Central Agricultural Universities** - comprising three Universities, one each from Imphal, Samastipur and Jhansi
2. **ICAR Deemed Universities** - there are 4 Universities in this cadre
3. **State Agricultural Universities** - includes 63 Universities
4. **Central University with Agriculture Faculty** - comprises four Universities

National Agricultural Education Policy - Key Points

The two key aspects of the National Agricultural Education Policy have been discussed below:

1. Academic Credit Banks:

- The service providers available to a desirable student community, that may ease the integration of the campuses and distributed learning systems, by creating student mobility within the inter and intra university system
- A consistent integration of skills and experiences can be achieved in the form of credit based formal system by providing credit recognition mechanism
- The storage of academic credits earned from recognised Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), on digital mediums can be managed through the academic credit banks
- It will also allow credit redemption in order to be awarded a certificate, degree or diploma

2. Experiential Education:

- Experiential Education is a teaching method or philosophy, as per which an educator focuses on direct experience and explains the learner. This results in increasing knowledge, developing skills and also analysing people's capacity and skills to contribute
- As per the National Education Policy (NEP), India aims at setting the agricultural undergraduate courses to a full time duration of four years. However, India is already a step ahead with all its agricultural courses running for a four year tenure
- NEP also states experiential education for all the 74 Universities which have been covered under the National Agricultural Education Policy. However, even this milestone had been achieved as experiential education had been mandated in agricultural education since 2016

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What is the Student READY Programme?

Another important aspect of the National Agricultural Education Project is the Study READY Programme.

As per the Student READY (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) Programme, all students will have to take up a six month internship or training program, in their final year of education. This will enhance their experience, gain in-hand rural awareness, research expertise, industry experience, and entrepreneurship skills.

Challenges & Issues with the National Agricultural Education Policy

Since this project is India's first ever agricultural education based project, there are various challenges and issues with which the authorities will have to deal with.

Discussed below are few such challenges for this policy:

- The option for entry and exit modules shall be a bit complex to manage. The Universities will have to come up with measures such that the entire education and experiential methodology both are adapted while completing the education of each student
- Agricultural universities have been modelled on the land grant pattern, with a focus on research and extension, and deep community connections, driven by the philosophy that farmers need holistic solutions to their problems

Once the policy is widely accepted, students may have better opportunities to learn and excel in agricultural awareness. This will build a better future for the field of Indian agriculture, which is the one of the biggest sectors in our country.

What is the Role of ICAR?

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) comes under the administration of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, and shall be responsible to ensure quality education is being provided to all students across the country.

Although agricultural education is a State subject, ICAR will have to maintain a standard for Universities under the new system of higher education regulation proposed by the NEP.

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