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India - Israel Agreement on Agriculture Cooperation

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Why in News

India and Israel have signed **“a three-year work program agreement”** for development in **agriculture cooperation**.



Key Points

- **Three-year Work Program:**
 - The programme **aims** to grow existing **Centres of Excellence**, **establish new centers**, **increase CoE's value chain**, bring the **Centres of Excellence** into the **self-sufficient mode**, and encourage **private sector companies and collaboration**.
 - Both countries are implementing the **"INDO-ISRAEL Agricultural Project Centres of Excellence"** and **"INDO-ISRAEL Villages of Excellence"**.

- **Indo-Israeli Agriculture Project:**

- Indo-Israeli Agricultural Cooperation Project **started in 2008** following the signing of a three-year Action Plan based on a Government to Government Agreement.
- Both started an agricultural fund **worth \$50 million** that focused on **dairy, farming technology and micro-irrigation.**
- **By March 2014, 10 centres of excellence operated** throughout India offering free training sessions for farmers on efficient agricultural techniques using Israeli technological expertise. Vertical farming, drip irrigation and soil solarization are taught at the centres.

- **INDO-ISRAEL Villages of Excellence (IIVOE):**

- This is a new concept aimed at **creating a model ecosystem in agriculture across eight states**, alongside 13 Centers of Excellence within 75 villages.
- The program **will promote the increase of net income and better the livelihood of the individual farmer**, transforming traditional farms into modern-intensive farms based on **Indo-Israel Agriculture Action Plan (IIAP)** standards.
- Large-scale and complete value chain approach with economic sustainability, embedded with Israeli novel technologies and methodologies will be **tailored to local conditions.**
- The IIVOE program **will focus on:** (1) Modern Agriculture infrastructure, (2) Capacity Building, (3) Market linkage.

Indo-Israel Bilateral Cooperation

- **Historical Ties:**

- The **strategic cooperation** between the two countries began during the **Sino-India War of 1962.**
- In 1965, Israel **supplied M-58 160-mm mortar ammunition to India** in the war **against Pakistan.**
- It was one of the few countries that chose **not to condemn India's Pokhran nuclear tests** in 1998.

- **Economic Cooperation:**

- From US\$ 200 million in 1992 (comprising primarily trade in diamonds), bilateral merchandise trade stood at US\$ 5.65 billion (excluding defence) in 2018-19, with the balance of trade being in India's favour by US\$ 1.8 billion.

Trade in diamonds constitutes close to 40% of bilateral trade.

- India is **Israel's third largest trade partner in Asia**.
- Israeli companies have **invested in India in energy, renewable energy, telecom, real estate, water technologies**, and are focusing on **setting up R&D centers or production units** in India.
- The first recipients of grants from the **Israel-India Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)** were announced in **July 2018**, including companies working to better the lives of Indians and Israelis through efficient water use, improving communications infrastructure, solar energy use, and life-changing surgeries.

The fund aims to help Israeli entrepreneurs enter the Indian market.

- **Defence Cooperation:**

- Israel has been **among the top four arms suppliers to India for almost two decades now**, notching military sales worth around USD 1 billion every year.
- The Indian armed forces have **inducted a wide array of Israeli weapon systems** over the years, which range from **Phalcon AWACS** (airborne warning and control systems) and **Heron, Searcher-II and Harop drones** to **Barak** anti-missile defence systems and **Spyder** quick-reaction anti-aircraft missile systems.
- The acquisitions also include a host of Israeli missiles and precision-guided munitions, from **Python and Derby air-to-air missiles** to **Crystal Maze and Spice-2000 bombs**.

- **Covid-19 Response:**

In 2020, an Israeli team arrived in India with a multi-pronged mission, codenamed **Operation Breathing Space** to work with Indian authorities on the Covid-19 response.

Source: IE