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Lakshadweep Declared an Organic Union Territory

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Why in News

Entire Lakshadweep group of islands has been declared as an **organic agricultural area** under the **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) of India**.

Participatory Guarantee System

- PGS is a process of **certifying organic products**, which ensures that their production takes place in accordance with **laid-down quality standards**.
The certification is in the form of a **documented logo or a statement**.
- It is implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare**.
- It is **only for farmers or communities** that can **organise and perform as a group within a village or a cluster of contiguous villages**, and is applicable only to farm activities such as crop production, processing, and livestock rearing, and off-farm processing “by PGS farmers of their direct products”.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Lakshadweep is the **first Union Territory** to become **100% organic** as all farming is carried out **without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices** and making agriculture a more environmentally-friendly activity.
Earlier in 2016, **Sikkim** became India's first “**100 percent organic**” State.
 - The entire 32 square kilometre geographical land area of the UT was declared as organic after receiving required certifications and declarations under Centre's **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (organic farming improvement programme)**.

- **Background:**

Earlier, the UT administration had imposed a formal **uniform ban on sale, use and entry of synthetic chemicals for agriculture purposes** from October 2017 onwards to make the islands a **chemical-free zone**.

- **Benefits:**

- Better marketing of **organic products** such as desiccated coconut and coconut milk.
- The organic tag will allow farmers to realize a premium for the farm produce.
- The island's coconut farmers are also expected to benefit from the Union government's '**One District One Product**' programme of food processing. Under it the entire island is being considered as a **single district** and coconut oil has been identified as the **product**.

- **Cropping Pattern:**

Coconut is the **only major crop** on the islands and remains **idle for six months**.

- The coconut processing industry works only for about six months. The period between **May and December sees the industry come to a standstill**.
- The island administration plans to **introduce dryers and other machinery to utilise the nuts** even during this standstill period.

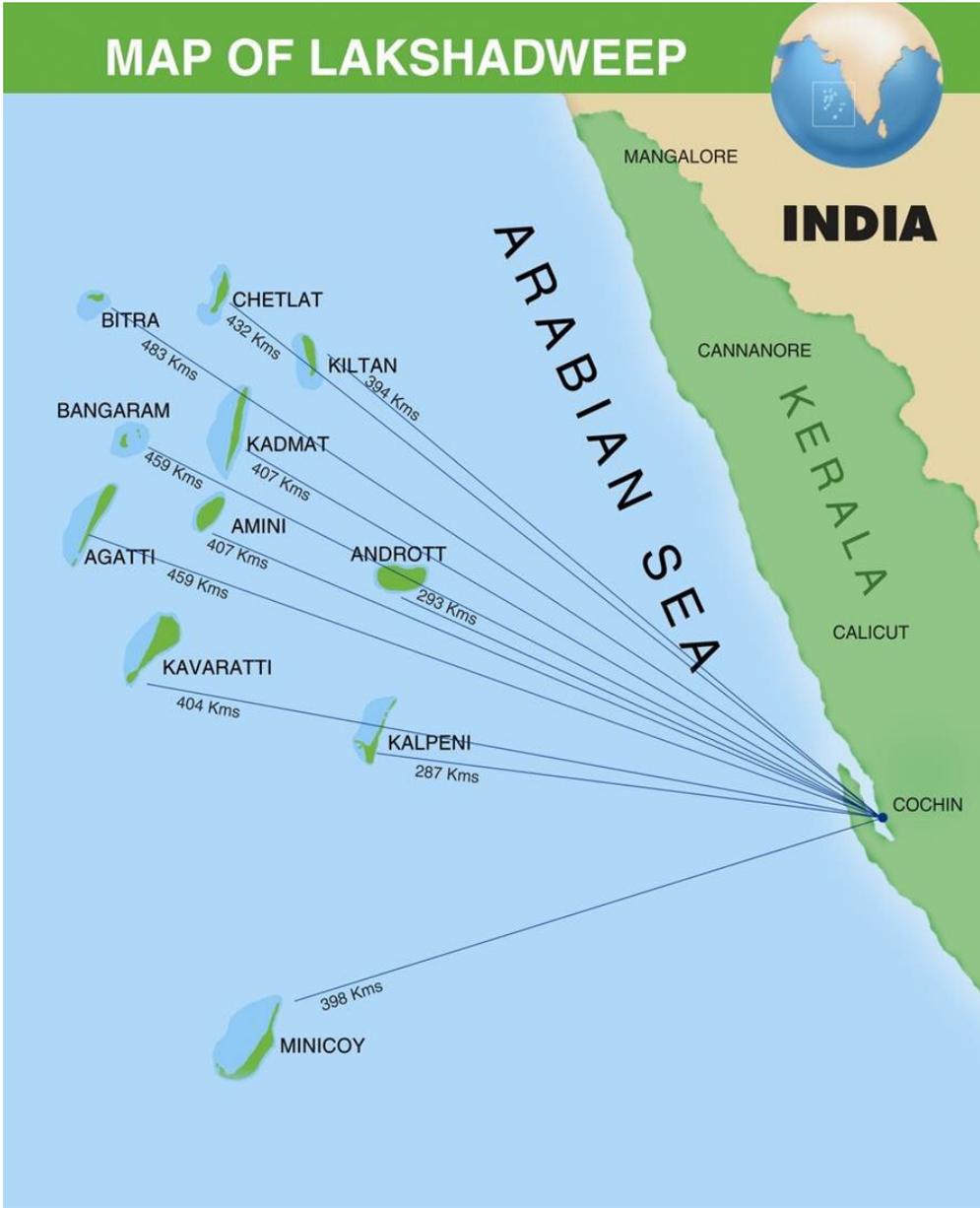
Organic Farming

- According to FSSAI, '**organic farming**' is a **system of farm design** and management to create an ecosystem of agriculture production **without the use of synthetic external inputs such as chemical fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms**.

- **Various Government Initiatives to promote Organic Farming:**
 - **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):**
The scheme promotes cluster based organic farming with certification. Cluster formation, training, certification and marketing are supported under the scheme.
 - **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER):**
The scheme promotes **3rd party certified organic farming** of niche crops of the north east region **through Farmers Producer organizations (FPOs)** with focus on exports.
 - **Capital investment Subsidy Scheme (CISS) under Soil Health Management Scheme:**
100% assistance is provided to State Government/Government agencies for setting up of mechanized fruit/vegetable market waste/agro waste compost production unit.
 - **National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP):**
Financial 50% subsidy to the tune of Rs. 300/ha is being provided for different components including **bio-fertilizers**.
 - **National Food Security Mission (NFSM):**
Financial assistance is provided **for promotion of Bio-Fertilizer**.

Lakshadweep

- India's **smallest Union Territory**, Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of **36 islands with an area of 32 sq km**.
- **There are three main group of islands:**
 - Amindivi Islands
 - Laccadive Islands
 - Minicoy Island.
 - Amindivi Islands are the northernmost while the Minicoy island is the southernmost.
- All are tiny islands of **coral origin (Atoll)** and are surrounded by fringing reefs. The Capital is **Kavaratti** and it is also the principal town of the UT.



Source:TH