



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine National Water Policy of India and discuss its potential in promoting the water use efficiency in agriculture. (250 words)

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Approach

- Write in brief the context and the objective of the National Water policy.
- Examine the policy giving its merits and demerits.
- Discuss its potential in promoting the water use efficiency in agriculture.
- Give a way forward to increase the water use efficiency.

Introduction:

- A scarce natural resource, water is fundamental to life, livelihood, food security and sustainable development. India has more than 18 % of the world's population, but has only 4% of world's renewable water resources and 2.4% of world's land area.
- The objective of the National Water Policy, 2012 is to take cognizance of the existing situation, to propose a framework for creation of a system of laws and institutions and for a plan of action with a unified national perspective.

Body:

National Water Policy of India -

- **Water Framework Law:** The policy recommends that there is a need to evolve a National Framework Law as an umbrella statement of general principles governing the exercise of legislative and/or executive powers by the Centre, the States and the local governing bodies.
- **Draft River Basin Management Bill:** The policy recommends that there is a need for a comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter-State rivers and river valleys to facilitate inter-State coordination ensuring scientific planning of land and water resources.
- **Participatory approach:** The National Water Policy while stressing on participatory approach in water resources management, specifically provides for necessary legal and institutional changes to be made at various levels for the purpose of ensuring appropriate role for women.
- **Water as economic good:** Water, after meeting the pre-emptive needs for safe drinking water and sanitation, and high priority allocation for minimum human and ecosystem needs, be treated as economic good so as to promote its conservation and efficient use.
- **Ecological needs of the river:** A portion of river flows should be kept aside to meet ecological needs ensuring that the proportional low and high flow releases correspond in time closely to the natural flow regime.
- **Some critical issues with the policy:**
 - Policy does not deter use among those who can afford to pay for water.
 - Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode may not ensure equity.
 - Policy does not follow polluter pay principle, rather it gives incentives for effluent treatment.
 - Policy was criticized for terming Water as an economic good.

- The policy does not focus on the reduction of water pollution.

Potential in promoting the water use efficiency in agriculture:

- **Participatory Water Management:**
 - Participation of beneficiaries will help greatly in the optimal upkeep of irrigation system and effective utilization of irrigation water.
 - The participation of farmers in the management of irrigation would include transfer responsibility for operation & maintenance.
- **Gap between Irrigation Potential created and utilized:** All components of water resources projects should be planned and executed in a manner so that intended benefits start accruing immediately and there is no gap between potential created and potential utilized.
- **Water Use Efficiency:** An institutional arrangement for efficient use of water at basin/sub-basin level will be established for this purpose at the national level.
- **Jal Kranti Abhiyan:** Under this component, States are being encouraged to **adopt State Water Policy** in line with National Water Policy, 2012. They are also being encouraged to set up their **State Water Resources Council** and **State Water Regulatory Authority**.
- **Water Pricing:** Water Regulatory Authority should be set up to fix water tariffs with provision of differential pricing for the pre-emptive and high priority uses of water.

Conclusion:

- India's National Water Policy should ensure that the water law not only achieves efficiency in the allocation of water resources, but also equity in their allocation and sustainability in the scale and mode of usage.
- India is yet to develop a well spelt out strategy on water privatization and management of water resources.
- Promote the local means of harvesting and preserving water.