

National Saffron Mission (NSM)

The National Saffron Mission (NSM) was launched in 2010-11 but it was only applicable for the cultivation of saffron in Jammu and Kashmir. However, in 2020, the Government has decided to revive this mission and expand the cultivation of saffron to the north eastern part of the country.

In this article, we shall discuss in detail the mission and its objectives along with the saffron bowl of India. This topic is important for candidates preparing for the upcoming [IAS exam](#) for the GS I and III paper, under agriculture and government schemes.

UPSC Aspirants can also get the [List of Government Schemes in India](#), at the linked article, and learn more about the other initiatives, projects and missions started by the Government for the development of the country.

About National Mission on Saffron

Crocus Sativus, is the plant through which saffron is produced, and this species is commonly grown in regions of Jammu and Kashmir in India. It is one of the most expensive spices and an important export commodity for the country. Discussed below are the aspects of the National Saffron Mission.

- NSM or National Saffron Mission comes under the governance of Ministry of Science and Technology
- It was a four year mission (2010-14) which was introduced to increase the cultivation of saffron in Kashmir. However, due to a heavy loss in the production during 2014, the mission was given an extension by the Government of India
- The Saffron Mission was launched as a part of the [Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana \(RKVY\)](#)
- It was initiated with an aim to improve the socio-economic status of the people living in Kashmir. As over 30,000 people in this union territory are engaged in the cultivation of saffron
- In 2020, the revised objective of the mission was to start the cultivation of saffron in the north east of India
- North East Centre For Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) has been given the charge to manage the pilot project will be started in the north east for saffron cultivation
- As per this mission, saffron flowers will be transported from Kashmir to Sikkim and then their plantation and cultivation be done

If the pilot project in the north east is successful, then India will have a larger area for the cultivation of saffron. Making the north-east part the second region in India where the cultivation can be done.

Aspirants can also study about the [North East Council \(NEC\)](#), a nodal agency responsible for the socio-economic development of the North Eastern Region in India, at the linked article.

Objectives of National Saffron Mission

With the introduction of the National Mission on Saffron, the Government intended to increase the productivity of saffron in Jammu and Kashmir, because **India is the second largest producer of saffron in the world.**

It came up with several objectives:

- **Improving the Soil Quality** - Since the cultivation was a slightly lengthy process and the area of cultivation was limited, having the best quality of soil was one of the biggest motives
- **Adapting to Scientific Methods** - To increase the quantity of production per year, orthodox methods had to be revived and scientific methods were required
- **Potential Irrigation System** - Since a lot of water is required, improving the irrigation system of the region was of utmost importance
- **Getting familiar with Technology** - Since the farmers working on the production are not familiar with the developing farming technologies, NSM representation had to provide them the machinery and teach them their usage and necessity
- **Testing the Quality of produced saffron** - Under NSM, people were appointed to monitor and test the quality of saffron which was being produced
- **Coping up with Weather Change** - Kashmir faces extreme cold weather and the conditions are very unpredictable. Thus, all measures had to be taken considering the climatic conditions of the region

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Causes for Failure of NSM in 2014

When the National Mission on Saffron was launched in India, Jammu and Kashmir was the only Indian state (J&K was a state in 2010) where saffron was grown and cultivated. Thus, to bring up measures to increase its productivity NSM was formed.

There were multiple reasons which led to the failure of this mission during 2014:

- People of Kashmir followed orthodox methods to cultivate saffron. With the change in the soil type and the resources provided, accepting scientific methods for cultivation had become the need of the hour
- As per the orthodox method, it took 2 years to harvest and cultivate saffron and then sow new seed for growth of saffron flowers. This was the main reason behind less productivity
- A lot of water is required for the cultivation purposes and the producing region had only three borewells. Thus, even after construction of over 80 borewells through NSM, the water wasn't enough
- Floods in the region had ruined a major part of the produce and the solid quality had also been disrupted

- Only specific regions of Kashmir, especially the Pampore region of India, allows the growth of saffron flowers. Thus, the area of cultivation had also reduced

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Why the National Saffron Mission in North-east India?

One of the key questions which may arise is why the Government of India chose the north-eastern part of the country for the cultivation of saffron. The two main reasons behind the same are given below:

- As per research done in the **Botany and Horticulture department of Sikkim Central University**, the soil condition of **Yangyang in Sikkim** is almost similar to the quality found in saffron growing regions of Kashmir
- Similarity in the climatic conditions of Pampore in Kashmir and Yangyang in Sikkim is another reason for the successful cultivation of saffron seed/corm

Saffron Bowl of India

The regions in which saffron is grown in India, together forms the Saffron bowl of India. Until 2020, only the regions in Jammu and Kashmir were a part of this saffron bowl, but after the initiatives under the National Saffron Mission, the bowl has now been extended to north-east as well.

Given below are the names of regions in Jammu and Kashmir where saffron is grown:

- Pampore, the main contributor
- Budgam
- Srinagar
- Kishtwar

Now, Yangyang, Sikkim is also a part of this saffron bowl in India.

What is a Saffron Park?

Once the *Crocus Sativus* flower is grown, it has to undergo many scientific practises which ultimately result in the final product, i.e., saffron. These post harvest practises of drying it, separation of stamen, etc. are all conducted in saffron parks.

Since saffron is one of the most expensive spices in the world, India looks forward to increasing its production through the Saffron Mission as it will economically back the nation.

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