AGRO CHEM FEDERATION OF INDIA

ACFI NEWSLETTER

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ACFI IN NEWS

एग्रोकेमिकल मैन्युफैक्चरिंग को बढ़ावा देकर बनेगा आत्मनिर्भर भारत : ACFI

Edited By National Desk, Updated: 12 Sep, 2025 10:22 PM

नई दिल्ली/टीम डिजिटल। भारत के एग्रोकेमिकल क्षेत्र में एक बड़ी हलचल मची है । देश का प्रमुख एग्रोकेमिकल प्लेटफॉर्म, एग्रो केम फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया (ACFI) ने सरकार से कुछ अहम रियायतें देने का आग्रह किया है । इसका मकसद है एग्रोकेमिकल विनिर्माण (manufacturing) को घरेलू स्तर पर बढ़ावा देना, आयात (import) पर निर्भरता को कम करना और भारत को इस क्षेत्र में सही मायनों में आत्मनिर्भर बनाना । एसीएफआई और डेलॉइट द्वारा जारी की गई एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, भारत का एग्रोकेमिकल निर्यात (export) पिछले 10 सालों में तीन गुना बढ़कर वित्त वर्ष 2025 में 3.3 बिलियन डॉलर हो गया है । इस बड़ी उपलब्धि के बावजूद, उद्योग का कहना है कि अभी भी कुछ गंभीर चुनौतियां बनी हुई हैं ।

तीसरा बड़ा एग्रो-केम निर्यातक बना भारत

भारत का एग्रोकेमिकल निर्यात पिछले 10 साल में करीब तीन गुना बढ़कर वित्त वर्ष 2025 में 3.3 अरब ड़ॉलर का हो गया है, जो वित्त वर्ष 2014-15 में 1.3 अरब डॉलर का था। एग्रो केमिकल्स फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया और डेलॉयट की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक अब भारत चीन व अमेरिका के बाद विश्व का तीसरा बड़ा निर्यातक बन गया है। निर्यात की इस रफ्तार को बनाए रखने के लिए एसीएफआई ने सरकार के इस उद्योग के लिए पीएलआई योजना और कर छूट देने का अनुरोध किया है। संगठन का कहना है कि इससे प्रमुख मॉलेक्यूल्स के आयात की निर्भरता कम होगी और घरेलू उत्पादन बढ़ाने के लिए एग्रोकेमिकल्स मैन्युफैक्चरिंग हब स्थापित करने में मदद मिलेगी। *बीएस*

3.3 अरब डॉलर के निर्यात के साथ भारत बना तीसरा सबसे बड़ा कृषि रसायन निर्यातक, बस चीन और अमेरिका हमसे आगे

BY GYANENDRA TIWARI | EDITED BY: GYANENDRA TIWARI
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पिछले एक दशक में भारत का कृषि-रसायन निर्यात (India Agrochemical Export) लगभग तीन गुना बढ़ गया है। वित्तीय वर्ष 2024-25 में यह रिकॉर्ड 3 .3 अरब डॉलर तक पहुंच गया है। यह वृद्धि दुनिया के तीसरे सबसे बड़े कृषि-रसायन निर्यातक के रूप में भारत की स्थिति को और मजबूत करती है।

3 .3 अरब डॉलर के निर्यात के साथ भारत बना तीसरा सबसे बड़ा कृषि रसायन निर्यातक

नई दिल्ली। India Agrochemical Export : पिछले 10 वर्षों में भारत ने कृषि रसायन के निर्यात में बड़ी उपलब्धि हासिल की है। भारत की कृषि रसायन निर्यात बढ़कर 3 .3 अरब डॉलर हो गया है। 2014-15 में यह 1 .3 अरब डॉलर रुपये था। इस रेस में बस चीन और अमेरिका ही भारत से आगे हैं। लेकिन जिस तरह से भारत की स्पीड है उस हिसाब से जल्द ही हम इन दोनों देशों को भी पछाड़ सकते हैं।

एग्रो-केमिकल्स फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया और डेलॉइट ने 12 सितंबर को जारी एक रिपोर्ट में इसकी जनाकीर दी। इस रिपोर्ट के अनुसार इस गति को बनाए रखने के लिए, एसीएफआई ने सरकार से इस क्षेत्र के लिए उत्पादन-आधारित प्रोत्साहन (PLI) योजना और कर छूट शुरू करने का आग्रह किया है। संस्था ने कहा कि इन उपायों से प्रमुख अणुओं के लिए आयात पर निर्भरता कम होगी और पूरे भारत में कृषि-रसायन निर्माण केंद्र स्थापित करने में मदद मिलेगी, जिससे घरेलू उत्पादन को बढ़ावा मिलेगा।

कारोबार

एसीएफआई ने तकनीकी आयात में कटौती के लिए रियायतों की मांग की

नई दिल्ली। एग्रोकेमिकल नीति का एक प्रमुख मंच, एग्रो केम फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया ने तकनीकी सामग्री के लिए आयात पर निर्भरता को कम करने और घरेलू उत्पादन को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एग्रोकेमिकल विनिर्माण हब स्थापित करने के लिए सरकार से पीएलआई योजना और टैक्स हॉलिडे शुरू करने का आग्रह किया है । एसीएफआई और वैश्विक परामर्श फर्म डेलॉइट ने अपनी वार्षिक आम बैठक के दौरान एक नॉलेज पेपर जारी किया, जिसमें फसल सुरक्षा रसायन उद्योग के विभिन्न पहलुओं और नियामक परिदृश्य पर प्रकाश डाला गया है। इसमें कृषि उत्पादकता बढ़ाने और वैश्विक खाद्य आपूर्ति श्रृंखला में भारत के योगदान को बढ़ाने के लिए आवश्यक इस क्षेत्र को बढ़ावा देने के उपायों का भी सुझाव दिया गया है। भारत और विश्व स्तर पर किसानों को गुणवत्तापूर्ण एग्रोकेमिकल उत्पाद उपलब्ध करानाश नामक रिपोर्ट में इस बात पर जोर दिया गया कि भारत एग्रोकेमिकल निर्यात में एक महत्वपूर्ण खिलाड़ी रहा है, जिसमें भारतीय एग्रोकेमिकल्स का निर्यात 2014-15 में $1.3 बिलियन से बढ़कर 2024-25 में लगभग $3.3 बिलियन हो गया है। यह भारत को चीन और अमेरिका के बाद दुनिया का तीसरा सबसे बड़ा एग्रोकेमिकल निर्यातक बनाता है। मौजूदा वैश्विक अनिश्चितताओं के मद्देनजर, विलोवुड के एमडी, श्री परीक्षित मुंद्रा ने टिप्पणी की कि यह उद्योग प्रमुख कच्चे माल और तकनीकी उत्पादों के लिए आयात पर निर्भर है, जिससे यह बाहरी आपूर्ति के झटकों के प्रति संवेदनशील हो जाता है। उन्होंने कहा कि रतकनीकी इनपुट के लिए चीन से आयात पर निर्भरता रणनीतिक जोखिम पैदा करती है, जैसे कि भू-राजनीतिक तनाव, व्यापार प्रतिबंध, या कारखाने बंद होने के कारण चीनी आपूर्ति में व्यवधान, जिससे भारत में कमी या कीमतों में वृद्धि हो सकती है।

Industry demands PLI to boost agrochemical manufacturing, cut technical imports

The Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) is advocating for government support through PLI schemes and tax incentives to reduce reliance on imported agrochemical ingredients. This push aims to establish domestic manufacturing hubs, enhance agricultural productivity, and strengthen India's role in the global food supply chain, especially amid prevailing global uncertainties.

Agro Chem Federation seeks PLI scheme, tax holidays to reduce imports of key inputs

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) has urged the government to introduce a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and tax holidays to reduce import dependence on technical ingredients for production of agrochemicals in the country.

It also urged the Centre to set up agrochemical manufacturing hubs in different regions of the country to boost domestic production.

ACFI has also made a strong case for promoting public-private research and development collaboration and strengthening the ₹69,000 crore MSME segment in the agri chemical sector, it said in a statement a day after its annual general meeting. A report, titled *Ensuring the availability of quality agrochemical products to farmers in India and globally*, prepared by Deloitte, was also released on the occasion.

RISING EXPORTS

The report emphasised that Indian agrochemicals exports, valued about $3.3 billion (in 2024–25), had increased from $1.3 billion in 2014-15 and made the country the world's third-largest agrochemicals exporter after China and the US.

Parikshit Mundhra, MD, Willowood, said, "Reliance on imports of technical inputs from China poses strategic risks, such as disruption in supply due to geopolitical tensions, trade restrictions or factory shutdowns, which could create shortages or price spikes in India."

Addressing the AGM, Agriculture Commissioner PK Singh said, "We must ensure not only the health of the crop but also the health of the farming community since agriculture is highly dependent on the climate. An output-outcome approach must be taken in the agrochemical sector as well. Climate- and insect-resistant seed varieties and improvised agrochemicals are the need of the hour."

"The government should introduce a PLI scheme for the agrochemical sector, specifically targeting critical active ingredients and key intermediates that are currently imported in large volumes," Rajeev Ranjan, Partner-Agri Business, Deloitte India, said.

'Make in India' incentives, regulatory policy and relaxed data requirement for export registrations are exciting factors for MNCs to transfer technology to Indian players and manufacture for export, and these are leading to India becoming one of the potential hubs for global exports, said Simon Wiebusch, Chairman and MD of Bayer CropScience.

India becomes third-largest agrochemical exporter with $3.3 bn exports

Agrochemical exports surged to $3.3 billion in FY25, making India the world's third-largest exporter as ACFI seeks policy support for growth momentum

India's agrochemical exports nearly trebled in 10 years to $3.3 billion in FY25, up from $1.3 billion in 2014-15, making the country the third-largest exporter of agrochemicals after China and the US, a report by the Agro-Chemicals Federation of India (ACFI) and Deloitte released late last evening showed.

To sustain the momentum, ACFI has urged the government to introduce a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and tax holidays for the sector. It said these measures would reduce import dependence for key molecules and help establish agrochemical manufacturing hubs across India, thereby boosting domestic production.

The association, which represents all major agrochemical companies in India, also advocated for greater public-private cooperation in research and development and the strengthening of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

AGRI BUSINESS

Agro Chem Federation seeks PLI scheme, tax holidays for agro chemicals sector

PREMIUM

ACFI urges government for manufacturing hubs to reduce import dependence and strengthen domestic roots

By BL New Delhi Bureau

Updated - September 12, 2025 at 08:00 PM.

The Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) has requested the government to introduce a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme and tax holidays to reduce import dependence on technical ingredients for production of agro chemicals in the country.

It has also urged the Centre to set up agrochemical manufacturing hubs in different regions of the country to boost domestic production.

एसीएफआई ने एग्रोकेमिकल विनिर्माण को बढ़ावा देने और तकनीकी आयात में कटौती के लिए रियायतों की मांग की

India's Agrochemical Exports Nearly Triple in 10 Years to USD 3.3 Billion in FY25 According to ACFI-Deloitte Report (Photo Source: ACFI)

एग्रोकेमिकल नीति का एक प्रमुख मंच, एग्रो केम फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया (ACFI), ने तकनीकी सामग्री के लिए आयात पर निर्भरता को कम करने और घरेलू उत्पादन को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एग्रोकेमिकल विनिर्माण हब स्थापित करने के लिए सरकार से पीएलआई योजना और टैक्स हॉलिडे शुरू करने का आग्रह किया है.

एसीएफआई और वैश्विक परामर्श फर्म डेलॉइट ने अपनी वार्षिक आम बैठक के दौरान एक नॉलेज पेपर जारी किया, जिसमें फसल सुरक्षा रसायन उद्योग के विभिन्न पहलुओं और नियामक परिदृश्य पर प्रकाश डाला गया है. इसमें कृषि उत्पादकता बढ़ाने और वैश्विक खाद्य आपूर्ति श्रृंखला में भारत के योगदान को बढ़ाने के लिए आवश्यक इस क्षेत्र को बढ़ावा देने के उपायों का भी सुझाव दिया गया है. "भारत और विश्व स्तर पर किसानों को गुणवत्तापूर्ण एग्रोकेमिकल उत्पाद उपलब्ध कराना" नामक रिपोर्ट में इस बात पर जोर दिया गया कि भारत एग्रोकेमिकल निर्यात में एक महत्वपूर्ण खिलाड़ी रहा है, जिसमें भारतीय एग्रोकेमिकल्स का निर्यात 2014-15 में $1.3 बिलियन से बढ़कर 2024-25 में लगभग $3.3 बिलियन हो गया है. यह भारत को चीन और अमेरिका के बाद दुनिया का तीसरा सबसे बड़ा एग्रोकेमिकल निर्यातक बनाता है.

Industry demands PLI to boost agrochemical manufacturing, cut technical imports

8th AGM of Agro Chem Federation of India (Image: ACFI)

New Delhi [India], September 13 (ANI): The Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) has urged the government to introduce a PLI scheme and tax holidays to reduce import dependence for technical ingredients and to set up agrochemical manufacturing hubs to boost domestic production.

ACFI and global consultancy firm Deloitte have released a knowledge paper during their Annual General Meeting earlier this week, highlighting the various aspects of the crop protection chemicals industry, the regulatory landscape, and suggesting measures to boost the sector, which is essential for enhancing agricultural productivity and increasing India's contribution to the global food supply chain.

The report titled "Ensuring the availability of quality agrochemical products to farmers in India and globally" emphasised India has been a significant player in the agrochemicals exports with the Indian agrochemicals export valued at about USD 3.3 billion as of 2024-25, rising from USD 1.3 billion a decade ago, to become the third-largest agrochemicals exporter in the world only behind China and the US.

NEWS

Can't put blanket ban on PUSA-44, other paddy hybrids: HC to Punjab

April 7 orders don't pass the test of legality as state has no power to ban notified hybrid seeds under Section 5 of the Seeds Act, says HC

Aneesha Sareen Kumar
letterschd@hindustantimes.com

The plea stated the seed subject falls in the concurrent list of the Constitution, giving Parliament the authority to legislate. PTI FILE

CHANDIGARH: Setting aside the Punjab agriculture department's April 7, 2025, order imposing a blanket ban on PUSA-44 and all hybrid paddy seeds, both notified and non-notified , the high court on Monday ruled that the directive "does not withstand the test of legality." The Punjab and Haryana high court bench clarified that the state cannot prohibit the use of varieties duly notified by the government of India under the Seeds Act of 1966.

Justice Kuldeep Tiwari, in his order, stated that the government notification dated April 7, 2025, 'does not pass the test of legality.'

"Therefore, the writ petitions are allowed and the impugned administrative order is set aside," read the order. In the 59-page order, the court observed that the state government was not vested with any power to impose a ban upon notified kind or variety of hybrid seeds, which have legal force on account of Section 5 of the Act of 1966".

The HC, however, upheld the administrative orders of April 4 and April 10, 2019, which imposed a prohibition only on the use of non-notified varieties of hybrid paddy in the state.

The court orders came on two civil writ petitions filed in the high court against the orders by the Punjab agriculture department, which initially banned PUSA-44 and all types of hybrid paddy seeds, notified and non-notified alike.

Senior advocates Munisha Gandhi and Gurminder Singh, representing the petitioners, companies involved in the business of seed production/trading, or the farmers aggrieved by the blanket ban, argued that the state government lacked statutory power to issue such sweeping orders.

They contended that the subject of seeds falls in the concurrent list of the Constitution, giving Parliament the authority to legislate.

Supporting this view, the Union government also opposed the blanket ban. In its reply filed through the additional solicitor-general Satya Pal Jain, the Centre submitted that the Seeds Act 1966 did not empower any authority to restrict or allow movement of seeds, which was a matter linked to interstate trade protected under Article 301 of the Constitution.

The court said that although a detailed reply has been filed, the state government maintained stoic silence on certain queries.

"As stated by the senior counsels for the petitioners, the state government has neither separately notified any seeds as per provisions of Section 2(i), nor established any mechanism of authorised dealers as per provisions of Section 2(iv) of the Act of 1949. Rather, the state government is following the mechanism for regulating seeds as per the central government enactments, i.e. the Act of 1966, Rules of 1968 and the Seeds Order. Consequently, this court can easily infer that, despite the Act of 1966 being in force, the Act of 1949 has been dug out and invoked by the state government merely to lend legal force to its decision to impose a ban on the use of notified kind or variety of hybrid seeds," read the order.

Chouhan orders probe into farmers' complaint on herbicide, promises action against fake inputs

Our Bureau
New Delhi

A day after ordering a team to probe farmers' complaint against a particular herbicide that has allegedly caused adverse effects on the soyabean crop, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday directed officials to take strict action against those selling fake fertilizers, seeds and pesticides.

Chouhan conducted a surprise inspection of soybean fields in Chirkheda village of Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh, on Sunday after farmers complained that their crop was ruined by a particular herbicide, according to an official release. He has already announced a team to visit the affected field and submit a report.

The village comes under the Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency represented by the Agriculture Minister.

PROBE TEAM

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) formed an inquiry panel on Sunday itself under JS Mishra, Director of the Jabalpur-based Directorate of Weed Research.

The committee also includes SRK Singh, Director of Atari Zone 9 (Jabalpur), and Deputy Director of the State Agriculture Department and Head of the Krishi Vigyan Kendra of Raisen.

SPOT VISIT. Union Agriculture Minsiter Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday visiting the soybean crop damaged by a herbicide at Chhirkhedi in Vidisha district, Madhya Pradesh PTI

At the review meeting, Chouhan told the officials that they should take the damage of farmers' crops very seriously. He also instructed them to conduct raids and visit farmers' fields regularly.

He shared his experience with officials as he found the crop completely burnt, with weeds standing in place of soyabean, sources said.

In the meeting, he also said hundreds of farmers in different districts were suffering due to fake fertilizers, seeds and pesticides.

'I AM WORRIED'

"When farmers say that they are using fertilizers in the fields but it is not working, I am very worried. The plight of these farmers should be taken seriously," he said, adding that those selling such sub-standard or spurious fertilizers and seeds should not be spared.

The reaction of the fertilizer company could not be received till the filing of this report.

Over 12K raids made to check black marketing of fertilisers: Agri min

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: Agriculture minister Surya Pratap Shahi on Wednesday said that as many as 186 people were identified for purchasing excessive urea, ranging from 1 MT to 2.37 MT, in Maharajganj.

Speaking to reporters, Shahi said that some of them bought urea four to 13 times, for which investigations have been initiated. Likewise, in Siddharthnagar, many farmers were identified for purchasing urea up to 20 times.

"Strict action will be taken against black marketing and hoarding," he said.The reports of fertiliser allegedly being smuggled to Nepal from bordering districts like Maharajganj, Balrampur, and Deoria have also been reported.

He said that statewide, as many as 12,653 raids were conducted to check the black marketing of fertilisers. In all, 91 FIRs were registered against people engaged in hoarding and black marketing.

The state govt, he said, issued notices to 1,047 people accused of malpractices related to the sale of fertilisers. Shahi said that licences of 571 retailers were suspended and 1,196 were cancelled.

Likewise, licences of 13 wholesalers were suspended and four cancelled. Shahi also launched a scathing attack on Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, saying he had no moral right to speak on farmers' issues as they were denied timely sowing support and MSP during his tenure.

The minister asserted that there was no shortage of fertiliser and a total of 15.91 lakh metric tons of fertiliser was available in the state. He said that the cultivation area under Kharif increased from 90.46 lakh hectares in 2013-14 to 105.93 lakh hectares in 2023-24. Thus, the area under Kharif crop increased by 17% to 15.47 lakh hectares.

He pointed out that consumption of urea in 2016 was 23 lakh metric tons. This increased to 39 LMT in 2024. That is, the consumption of urea increased by 16 lakh metric tons in eight years.

Shahi said the state govt will seek 25.45 lakh metric tons of urea from the govt of India. Availability of 37.97 lakh metric tons of urea is ensured, he said.

Minister Surya Pratap Shahi

Yogi to farmers: Don't store fertilisers

Lucknow: Asserting that there was no shortage of fertiliser in the state, CM Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday appealed to the farmers not to store fertilisers. He asked the farmers to take fertiliser only as needed. The CM stressed that there was a complaint cell in every district where farmers can inform in case of any problem. The CM has also given a stern warning to those who overrate and black market fertilisers. He has directed the officers posted in the district to inspect from time to time, establish communication with the farmers, and resolve the problems.

IFFCO names KJ Patel as new MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, July 31

COOPERATIVE MAJOR IFFCO has appointed K J Patel as its new managing director (MD) with former chief US Awasthi's term ending on Thursday.

IFFCO chairman Dileep Sanghani announced Patel as the new MD, the cooperative said in a statement.

Patel, who was director-technical at IFFCO, holds a mechanical engineering degree from Saurashtra University and has a rich experience of more than 32 years in the maintenance of Nitrogenous & Phosphatic fertiliser plants.

He was heading the IFFCO Paradeep Plant, the biggest complex fertiliser plant in India.

"Patel brings deep industry knowledge and, proven strategic thinking approach that aligns with the goals of IFFCO," Sanghani said.

Further, he said the board is confident that Patel will steer IFFCO into a new era of innovation and value creation.

India needs $467 bn climate finance by 2030 to decarbonise 4 key sectors: Study

NEW DELHI

INDIA will need to mobilise $467 billion in climate finance by 2030 to put four of its most carbon-intensive sectors -- power, steel, cement and transport -- on a low-carbon pathway, according to a new study.

The working paper, "India's Climate Finance Requirements: An Assessment", authored by economists Janak Raj and Rakesh Mohan for the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) and the Task Force on Climate, Development and the IMF, was released on Thursday. It departs from conventional top-down modelling approaches and instead uses a bottom-up methodology, estimating climate finance needs sector by sector to present what the authors described as a "granular understanding" of India's challenge. The study found that decarbonising the four sectors, which together accounted for more than 50 per cent of the country's carbon dioxide emissions in 2023, would require an average of $54 billion a year between 2022 and 2030. This amounts to around 1.3 per cent of India's GDP. "Contrary to the common narrative, the study finds that it is not the power sector, but the steel and cement sectors which need large climate finance," Raj said.

"Both the steel and cement are hard to abate sectors, which require the use of an expensive carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology, but it is the only feasible option at this stage," he said.

Union Minister asks ICAR to expedite research on whether arecanut is carcinogenic or not

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Union Agriculture Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan has asked the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) to expedite the research on whether arecanut is carcinogenic or not. The research team has been asked to submit a report within a time frame.

The Minister, who held a meeting with Union Ministers from Karnataka and representatives from arecanut-growing regions in the State, said that the ICAR had been asked to conduct the research in the light of the World Health Organisation's statement that said that the arecanut was carcinogenic, which had caused confusion.

A release said that the Minister observed that Indians had been consuming arecanut since time immemorial, and it was used in every auspicious occasion in the country.

ICAR has been asked to conduct the research in the light of the World Health Organisation's statement which said that arecanut was carcinogenic. FILE PHOTO

Referring to problems being faced by areca farmers, he said a disease like "areolate mildew", which destroyed areca trees, was being addressed by scientific teams. The availability of clean planting material was also discussed, the release said.

The press note said that the Union Agriculture Minister informed that the government was seriously considering appropriate compensation to farmers for the heavy losses caused by viral infections.

Issues such as illegal imports of arecanut, moisture problems, and price differentials between small and large nuts were also extensively discussed, it added.

He promised that all issues would be resolved in a time-bound manner and that the interests of farmers and the arecanut industry would be fully protected.

GST overhaul set to make life easier for exporters

mint

Mint Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: India's proposed overhaul of Goods and Services Tax (GST) will speed up tax refunds for exporters, improve their cash flow, and streamline compliances for small businesses, as part of overall reforms meant to unlock the untapped potential of the economy, a central government official said on Saturday.

India's efforts to make life easier for businesses, especially exporters, comes as they face headwinds in their largest market, the US, which has slapped additional tariffs of 50%, including a penal rate for New Delhi's energy trade with Russia. On Friday, talks between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin remained inconclusive in deciding a ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine war.

"The GST overhaul will result in 90% of tax refunds getting issued very quickly, within two or three weeks," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

THE OVERHAUL OF GST, IN SPITE OF A SHORT-TERM DENT IN REVENUE GROWTH, WILL BE FISCALLY SUSTAINABLE, THE OFFICIAL SAID

"While this will be for all taxpayers, exporters will benefit the most," the person said.

Other than exporters, a large section of domestic businesses seeks refunds because of the inverted duty regime in sectors such as fertilizer and textiles where raw materials attract higher taxes than finished products.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Friday announced his government's commitment to have the GST reforms implemented by the coming festive season. The reforms include doing away with the 12% and 28% rates, and taxing most of the goods under these slabs at 5% and 18% respectively; reducing classification-related disputes, correcting inverted duty structures in specific sectors, ensuring greater rate stability, and enhancing ease of registrations, return filing and refunds.

The reforms were conceived keeping in mind the need for making daily use goods for the middle-class and the poor cheaper, the official said. Prices of goods such as pasta, jam, and namkeen are likely to fall thanks to the lower tax rate.

"Also, the idea is to make life easier for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in terms of processes and compliance," the second official said. The tax restructure also will make the registration process also easier. The official said the most registrations will likely happen within three calendar days of applying.

The GST restructuring, in spite of a short-term dent in revenue growth, will be fiscally sustainable as the increase in consumption demand and compliance will make up for the revenue forgone, the official said.

The official also clarified that the GST compensation cess levied on products like tobacco, automobiles and carbonated drinks will likely be discontinued before March 2026 as soon as all debts and interest are paid. Sin goods such as tobacco are expected to be taxed at 40% under the new proposal.

The central government is expected to complete repayment of the ₹2.69 trillion raised from the market to give liquidity support to states during the pandemic, ahead of March. This cess ranges from 1% in the case of certain motor vehicles to 290% in the case of mixtures used in smoking pipes.

A group of ministers led by Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Chaudhary is currently studying the proposal. Once it is done, the GST Council will call its next meeting, the official said. GST reforms have been in the works for a couple of years.

TNAU training programmes on organic farming provide a window of opportunity for exporters

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, through its monthly training on organic farming for the last four years, has been providing beneficial inputs to a substantial number of prospective exporters among participating agriculturists.

The farmers taking part in the trainings at the TNAU's Nammazhvar Organic Farming Research Centre are exposed to the export market for organically produced agricultural and horticultural crops in European Union and other countries, alongside receiving orientation on principles of organic farming, organic nutrient, weed, pest and disease management, and production of organic inputs.

TNAU's programmes have benefited farmers undertaking organic cultivation of grapes in Thondamuthur in Coimbatore district, and varieties of vegetables in Gobichettipalayam-Sathyamangalam belt, Head of the Nammazhvar Organic Farming Research Centre, TNAU, Coimbatore, said.

The farmers are familiarised with the norms of APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through the programme.

According to officials of Department of Seed Certification and Organic Certification, coconut farmers are raising organic crop in over 10,000 hectares in Udumalpet and Pollachi belt in the Western region.

In Udumalpet and surroundings, organic coconut crops grown in 4,500 hectares are registered under NPOP (National Programme for Organic Production) that qualifies the cultivators to export their products.

The NPOP standards for crop production have been recognised by the European Commission and Switzerland as equivalent to their country's standards and are also accepted by Great Britain. There is an MRA (Mutual Recognition Agreement) for organic products with Taiwan, officials said.

As for the PGS (Participatory Guarantee System) under the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers have raised organic moringa, and also coconut, in about 1,600 hectares in Tiruppur district, sources said.

The Quality Control Laboratories that the State Government has planned to establish in Coimbatore, Chennai, Tuticorin and Madurai at Rs. 6.16 crore is expected to accord a further thrust to organic farming, official sources added.

CM for deploying drones to curb pesticide use

Naidu reviews Real Time Governance Society initiatives

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

Chief Minister N Chandrababu reviewing the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) at the Secretariat in Vijayawada on Monday

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has called upon the state's Drone Corporation to expand its services across the state. In this context, he emphasised increasing the use of drones in agriculture to significantly reduce farmers' resort to pesticides and fertilizers. Officials told him that 45 use cases for drones were currently ready.

During a review of the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) center at the Secretariat here on Monday, he suggested using drones also for public health initiatives, such as controlling the spread of infectious diseases and those spread by mosquitoes. He directed officials to expedite the construction of a dedicated Drone City.

At the review, he reaffirmed that, starting August 15, the state government will provide over 700 services to citizens through 'Mana Mitra,' the state's one-of-its-kind WhatsApp governance initiative. In this regard, the Chief Minister instructed officials to ensure that all relevant departments work together to prevent any technical issues for citizens using the WhatsApp service. He emphasized the need to raise public awareness about the platform so that citizens can access government services without needing to visit government offices in person.

AWARE integrates data from satellites, drones, Internet of Things, sensors, mobile feeds, and CCTV to deliver real-time alerts and advisories to citizens and the government via SMS, WhatsApp, media and social media

It may be mentioned here that on June 2nd RTGS of Andhra Pradesh and the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for leveraging space technologies to facilitate real-time citizen-centric governance. The collaboration is expected to enhance RTGS's AWARE (AP Weather Forecasting and Early Warning Research Centre) platform with satellite imagery and scientific inputs across 42+ applications across agriculture, weather, disaster management and urban planning. AWARE integrates data from satellites, drones, Internet of Things, sensors, mobile feeds, and CCTV to deliver real-time alerts and advisories to citizens and the government via SMS, WhatsApp, media and social media.

Continued on Page 7

Experts advise adopting integrated pest management for paddy crop

MANAV MANDER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, AUGUST 9

With rice and basmati crops covering over 31.79 lakh hectares in Punjab this kharif season, agricultural experts are sounding the alarm over increasing insect-pest infestations that threaten both yield and quality.

High humidity and warm conditions during the crop cycle have created a conducive environment for pests like stem borers, leaf folders, planthoppers and rice hispa to thrive—prompting calls for integrated pest management (IPM) and need-based chemical intervention.

Dr Preetinder Singh Sarao from the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), emphasised the urgency of shifting away from blanket insecticide applications.

"Farmers often spray insecticides early in the season without assessing pest levels. This not only wastes resources but also disrupts ecological balance and increases pest resistance," said Dr Sarao.

High humidity and warm conditions during the crop cycle have created a conducive environment for pests to thrive. HIMANSHU MAHAJAN

Stem borers: Persistent threat

Three species of stem borers—yellow, white and pink—are active from July to October. These pests bore into rice stems, causing 'dead hearts' in vegetative stages and 'white ears' in panicle-bearing plants, leading to seedless, erect gearheads.

"Avoid long-duration varieties like Pusa 44 and Peeli Pusa, which demand more water and additional pesticide sprays," advised Dr Harpal Singh Randhawa from PAU's Regional Research Station, Gurdaspur. "Instead, follow PAU's sowing and transplanting schedule to reduce pest build-up," he said.

Chemical control is recommended only when damage exceeds 5 per cent in rice and 2 per cent in basmati. Experts urge alternating insecticides and monitoring pest thresholds before spraying.

Leaf folder: Subtle but damaging

Leaf folders feed on green leaf tissue, reducing photosynthesis and weakening plant health. Females lay translucent eggs on leaf undersides and larvae fold leaves to feed internally.

"Mechanical control like rope dragging across the canopy can dislodge larvae effectively," said Dr Rubaljot Kooner from PAU's Department of Entomology. "This should be done before flowering and only when water is standing in the field."

Chemical intervention is advised when leaf damage reaches 10 per cent with more than one-third of the leaf affected.

Planthoppers and emerging viral threats

White-backed and brown planthoppers suck sap from the base of tillers, causing 'hopper burn'—dry patches that spread rapidly. Their honeydew excretion also leads to sooty mould, further hindering photosynthesis.

During kharif 2022, a new virus—southern rice black-streaked dwarf virus (SRBSDV)—was detected in early sown fields. The vector? White-backed planthopper nymphs and adults. "This virus causes stunted growth and poor yield. Farmers must monitor hopper populations using light traps and uproot infected plants immediately," warned Dr Kooner.

Spraying is recommended only when hopper counts exceed five per hill. Spot treatment of affected patches and surrounding areas is crucial to contain spread.

Other pests and preventive measures

Grasshoppers and rice hispa also pose threats, especially in nurseries and waterlogged fields. Hispa beetles tunnel into leaves, leaving bold white streaks that impair photosynthesis.

Promoting eco-friendly practices

PAU scientists advocate for green chemistry solutions like Ecotin and PAU's homemade neem extract. The neem extract, prepared by boiling 4 kg of neem parts in 10 litters of water, offers an effective, eco-safe alternative at pest initiation stages.

"Natural enemies like spiders, dragonflies and ladybird beetles thrive in rice ecosystems. Need-based spraying preserves these beneficial species," said Dr Sarao.

Farmers are also cautioned against using banned insecticides such as acephate, buprofezin and chlorpyriphos on basmati, which can lead to chemical residue issues in the final produce.

Agri Min approves ICAR-CPRI's four potato varieties for nationwide cultivation

SHIMLA, Sept 6: The Union agriculture ministry has approved four new potato varieties for agricultural use as quality seed across India based on the Central Seed Committee's recommendations

productivity.

These four new potato varieties – Kufri Ratan, Kufri Chipbharat-1, Kufri Chipbharat-2, and Kufri Tejas, developed by ICAR's Central Potato Research Institute

seed production and multiplication across the country, an official statement said.

Kufri Ratan, a medium maturing (90 days), high yielding (37-39 t/ha) red skin table potato variety, is suitable for North Indian plains and plateau regions like Haryana, Punjab, the plains of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. It produces attractive, dark red, ovoid tubers with shallow medium eyes and yellow flesh and has excellent storability.

Kufri Tejas is a heat-tolerant, medium maturing (90 days) and high-yielding (37-40 t/ha) variety

tified and recommended for Indian plains, such as Haryana, Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand, for the early season and for Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, for the main season.

The variety produces white cream, ovoid tubers, shallow eyes, white flesh, and has very good storability under ambient storage conditions.

Kufri Chipbharat-1 is a medium maturing (100 days), high-yielding (35-38 t/ha) chip processing variety. It is recommended for Indian plains such as Haryana, Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand, MP, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka,

main season.

The variety produces white cream, round tubers, shallow eyes, white flesh, high dry matter (21 per cent), and has very good storability under ambient storage conditions. It has an acceptable chip colour and low reducing sugars.

The fourth variety, named Kufri Chipbharat-2, is an early maturing (90 days), high-yielding (35-37 t/ha) chip processing potato variety. It has been notified and recommended for Indian plains such as Haryana, Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand, MP, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka,

main season.

The variety produces white cream, ovoid tubers, shallow-medium eyes, cream flesh, high dry matter (21 per cent), and has very good storability under ambient storage conditions. The variety has wide adaptability, acceptable chip colour and reducing sugars and will be available through licensing to potato seed producers and processors.

Brajesh Singh, Director, ICAR-CPRI, congratulated the team of scientists for their dedicated and sustained contributions to the farming community and the potato-based industries.

tion of four new varieties marks a significant milestone in strengthening India's potato sector.

"This is not just a scientific achievement but also a moment of celebration for scientists, farmers, and industries alike," CPRI, in a statement, quoted Singh as saying.

Singh further emphasised that the release of these varieties would open new avenues for enhancing potato productivity, improving processing efficiency, and ensuring better returns to farmers, while simultaneously supporting the growth of the potato-based food

Dwarf virus: 'Under control' claims face paddy farmers' spray worries

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chandigarh: Despite a favourable monsoon, Punjab's paddy crop has been hit by a resurfacing outbreak of the Southern Rice Black-Streaked Dwarf Virus, commonly known as the Fiji virus.

The state's agriculture department claims that the virus is under control, officially affecting just over 510 hectares in multiple districts. However, farmers are expressing significant concern, fearing that multiple insecticide sprays may only offer temporary relief, and have already resulted in financial losses.

The virus, first identified in the region in 2022, severely stunts plant growth and reduces crop yield, threatening the season's harvest. It causes rice plants to become severely stunted, often reducing their height by half or more. Infected plants also develop a distinct dark green colour with narrow, upright leaves, while their roots become weak and black, hindering nutrient absorption.

The state's agriculture dept said the virus has affected just over 510 hectares in multiple districts

The virus is not transmitted through wind or water; instead, it is spread by an insect known as the whitebacked planthopper (WBPH). While the virus is more commonly found in early-sown, non-basmati rice varieties, it has also been detected in some basmati fields.

Jaskaranvir Singh, a farmer from Khamanon village in Fatehgarh Sahib, said acting on the advice of agricultural experts, he sprayed the crop twice so far – something that was typically not required at this stage of the season. "The sprays are an additional financial burden. Our fear is that the whitebacked planthopper may become active and spread to other plants," he said.

Since there is no direct cure for the virus, the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) advised farmers to conduct weekly field inspections and, upon detecting the presence of the planthopper, to use specific insecticides.

Director of agriculture Jaswant Singh said the virus was currently "under control", and special teams had been deployed to monitor the situation on the ground. He mentioned that field staff was informing farmers about recommended sprays. The affected area is officially estimated at 510 hectares. "This time, the virus was addressed at the start of its attack," he added.

Rise of the herbicides

The growth in India's pesticide market is being led by not insecticides or fungicides, but herbicides. In recent years, the demand for this chemical has increased due to a shortage of labour for manual weeding

HARISH DAMODARAN

CROP PROTECTION chemicals, commonly known as "pesticides", are classified based on the pest they target. Insecticides target insects that cause damage by feeding on crops or transmitting disease, fungicides control fungal diseases, and herbicides kill or inhibit the growth of weeds.

India's organised domestic crop protection chemicals market is valued at roughly Rs 24,500 crore with insecticides, at Rs 10,700 crore, being the largest segment followed by herbicides (Rs 8,200 crore) and fungicides (Rs 5,600 crore).

That said, it is also the market for herbicides that, at 10% per annum, is growing at the highest rate. Here's why.

The herbicide market

Much of India's herbicide market is controlled by multinationals: German Bayer AG (which has an estimated 15% market share), Chinese state-owned Syngenta (12%) and ADAMA (10%), American Corteva Agriscience (7%), and Japanese Sumitomo Chemical (6%). Major Indian players include Dhanuka Agritech (6%) and Crystal Crop Protection Ltd (CCPL, 4%).

CCPL recently purchased the rights to Ethoxysulfuron, a herbicide used against broad-leaved weeds and sedges in rice and sugarcane, from Bayer AG for sales in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Southeast Asian countries. The deal, announced in January, covered Bayer's 'Sunrice' trademark for mixture products containing this active ingredient.

Earlier, in December 2023, CCPL had acquired 'Gramoxone', a broad-spectrum herbicide containing the active ingredient Paraquat, from Syngenta for sale in India.

"We are very bullish on herbicides. While the all-India market for this segment grew by 10% in 2024-25 (from Rs 7,460 crore to Rs 8,209 crore), our own sales rose over 47%," said Ankur Aggarwal, managing director of the Delhi-based company that recorded a turnover of Rs 2,201 crore from crop protection chemicals last fiscal.

Pavan Khengre

INDIA'S CROP PROTECTION CHEMICALS MARKET

	Market Size	Annual Growth
Insecticides	₹10,706 cr	5.3%-5.5%
Fungicides	₹5,571 cr	5.5%-6%
Herbicides	₹8,209 cr	10%-11%

Source: Industry estimates for 2024-25. Growth is for last five years.

Growth driver: labour shortage

Weeds, unlike insect pests and disease-causing pathogens, do not directly damage or destroy crops. Instead, they compete with them for nutrients, water and sunlight. Yield losses happen because the crops are deprived of these essential resources. Besides growing at their expense, weeds sometimes even harbour pests and pathogens inflicting further harm.

By keeping their fields free from weeds, farmers can ensure that the benefits of the fertilisers and irrigation water go to crops and not these unwanted plants.

Weed control has traditionally been manual: either by hand or or simple tools with flat blades such as *khurpi*. There are also power weeders that can be run between rows of standing crops to remove weeds in and around those spaces.

But manual weeding is time-consuming, with a labourer taking 8-10 hours to cover a single acre. And since the weeds regrow, the process has to often be repeated during the crop's lifecycle.

According to the Labour Bureau's data, the all-India daily wage rate for plant protection workers averaged Rs 447.6 in December 2024, as against Rs 326.2 five years ago. Cost aside, this labour is not available when the farmer needs it. While power weeders take 2-3 hours per acre, these are not effective against weeds with deep roots or growing within densely planted crop areas.

That's where herbicides come in: the demand for these chemicals is growing mainly on the back of rising agricultural labour scarcity.

How market is evolving

Farmers generally spray insecticides and fungicides only when they physically observe and assess the pest population or disease incidence to be significant enough to impact crop yield and quality.

There's a certain economic threshold level, where the cost of controlling the pest/disease using chemicals is justified by the extent of anticipated crop loss. In herbicides, too, farmers tend to mostly spray only after the weeds appear, that is, "post-emergence".

In recent times, however, farmers have also been resorting to prophylactic application of "pre-emergent" herbicides around or just after crop sowing. These stop the weeds from coming out, helping keep the field clean from the very start. Alternatively, they may use "early post-emergent" herbicides to control weeds at the crop's initial sensitive growth stage. In both cases, the spraying is preventive, as opposed to being reactive.

And it is this segment that is leading growth, as farmers increasingly opt for timely and smart weed control amid rising labour shortages. Currently, out of the estimated Rs 1,500-crore paddy herbicide market, the "pre-emergent" sub-segment accounts for roughly Rs 550 crore. That share is about a fifth in the Rs 1,000-crore market for wheat herbicides.

Monopoly concerns

Unlike seeds and fertilisers, where there are enough Indian public as well as private sector players, the crop protection chemicals industry is practically a multinational monopoly.

But some Indian companies, nevertheless, are attempting to break through, by acquiring the rights to active ingredients and brands from big global majors or introducing innovative formulations.

CCPL, for instance, has collaborated with the Ohio (US)-based Battelle and Japan's Mitsui AgriScience to develop a new paddy herbicide called 'Sikosa'. Containing two active ingredients, Bensulfuron-methyl and Pretilachlor, in a patented oil-dispersion formulation, 'Sikosa' spreads quickly in water and works well when sprayed within 0-3 days after transplanting.

"The product cost is Rs 850-900 per acre, compared to Rs 2,000-plus with manual weeding," Aggarwal claimed.

That said India is still some distance away from having its own Sinochem, which owns both Syngenta and ADAMA.

LONGER VERSION ON
indianexpress.com/explained

EXPLAINER

Black-streaked dwarf virus hits paddy, experts give tips to farmers

MANAV MANDER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, AUGUST 7

In the heart of the state's paddy belt, a silent adversary has resurfaced—the southern rice black-streaked dwarf virus (SRBSDV). First identified in the region in 2022, the virus has once again struck the kharif crop, stunting the growth of rice plants across eight districts.

As farmers grapple with yield losses and uncertainty, scientists and agricultural experts are racing to contain the damage and decode the virus's resurgence. The virus's spread has sparked concern among farmers, many of whom are urging the state government to conduct a *girdawari* (crop loss assessment) and announce compensation.

The hallmark of SRBSDV infection is a sharp reduction in plant height.

The virus

SRBSDV belongs to the Fijivirus genus and was first reported in Southern China in 2001. It made its presence felt in Punjab three years ago, when farmers began noticing mysterious dwarfing of crops in their fields.

The virus is transmitted by the white-backed planthopper (WBPH), Sogatella furcifera, which spreads the infection persistently. WBPH nymphs are particularly efficient carriers and their migration—often aided by strong winds—can carry the virus across large distances. WBPH, the primary vector, is a familiar pest in Punjab's rice-wheat cropping system.

The hallmark of SRBSDV infection is a sharp reduction in plant height, often to half or even one-third of the normal. Infected plants develop narrow, upright leaves with white specks, shallow roots, poor tillering and stunted shoot growth.

In severe cases, plants may wither prematurely, leading to a significant yield loss. Field surveys by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, show that early-sown crops are especially vulnerable to the disease, with incidence rates ranging between 10 to over 40 per cent.

Reasons for resurgence

Experts attribute the virus's resurgence to a combination of factors. The SRBSDV is believed to have evolved from a related virus through genetic mutation, acquiring WBPH as a new vector. The widespread use of insecticides has altered the WBPH populations, making them harder to control.

Changes in transplanting schedules and rice varieties have also created conditions conducive to viral spread. The role of change in climatic conditions leading to the occurrence of virus is still under investigation by experts.

The PAU has been leading the response. In mid-July, reports of stunted rice plants began surfacing. PAU scientists conducted field visits, collected samples, and confirmed SRBSDV through molecular sequencing. PAU Vice-Chancellor Satbir Singh Gosal said the university was monitoring not just rice crops but also weeds and alternate host plants that may harbour the virus.

Dr KS Suri, Principal Entomologist at PAU, advised farmers to conduct weekly field checks by gently tilting and tapping rice plants to dislodge WBPH nymphs or adults. The transmitting insects can be seen floating on water surfaces or clustering at the plant base. Upon detection, farmers were urged to use insecticides recommended by the university. These include Pexalon, Ulala, Osheen/Dominant/Token, Imagine, Orchestra and Chess.

Scientists have also laid out the dose or quantity required per acre for different pesticides and the method of their application such as directing the spray specifically at the base of the plants and using proper nozzles like flat-fan or hollow cone for the maximum effectiveness. Dr Suri, however, cautioned against the indiscriminate use of pesticides, warning that it could lead to resistance and environmental harm.

How is the menace being tackled?

Not all stunted plants are victims of SRBSDV. Dr MS Bhullar, Director of Extension Education at PAU, noted that zinc deficiency can mimic viral symptoms. He urged farmers to consult extension services for an accurate diagnosis and proper nutrient management, to avoid unnecessary panic.

Since there is no cure for SRBSDV, prevention and early detection are critical. The PAU recommends that farmers follow transplanting schedules strictly, as crops transplanted after June 15 show lower incidence of the disease.

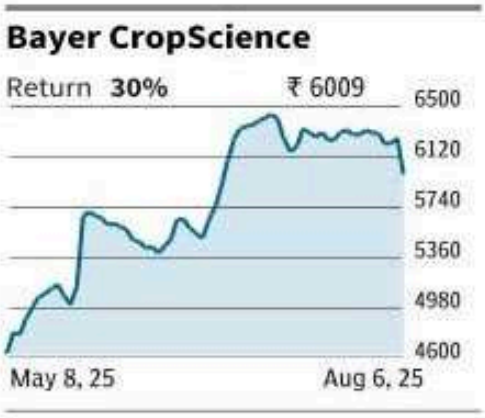
Monitoring WBPH activity, avoiding seed stock from infected fields and maintaining weed-free plots are essential. Farmers noticing symptoms should promptly report them to the nearest Krishi Vigyan Kendra or at the PAU.

With rice being a major economic crop in the state, the stakes are high. The current outbreak is a reminder of the vulnerabilities in our agricultural systems and the need for integrated pest management, climate-resilient practices and scientific vigilance.

As Punjab's farmers stand guard against this invisible enemy, the collective effort of researchers, policymakers and cultivators will determine whether the SRBSDV remains a seasonal menace—or becomes a chronic threat.

Bayer CropScience Q1 net up 10% on higher revenues

Our Bureau
Bengaluru



Bayer CropScience Ltd reported a 10 per cent increase in net profit for the June quarter at ₹278.7 crore over the corresponding period last quarter's ₹254.2 crore on higher revenues.

The company reported a 17.35 per cent increase in revenue from operations at ₹1,914.6 crore. Profit before tax stood at ₹335.2 crore (₹315.8 crore).

Simon Wiebusch, Vice-Chairman & Managing Director and CEO, Bayer CropScience Ltd, said, "In Q1, BCSL achieved 17 per cent growth in revenue from operations, primarily driven by higher volumes of corn seeds and roundup supported by the early onset of the monsoon."

He said: "Additionally, we successfully launched BICOTA, an innovation-backed solution for managing stem borers in paddy cultivation nationwide to support our smallholder farmers."

Vinit Jindal, Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, Bayer CropScience Ltd, added, "We delivered a 10 per cent increase in profit after tax for the quarter, underpinned by strong sales growth and early signs of input cost stabilisation. While operating expenses were elevated due to the early onset of the monsoon, our continued focus on cost discipline positions us well for sustained performance."

One-stop platform: Govt plans digital push to bridge farm infra gap

Vijay C Roy
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NEW DELHI

The government is set to expand the use of digital technology to deliver agricultural services and foster greater private sector participation in schemes run jointly with industry.

Public-private partnership (PPP) schemes and projects run by the Centre and states will be integrated into the agricultural investment portal, Krishi Nivesh, as part of broader e-governance measures aimed at improving service efficiency and plugging leakages, according to two people familiar with the development.

Krishi Nivesh is an integrated portal to attract, guide, and support investments in agriculture and allied sectors by simplifying access to schemes, data, submission of investment proposals, and tracking of approvals.

"There are many PPP schemes and projects across the Centre and state governments that remain scattered, and private entrepreneurs are often unaware of them. Integrating these into Krishi Nivesh will create a one-stop platform for availing benefits while attracting new investment," said one of the people cited above.


PPP schemes and projects run by the Centre and states will be integrated into the Krishi Nivesh portal. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

India's agriculture sector continues to face infrastructure gaps in post-harvest facilities such as cold storage, warehouses, processing units, and logistics. Government estimates suggest 6% of crops suffer post-harvest losses annually, amounting to around ₹1.2 trillion. With limited public funds, PPP is seen as a way to mobilize private capital and expertise to bridge these gaps.

"The integration of PPP projects on Krishi Nivesh portal will go a long way in attracting investment in the agriculture sector as the private players can access all the information pertaining to all the PPP schemes at a single place and at the same time they can submit their application and monitor its progress online," said Nutan Kaushik, director general, Amity Food and Agricultural Foundation.

Launched on 3 September 2024, the portal is primarily overseen by the ministry of agriculture and farmers' welfare. It has already integrated schemes from nine ministries and onboarded 19 programmes, including the agriculture infrastructure fund, animal husbandry infrastructure development fund, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojna and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna.

Planned inclusions on the platform include key central PPP schemes such as Agriculture Value Chain Development, Agro Processing Park, and Agri Export Zones. These aim to open opportunities for private investors to collaborate on critical infrastructure, such as warehouses, agro parks, and primary processing units.

"In the near future, we have plans to onboard more ministries and departments of the Centre and state pertaining to agriculture and allied activities, to streamline investments, boost transparency, and improve access to benefits for farmers and businesses," said the second person.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

Glossary to simplify agricultural biotechnology terms launched

Comprehensive guide aims to bridge research, practical application in crop science

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, AUGUST 6

Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) advanced its academic mission with the launch of the 'Glossary of Agricultural Biotechnology' during the concluding session of Dr Abraham Matoc Dhal's visit from South Sudan's Dr John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology. Organised at the Vice-Chancellor's Committee Room, the event was led by Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, PAU Vice-Chancellor and attended by scientists, officers, faculty and students. Published by CABI, UK, the book is a landmark contribution co-authored by Dr Gurbachan Singh Miglani, Dr Parveen Chhuneja and Dr Gosal, capturing foundational concepts in agricultural biotechnology.

Unveiling the glossary, Dr Dhal praised the authors for their commitment to advancing education in agricultural biotechnology. He highlighted biotechnology's growing role in tackling global food security challenges and stressed the importance of accessible, well-defined scientific knowledge. He noted the glossary would bridge the gap between complex research terms and practical applications, benefiting students, researchers and policymakers alike.

Dr Satbir Singh Gosal emphasised the book's significance amid the evolving field of agricultural biotechnology, which integrates genetics, molecular biology, bioinformatics and artificial intelligence (AI). Containing over 16,200 carefully curated terms, the glossary would serve as an indispensable resource for academia and industry, ensuring clarity and precision in scientific communication. As an author, Dr Gosal underlined the necessity of such a resource, especially given rapid advances in genomic research and precision breeding. He said the glossary would assist students, educators and professionals across government and private sectors involved in agricultural biotechnology.

Dr Gurbachan Singh Miglani, a genetics educator, reflected on the glossary's development, noting it was designed to fill a long-standing gap in agricultural biotechnology literature. Drawing on his extensive experience in genetics and molecular biology, he ensured the glossary offers scientifically accurate yet accessible definitions to help students and researchers navigate this complex field.

Dr Parveen Chhuneja, Director of the School of Agricultural Biotechnology at PAU and a leading molecular geneticist, highlighted the glossary's role in promoting interdisciplinary learning. She noted agricultural biotechnology spans multiple scientific disciplines, from cytogenetics to epigenomics. By consolidating terminology across these areas, the book would enhance understanding and application of biotechnology in crop improvement and sustainable agriculture.

'Industry will pass on GST benefits to consumers'

SHREYA NANDI

New Delhi, 4 September

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that the industry has given the commitment to pass on the benefits of GST rate reductions to consumers.

The GST rate rationalisation measures are aimed at lowering costs, addressing duty-related distortions, and boosting competitiveness across diverse sectors such as paper, leather, wood, handicrafts, commercial vehicles, tractors, food processing, textiles, toys, and packaging materials.

The measures will help exporters directly impacted by the imposition of the steep 50 per cent tariff imposed by the United States (US) on Indian-origin products.

"Those who are directly facing stress right now, it will create more domestic opportunities for them," Goyal told reporters in an interaction.

He also said greater demand in the domestic market — due to the rate rationalisation and GST reforms — will have an impact on the shortfall of exports to the US. That apart, India is also in talks with 50 other countries, who can take the products that India would like to sell, while also buying products from them..

"This has been a special year for consumers. Income-tax benefits for salaried income earners and rate rationalisation and reform of the GST system is an unprecedented and a transformational step. It shows that the Indian economy is strong... this (GST reforms) will give a huge boost to domestic demand, have a multiplier impact on the economy. Our ability to create infrastructure faster will go up and with economies of scale helping Indian manufacturers become more productive, it will continue to keep inflation," the minister said.

The government has also requested certain large retail chains to buy products from textiles exporters, who are not able to export it to the US due to the imposition of the high tariffs.

Goyal also said that the ₹2,250 crore Export Promotion Mission is 'making fast progress'. "I should be in a position to go to the Union Cabinet soon," he said.

Illegal fertilizer haul exposed; JD(S) alleges govt involvement

INDUSHEKAR
Chamarajanagar

Amidst growing protests by farmers across Karnataka over an acute shortage of urea fertilizer, a major illegal transport of urea was intercepted in Chamarajanagar district. The incident has further intensified the ongoing blame game between the central and State governments over the availability and distribution of fertilizers in the State.

Acting on specific information, agricultural officers and police officials seized a truck carrying approximately 330 bags — around 15 tonnes — of urea that was being illegally transported from a warehouse in Nanjangud to Kerala. The operation took place at the Moolehole check-post in Gundlupettaluk, where the authorities halted the vehicle and took it into custody.

Transportation of urea across State borders without permission is strictly prohibited. A case has been registered at the Nanjangud police station.

As reports of fertilizer shortages continue to emerge, political tensions have escalated. The Janata Dal (Secular) lashed out at the Congress government, accusing it of failing to ensure timely fertilizer supply to farmers while allegedly allowing illegal diversion of urea meant for Karnataka.

"The Congress government, instead of distributing fertilizers to our farmers, is smuggling urea received from the central government to Kerala during the night. This is a betrayal of Karnataka's farmers," JD(S) leaders alleged in a statement. They further claimed that farmers are being forced to wait endlessly outside RaithaSamparkaKendras (Farmer Facilitation Centres) without receiving adequate urea supply.

In another alarming revelation, reports have emerged of black market sales in Raichur district. Around 79 tonnes of urea, originally meant for the Kallur Primary Agricultural Credit Cooperative Society's warehouse, was allegedly diverted and sold illegally in the open market. Following farmer complaints, a probe has been launched.

Adding to the political back-and-forth, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah hit back at former CM and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, urging him to lobby with the Centre for increased urea allotment instead of staging protests.

Experts and fertilizer dealers acknowledge that the demand for urea has surged this year, particularly due to increased maize cultivation.

"Yes, there is a shortage. With more maize being sown this season, demand has naturally gone up. We are requesting farmers to also consider Nano-DAP as a supplementary input," a fertilizer dealer explained.

PM highlights importance of agriculture in nation's growth, cites Chouhan's views

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 5 AUGUST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday emphasised the significance of agriculture in India's growth story, echoing the views of Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

In a post on handle X, PM Modi highlighted Chauhan's article in a newspaper, asserting that "Agriculture is not just the backbone of our economy, but it is the foundation of a self-reliant and strong India."

"Union Minister Shri@ChouhanShivrajexplains about the continuous reforms and farmer-centric initiatives which have led to steady growth in the agriculture sector, aiming to build a Viksit Bharat by 2047," PM Modi said in his post.

Chouhan has emphasised in his article that the government has been working tirelessly to empower the agricultural sector, with continuous reforms and farmer-centric initiatives that have led to steady growth in the sector. The aim is to build a Viksit Bharat by 2047, a developed India that is self-reliant and strong, Chouhan has maintained. Chouhan has asserted that by empowering farmers, encouraging innovation, and improving rural life, the government is working towards a prosperous and self-reliant India. By focusing on these key areas, the government aims to create a strong and self-reliant India, with a thriving agricultural sector that benefits all.

The Prime Minister's vision aligns with the goal of building a Viksit Bharat by 2047, where agriculture plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development and prosperity. By empowering farmers and promoting innovation in the sector, the government aims to create a robust agricultural ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders.

Punjab, Hry among heaviest agricultural debt burden states

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 5

The burden of agricultural debt continues to weigh heavily on India's farmers, with Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh emerging among the states where agricultural households carry some of the highest average outstanding loans, as per newly released national data.

While Andhra Pradesh tops the list with an average farm debt of Rs 2,45,554 per household, other states in both northern and southern India reflect worrying levels of rural indebtedness.

Among the northern states, Punjab reported the third-highest average loan burden at Rs 2,03,249, while Haryana closely followed at Rs 1,82,922, according to an answer in Lok Sabha today by Minister of State for Agriculture Ramnath Thakur.

Himachal Pradesh also stood high on the chart with Rs 85,825 and Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, reported an average of Rs 51,107 per agricultural household. These figures reflect persistent credit dependency among farmers, often linked to rising input costs, stagnant income, erratic weather conditions and delays in procurement payments.

Experts warn that this growing debt could become unsustainable unless systemic reforms are introduced.

States in southern India dominate the upper end of the debt spectrum.

Andhra Pradesh holds the highest average at Rs 2,45,554, followed by Kerala (Rs 2,42,482), Telangana (Rs 1,52,113), Karnataka (Rs 1,26,240) and Tamil Nadu (Rs 1,06,553).

These states have seen a proliferation of both institutional and non-institutional credit sources, leading to increased debt despite higher agricultural production in some cases. The data reveals stark regional differences. The all-India average of outstanding loans per agricultural household stands at Rs 74,121. The data signals a need for urgent reforms in agricultural credit policy.

GOVT: AGRI INTERESTS PARAMOUNT IN US DEAL

- The Centre on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that the interests of Indian farmers and national food security remain non-negotiable priorities in the ongoing discussions for an Indo-US bilateral trade agreement, especially in the agricultural sector
- The government maintained that any potential deal will be structured in a way that benefits domestic stakeholders and ensures sustainable growth in the sector

FSSAI Sets Up Panel to Revamp Regulations on Organic Food

GETTY IMAGES

Shambhavi Anand

New Delhi: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is working on overhauling the regulations for organic food in the country, a senior official said, adding that the authority has formed a committee for this.

"As India is revising its regulations and guidelines for organic farming, there is a need to revise regulations for organic food certification too," said the official.

The new standards are expected to cover organic agricultural products and align with the latest guidelines in advanced nations.

The authority has not yet set any timeline for the formulation of regulations, said the official.

The new standards are expected to cover organic agricultural products and align with the latest rules in advanced nations

The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) 2014, which covers the production and accreditation of organic labels, is being updated to reflect changes in the international organic landscape and global organic markets.

The NPOP is recognised under the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017, issued by FSSAI. It functions alongside the participatory guarantee system, overseen by the ministry of agriculture and farmers' welfare.

The programme lays down rules for organic farming, sets out requirements and procedures for accreditation and certification agencies, and regulates the use of the India Organic label. Its framework is designed to be in line with global regulations governing the trade of organic products.

Internationally, NPOP's crop production standards are acknowledged as equivalent by the European Commission, Switzerland and Great Britain.

India has emerged as a prominent supplier of organic products in a span of two decades.

ICRISAT, ICAR to launch AI-based personalised agri advisory services

Our Bureau
Hyderabad

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), in association with organisations like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), will launch personalised and real-time climate advisory services, powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML).

The initiative will provide farmers with timely, actionable recommendations for critical decisions such as sowing, irrigation and pest management. These advisories will be delivered through user-friendly digital channels, including an AI-powered WhatsApp bot.

The project will first be implemented in Maharashtra, through the ICAR's Agro-Meteorological Field Units (AMFUs).

MONSOON MISSON

The project, AI-powered Context-Specific Agromet Advisory Services for Climate-Resilient Agriculture at Scale, is supported under the Government of India's Monsoon Mission III. The Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, the International Livestock Research Institute, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) also joined the initiative.

The Intelligent Systems Advisory Tool (iSAT), a digital platform developed and piloted by ICRISAT and partners during Monsoon Mission II, was initially designed to transform complex climate and agronomic data into personalised, science-based advisories. iSAT is now being upgraded into a fully functional AI-powered tool under this new initiative.

"This technology holds immense potential for adaptation across the Global South, where farmers face similar climate vulnerabilities," Himanshu Pathak, Director General, ICRISAT, said in a release on Wednesday.

NEW | FOCUS **Country currently imports 80% of its specialty fertilisers from China**

India develops water-soluble fertiliser

New Delhi, Aug 31: India has developed its first indigenous water-soluble fertiliser technology after seven years of research.

The technology, backed by the ministry of mines and developed using Indian raw materials and Indian-designed plants, represents a 'Make in India' proposition that could reduce the country's dependence on Chinese specialty fertiliser imports.

"Aim was to make India, especially for speciality fertiliser, an export-dominating country, not an import-dependent country," Rajib Chakraborty, president of Soluble Fertiliser Industry Association (SFIA), who spearheaded the research initiative.

India's reliance on Chinese specialty fertiliser imports provided the impetus for developing indigenous technology. The country currently imports 80 per cent of its specialty fertilisers from China, while the remaining 20 per cent is indirectly traded through Chinese sources.

Barring 5 per cent of NPK formulations produced domestically, India is 95 per cent dependent on Chinese supplies for

speciality fertilisers. This dependency has grown steadily since 2005, when European suppliers began sourcing from China to serve Indian markets, gradually building capacity and technology to capture global market share.

The technology is expected to reach farmers' fields within two years when large-scale production capacities come online. Joint venture discussions are underway with fertiliser companies for commercial implementation, Chakraborty said.

"This technology is special in terms of many things. First, one single process produces almost all the soluble fertiliser. Usually for every product there is a different technology, but this technology enables production of all products in one process," Chakraborty explained.

"This particular technology is a zero effluent project. There is no emission from this project. So that's why this was one of the grounds that the ministry of mines has taken into consideration and given it a project of national importance," he said.

"Whatever technology we have today, especially in fertiliser, is actually borrowed technology. That is not our technology. For every borrowing, we have to pay a big price," Chakraborty noted.

"We pay another price for getting the upgradation. But if it is our own, we can keep on developing," he added. — *PTI*

Leaf folder attack causing worry among Kodagu's paddy growers

K S GIRISH
MADIKERI, DHNS

In Kodagu, the spotting of leaf folder pest has led to concerns among paddy farmers.

About 20 to 25 days after transplantation, the pest menace has been noticed in fields around Madikeri, Virajpet, Ponnampet, Kushalnagar, and Somwarpet.

The larvae fold the edges of the leaves into rolls and feed on the green portions inside. This causes the crop to appear pale and bleached. In severe cases, the plant's growth is stunted, and the panicles fail to emerge, leading to crop loss.

Farmers, who were delighted with good rains this season, are now disheartened by the leaf folder attack. Because of such pest attacks, crop diseases, and rising labour costs, many farmers are gradually losing interest in paddy cultivation. The area under paddy cultivation is shrinking over the years.

This year, the Agriculture department had set a target of paddy cultivation on 29,000 hectares. However, by the end of the monsoon last weekend, transplantation had been completed only on 20,000 hectares.

Chandrashekar, Joint Director, Agriculture department, said, "In some parts of the district, cloudy weather has led to the spread of the leaf folder pests. Farmers should consult agricultural experts and take necessary control measures."

To control leaf folder pests, Dr K V Veerendrakumar, Scientist, Plant Protection Division, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Gonikoppal, has suggested a few measures, such as removal of weeds around the paddy fields and keeping the surroundings clean. "Apply only the recommended amount of nitrogen fertilizer. On noticing pest infestation, spray either Indoxacarb (0.5 ml per litre of water) or Flubendiamide (0.4 ml per litre of water) - whichever is available. While spraying, it is advisable to mix a sticking agent with the pesticide for better effectiveness."

For more information, farmers can contact 08274-295274.

The leaf folder pest.

Govt plans to cut down on imports of pharma agents, biofuel enzymes

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

FROM ACTIVE pharmaceutical agents for making key medicines to enzymes needed for developing biofuels, and reagents needed for manufacturing biofertilizers — the government under its BioE3 policy plans to set up around 16 biomanufacturing hubs across the country to ensure that India starts making the components for which it is largely dependent on imports. The government has already listed 1,000 such products for which there is a need to develop indigenous manufacturing facilities, which will be put on a website soon.

There has been a push towards manufacturing within the country since Covid-19 pandemic, with government policies such as performance-linked financial incentives to drug manufacturers. The department has been somewhat successful in scaling-up manufacturing of some of the drugs, but fermentation-based products still remain a challenge for the country.

With plans of setting up large fermenters of around 500 litres or 1,000 litres, these hubs can help push the manufacturing of not just fermentation-based medicines but also other products such as biofuels. "Creating these hubs helps pool the resources; meaning start-ups and small companies do not have to make big capital investments initially," said an official from the department, on condition of anonymity.

These biomanufacturing hubs, in addition, will also look at scaling up innovative solutions such as novel monoclonal antibody treatments, new technologies for carbon capture, or smart proteins to improve nutrition developed under the programme from proof of concept to market ready products.

The Department of Biotechnology has already supported a set up of six biofoundries — a specialised facility that helps to develop and conduct the initial tests on such novel projects — at National Agri-Food and Bio-manufacturing Institute (NABI), Mohali (for sustainable food and nutrition), Tata Memorial Centre (for new drugs), International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi (for synthetic biology to make microbial cells for manufacturing enzymes, testing new biofuels, enhancing carbon capture efficiency), Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad (for monoclonal antibody therapies), Institute of Pesticide Formulation Technology (IPFT), Gurugram (for biopesticides), and National Centre For Cell Science (NCCS), Pune (for enzymes and metabolites).

"Once a proof of concept has been developed and tested at the biofoundries, it can be taken for manufacturing at these biomanufacturing hubs," the official added.

The biomanufacturing hubs will be set up in research institutes, private companies that specialise in a particular form of manufacturing, or near existing knowledge hubs for specific industries.

The facilities can be accessed by government and private research institutes, universities, and colleges, along with start-ups and other companies. While the private companies will be charged, mainly to cover the cost of consumables, human resources, and other overhead charges.

As per its policy, the start-ups will be charged a maximum of 5% over the actual costs while companies may be charged up to 15% over the cost. The policy also states that the facility will not claim any intellectual property rights.

EXPLAINED

BioE3 policy push

WITH THE biomanufacturing hubs under the programme, critical ingredients for medicines, reagents needed for various products such as biofuels, bioproteins, and other chemicals for which India depends on imports, will be manufactured within the country. The Department of Biotechnology has undertaken a survey to finalise a list of 1,000 such products, which start-ups and companies may develop processes to manufacture within the country.

Naidu warns of stern action against fertilizer black mkt

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

Do not panic, fertilizer stocks sufficient, CM assures farmers

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu at a review meeting on horticulture crops in Amaravati on Tuesday

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday issued a stern warning against black marketing of urea and other fertilizers, stating that those involved in it would be punished. He assured farmers that there was no need to worry about fertilizer supplies, as "the state has more than adequate stock".

The Chief Minister made these remarks during a review meeting on horticulture crops and fertilizer availability held in Amaravati on Tuesday. He directed the officials to use e-crop data to track the total area, types of crops being cultivated in the state and monitor fertilizer usage. Naidu emphasised the need for constant supervision to prevent any problems for farmers. Officials reported that the state has received an additional 91,000 metric tonnes of urea this year compared to last, bringing the total supply to 2.02 lakh metric tonnes, which is more than the actual demand.

Similarly, the supply of DAP has increased by 16,000 metric tonnes, totaling 51,700 metric tonnes. Complex fertilizers also saw a significant boost, with an additional 1.20 lakh metric tonnes supplied, bringing the total to 2.72 lakh metric tonnes. The Chief Minister noted that despite these ample supplies, some individuals were spreading misinformation. He instructed officials to use the Integrated Fertilizer Management System to track urea consumption.

Further, Naidu asked officials to work towards making Andhra Pradesh a state free of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. He directed them to educate farmers on how to reduce the use of these substances. He also proposed offering subsidies and incentives to farmers who reduce their reliance on chemical inputs.

Continued on Page 7

CM plans ration system to curb misuse of chemical fertilisers

- Farmers to be linked with Aadhaar, soil tests would be conducted, and fertilisers would be delivered directly to fields based on actual requirement
- Overuse of chemicals is damaging both health and agriculture exports
- Agriculture contributes 35% the state's GSDP, with a GVA of Rs 5.17 lakh cr

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday announced that the State will introduce a ration system for fertilizers and pesticides to curb their indiscriminate use.

Speaking during a debate on agriculture in the Assembly, he said farmers will be supplied only with the quantities required for their fields.

The CM stressed that farmers should adapt to changing food habits and cultivate crops that bring better profits. "It is not wise to rely too heavily on rice," he said.

Naidu warned that the overuse of chemicals is damaging both health and agriculture exports. He pointed out that China and Indonesia had rejected chili and groundnut consignments from Andhra Pradesh, while European Union countries subject 50 per cent of containers from the State to aqua sampling, compared to just 10 per cent for others. "This reflects the condition of our farm sector," he said. He also flagged that excessive fertilizer use was adulterating milk.

Explaining the imbalance, Naidu said that while the ideal NPK fertilizer ratio is 4:2:1, Andhra Pradesh stands at 6:3:1.

To tackle the problem, he said farmers would be linked with Aadhaar, soil tests would be conducted, and fertilizers would be delivered directly to fields based on actual requirement.

He urged MLAs to visit villages at least once a month to create awareness among farmers.

While assuring that there is no shortage of fertilizers in the State, he accused Opposition party of misleading farmers on availability.

On the wider economy, Naidu said agriculture contributes 35 per cent to the State's GSDP, with a GVA of Rs 5.17 lakh crore. He underlined the need to boost farmer incomes through allied sectors.

Dairy and horticulture, he said, could be "game changers" for Andhra Pradesh, particularly in backward regions like Rayalaseema. The government aims to expand horticulture cultivation significantly by 2029.

Naidu highlighted that Andhra Pradesh is already ahead in drip irrigation. He admitted, however, that the aqua sector has been hit by US tariffs.

The State is in talks with the Centre to find new markets abroad, while also focusing on food processing to add value to farm produce.

Indigenous fertiliser technology to cut Chinese import dependence

NEW DELHI, Aug 31: India has successfully developed its first indigenous water-soluble fertiliser technology after seven years of research, marking a potential breakthrough that could transform the country from an import-dependent nation to an export-dominating force in specialty fertilisers.

The technology, backed by the Ministry of Mines and developed using Indian raw materials and Indian-designed plants, represents a true "Make in India" proposition that could significantly reduce the country's heavy dependence on Chinese specialty fertiliser imports.

"My aim was to make India, especially for specialty fertilizer, an export-dominating country, not an import-dependent country," Rajiv Chakraborty, President of the Soluble Fertilizer Industry Association (SFIA), who spearheaded the research initiative, told PTI in an interview.

India's overwhelming reliance on Chinese specialty fertiliser imports provided the impetus for developing indigenous technology. The country currently imports 80 per cent of its specialty fertilisers directly from China, while the remaining 20 per cent is indirectly traded through Chinese sources.

Barring 5 per cent of NPK formulations produced domestically, India is 95 per cent dependent on Chinese supplies for specialty fertilisers. This dependency has grown steadily since 2005, when European suppliers began sourcing from China to serve Indian markets, gradually building capacity and technology to capture global market share.

The development process was arduous, with Chakraborty describing the typical challenges of research and development. "R&D means a failure game a thousand times. Have you only succeeded once after failing for a thousand times? So it's common to every R&D process," he said.

The financial toll was substantial, with Chakraborty risking his business to pursue the breakthrough. "I risked my entire life in doing that, developing something, and I was almost out of the business at one point of time, because I was not able to focus on developing my business as a soluble fertilizer player," he revealed. – PTI

'AI, green energy, agritech to help achieve $6trn economy'

Govt Formulating Plan To Meet Viksit UP@2047 Targets

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: To realise the vision of a 'Developed Uttar Pradesh by 2047', the state govt is formulating a concrete plan involving three core areas: holistic development, economic leadership, and cultural renaissance.

"These can only be achieved through increased economic activity, creative power, and a young and healthy population. Targeting artificial intelligence, green energy, and agriculture technology, the govt is committed to delivering results in the next 22 years," a govt spokesperson said.

"Before 2017, Uttar Pradesh was considered a backward state in terms of development. Lack of police empowerment and smart monitoring frameworks resulted in weak crime control. Consequently, both employment and industry were stagnant, with many entrepreneurs migrating to other states," he said.

The state has set up a portal through which such suggestions and feedback would be collected

The spokesperson said that from 2017 onwards, when the BJP took over, consistent efforts were made to improve the delivery of govt schemes and policies with the help of technology. "In the recent investors summit, prominent companies from India and abroad proposed investments exceeding Rs 45 lakh crore, out of which Rs 15 lakh crore have already been realised," he added.

A senior govt official said that high-value services such as green manufacturing, agritech reforms, and modern technology would lead the state on the USD 6 trillion economy pathway.

"Renewable energy, smart city infrastructure, and supply chain would create lakhs of job opportunities. Agritech and cold chain in rural areas will provide local employment and reduce migration," he said.

"To meet the target, the state must maintain continuous annual growth at the rate of 16%. Per capita income will significantly increase, and the state's contribution to the national economy will reach around 20%. It will be possible only if private and public investments, cluster-building, human resource development, and a secure investment environment are consistently maintained," the officer said.

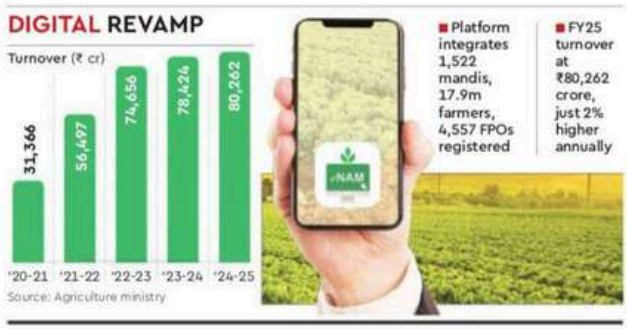
Those willing to contribute to the 2047 mission would also get to play their part. CM Yogi Adityanath has announced that a dedicated portal to collect and gather feedback of the state population and those willing to take the state on the path of prosperity by 2047 are welcome. The state has set up a portal (samarthuttarpradesh.up.gov.in) through which such suggestions and feedback would be collected.

OPEN BIDDING, INFRA & FINTECH SUPPORT KEY FEATURES

Govt to roll out e-NAM 2.0 to push inter-state trade

● Nine years after launch, agri trade on e-NAM remains local

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, September 23



THE GOVERNMENT IS planning to roll out a revamped version of the electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), as it seeks to boost inter-state and inter-mandi trade on this platform.

Sources told *FE* that the proposed e-NAM 2.0 will have features like automated bidding, facility for demand-supply data and open network of digital commerce-linked services, including assaying, logistics and fintech support.

"While currently there was no provision on the e-NAM facility for availing assaying and transportation facilities provided by private parties in physical mandis, the revamped platform will have such facilities which would help inter-state trading in crops as well as fruits and vegetables," an official said.

Officials said it would reduce food wastage and get best prices for farmers as intermediaries are reduced.

Sources said that work for launching e-NAM 2.0 is currently on and likely to be rolled out in a couple of months.

Officials said the new platform is being built to handle a high volume of commodities trade to ensure that the system does not slow down at the peak procurement level.

Since the launch of the platform in April, 2016, while ₹4.47 lakh crore worth of agricultural commodities have been traded on it till now, out of which share of inter-state trade was only ₹76.8 crore.

Overall sales turnover of e-NAM, rose to ₹80,262 crore in 2024-25, a marginal increase of 2% compared to FY24, while volume of inter-state trade was still ₹21 crore. Inter-mandi e-NAM trade since the start has been ₹6,230 crore.

The focus of the e-NAM 2.0 would be to ensure ease of doing intra-state and inter-state trade in agricultural commodities with an objective to overcome logistic gaps and enable faster trade, reduced wastage and boost farmer incomes.

The platform would have facilities such as QR based lot tracking and issuance of timely notifications.

Sources said that inter-state and inter-mandi trades on the digital platform, launched over nine years back remain very small compared to overall trade, indicating that most of the sales on e-NAM are reported from within the wholesale markets.

The e-NAM has already digitally integrated over 1,500 wholesale markets.

In FY 2022-23, e-NAM for the first time facilitated inter-state trade of apple from Jammu and Kashmir to Jharkhand.

Overall sales turnover of e-NAM, rose to ₹80,262 crore in 2024-25, a marginal increase of 2% compared to FY24.

Also, 17.94 million farmers, 4,557 FPOs, 269,688 traders and 1,17,590 commission agents are registered with e-NAM.

Currently, 1,522 mandis in 27 states and union territories, including Tamil Nadu (213), Rajasthan (173), Gujarat (144), Maharashtra (133), Uttar Pradesh (162) and Haryana (108) mandis are on e-NAM platform.

At present, 238 agricultural, horticultural and other commodities notified by respective state governments were finalised for online e-auction in e-NAM platform.

Sources said there are estimated to be around 7,000 mandis in the country and after the recommendation from mandi boards of respective states, the marketplace for agricultural produce comes on board of e-NAM.

Agri min seizes 64k bags of fake fertiliser

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Jaipur: In a late-night operation Sunday, agriculture minister **Kirori Lal Meena** raided two fertiliser factories in Kolayat area of Bikaner, resulting in seizure of 64,000 bags of counterfeit fertiliser. The fake product, adulterated with soil, had been on its way to not just various locations within Rajasthan but also to neighboring countries like Nepal, the minister later said.

Meena, accompanied by senior officers from the agriculture department, targeted specific locations that had been under surveillance. In the first raid at Khari Gangapura village, authorities confiscated 24,000 bags of fake fertiliser. Approximately 3-km away, a further inspection at a facility near Sankhla Phanta yielded an additional 40,000 bags of the contaminated product.

"It was discovered that mud and soil were mixed in a heavy percentage," Meena told **TOI** on Monday.

Both factories have since been sealed and all related documentation has been secured to facilitate a more thorough investigation into the operation, which is believed to be part of a larger scheme involving the fraudulent sale of seeds and fertilisers across the state.

'Cut GST for fertiliser raw material rates'

NEW DELHI

FERTILISERS industry body FAI has demanded lowering of GST rates on raw materials like ammonia and sulphuric acid to 5 per cent as well as a refund of accumulated input tax credit to the manufacturers. A delegation of the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on this issue on August 26 and also gave a representation. The government has announced that it would reform the GST before the Diwali festival to bring down the prices and make this law simpler. In a statement on Thursday, the industry body said that during the meeting it requested the finance minister to "reduce the GST rates on fertiliser raw materials (ammonia and sulphuric acid) from 18 per cent to 5 per cent and allow refund of accumulated ITC (input tax credit) in fertiliser manufacturing and trading where accumulation is due to the non-taxable subsidy portion."

The FAI pointed out that the industry has been facing vital problem related to GST. The finance minister assured the delegation about examining the issues and taking necessary actions in the matter.

Explaining the problems, the association said that P&K (phosphatic and potassic) fertilisers attract GST rate of 5 per cent but the GST rates on inputs for manufacturing P&K fertilisers such as ammonia and sulphuric acid attract a GST rate of 18 per cent. Apart from that, the FAI said that the fertiliser subsidy has been excluded from the value of supply under the GST regime. "As a result of lower rate of output GST than the rates of GST on some inputs, the output GST payable is much lower than the input GST credit, mainly due to subsidy.

GST reforms to benefit fertilizers sector: NFL

NOIDA: National Fertilizers Ltd (NFL) has applauded the GST reforms which will provide a big boost to the fertilizer sector. While the GST rates for essential inputs for manufacturing of nitrogenous and NPK fertilizers viz. Ammonia, Sulphuric Acid and Nitric Acid have been reduced from 18 per cent to 5 per cent, it has been reduced from 12 per cent to 5 per cent on micronutrients.

This will encourage the domestic production of fertilizers as the fertilizer companies will save significantly on raw materials costs ensuring their timely availability and making them affordable to farmers.

This reduction in GST for micronutrients from 12 per cent to 5 per cent will significantly encourage PM-PRANAM Scheme (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother-Earth) designed to encourage States and UTs to cut chemical fertilizer use by adopting sustainable farming practices and promoting organic alternatives. This will promote the 'Balanced Use of Fertilizers' ensuring the long term sustainability of soil and plant health. It will directly benefit farmers and FPOs, aligning with Govt.'s Natural Farming Mission. MPOST

Corteva launches pesticides for use on potato, grapes

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Global pesticides company Corteva Agriscience has launched two pesticides against diseases like 'Downy Mildew' in grapes and 'Late Blight' in potatoes.

The company claimed that both the chemicals will transform potato, grapes cultivation in India.

A release from Corteva said building on the globally successful Zorvec technology, this advanced solution offers growers protection against the devastating diseases and will lead to healthier crops, higher yields and superior quality produce.

"Zorvec Entecta delivers a unique combination of advanced chemistry and powerful performance. Its active ingredients provide strong and reliable control against oomycetes plant diseases," it said.

The release added that the chemical is secure and protected from wash-off just 20 minutes after application.

Now, farmers grapple with grain discolouration

MANAV MANDER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 13

After battling incessant rains and flooding for weeks, farmers are now grappling with a new crisis — blackened paddy grain and a surge in brown plant hopper infestation.

The twin threats have emerged just as the paddy crop nears maturity, raising fears of widespread yield loss and financial hardship.

Experts from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) confirmed that the damage stems from an unfortunate overlap of heavy rains with the flowering period of paddy crop and attack of brown plant hopper had been been observed at a few places in the state.

Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, Vice-Chancellor of the PAU, said, "Continuous rains have led to higher moisture. Further, sudden spike in temperature have created ideal conditions for fungal growth. The grain is turning black and splitting, which will severely impact both quality and quantity. In addition, brown plant hopper population has exploded. The farmers must act swiftly."

Field reports from KVKs indicate widespread discolouration.

FUNGAL GROWTH

"Continuous rains have led to higher moisture. Further, sudden spike in temperature has created ideal conditions for fungal growth. The grain is turning black and splitting, which will severely impact both quality and quantity. In addition, brown plant hopper population has exploded. The farmers must act swiftly.

Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, VC, PAU

Field reports from the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) indicate widespread grain discolouration. Agronomist Buta Singh from the PAU said, "This year, the flowering period coincided with rains, creating havoc. It has led to blackened paddy grain."

Farmer Gurpreet Singh from Sahabana village said, "The grain has turned black. This will definitely affect yield and market value. This has come as a double blow to farmers."

Adding to distress, the PAU's latest survey has revealed a sharp rise in brown plant hopper population in state. These pests, which thrive in hot and humid conditions, suck sap from rice plants, causing them to yellow, wilt and eventually die — a phenomenon known as "hopper burn".

The PAU has issued advisory urging farmers to monitor their fields by gently shaking plants and check for floating hoppers. If infestation exceeds five hoppers per plant, farmers have been advised to use the PAU-recommended insecticides and focus application at the plant base for maximum effectiveness.

The compounded impact of fungal damage and pest infestation threatens to devastate yield in Punjab's key paddy producing belts. With grain quality deteriorating and pest pressure mounting, farmers face potential financial ruin during this critical harvest window, said farmer Harvinder Singh from Samrala.

Dr Gosal said, "Timely intervention and adherence to expert guidance are crucial to salvaging what remains of this season's crop."

Agri Stack preparing digital data of 14 cr farmers by 2026-27: Top official

The system aims to address existing gap in reliable agricultural data, will enable development of effective digital solutions, services

BIZZ BUZZ BUREAU
VISAKHAPATNAM

Delegates listening to deliberations at the e-, governance conference in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

THE Government of India has launched a mammoth exercise under the Digital Agriculture Mission in September 2024 to create a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for agriculture, under the project named Agri Stack.

Speaking at the plenary session on the second day of the 28th National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG) 2025 here on "Agri Stack – A Digital Solution Agriculture" here on Tuesday, Devesh Chaturvedi, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, explained that the initiative is designed to drive formal solutions and ensure that timely, reliable crop-related information is made accessible to all farmers.

The Agri Stack has set key targets, including the generation of 11 crore farmer IDs (digital identities) by 2026–27 and the collection of plot-wise data of crops across all States and Union Territories beginning with Kharif 2025.

The system aims to address the existing gap in reliable agricultural data and will enable the development of effective digital solutions and services.

Chairing the session, Chaturvedi, who holds additional charge as Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) spoke along with Pramod Kumar Meherda, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Rajeev Chawla, Strategic Advisor and Chief Knowledge Officer, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare; Budithi Rajasekhar, Special Chief Secretary, Agriculture, Marketing & Cooperation Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh and Shashank Kumar, Co-Founder and CEO of DeHaat.

In his address, Chaturvedi pointed out that the initiative is designed to drive farmer-centric digital solutions and ensure that timely, reliable crop-related information is made accessible to all farmers.

India, Bhutan ink pact for co-operation in agriculture, allied sectors

NEW DELHI: India and Bhutan have signed a pact to strengthen co-operation in the field of agriculture and allied sectors.

According to an official statement on Thursday, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi and Thinley Namgyel, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoAL), Royal Govt of Bhutan, signed an MoU in Thimpu to further strengthen cooperation in agriculture & allied sectors.

The signing of an MoU reflects the two countries' shared commitment to food security, sustainable farming and rural prosperity.

"It will serve as a framework for collaboration in various areas outlined in the MoU, including agricultural research and innovation, livestock health and production, post-harvest management, value chain development, and the exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise," the statement said.

To implement the MoU, the first session of the Joint Technical Working Group was convened. The two countries agreed on the Terms of Reference for JTWG and priority areas of collaboration for immediate actions. Chaturvedi spoke about the priorities and challenges, besides highlighting a series of initiatives launched by the Indian government for the growth of the agricultural sector. PTI

Coromandel expands seawater desalination capacity

NEW DELHI: Fertiliser maker Coromandel International on Wednesday said it has signed an agreement with Veolia Water Technologies and Solutions to expand its seawater desalination capacity to 9 million litres per day (MLD) from 6 MLD. The company commissioned its original 6 MLD desalination plant in 2023 to reduce dependence on surface water and enhance operational resilience at its Visakhapatnam facility. The partnership will follow a build-own-operate (BOO) model, with Coromandel providing infrastructure support while Veolia brings water treatment technology, machinery and operations expertise, the company said in a statement. Coromandel International Managing Director S Sankarasubramanian and Veolia Senior Vice President Gopal Madabhushi signed the agreement. Once operational, the upgraded plant will meet approximately 60-70 per cent of Coromandel's total water requirements at its Vizag facility, substantially reducing reliance on external water sources.

36 fertiliser dealers' licence cancelled over discrepancies

SHIV KUMAR SHARMA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

YAMUNANAGAR, SEPTEMBER 21

Sending a stern message to curb illegal trade of subsidised agriculture grade urea, the Haryana Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department has cancelled licences of 36 fertiliser dealers between May 2024 and September 2025 following a number of discrepancies in their work.

During this period, the department also got 14 FIRs registered against fertiliser dealers, owners of plywood factories and other persons for their alleged involvement in illegal trade of subsidised agriculture grade urea.

Besides, 7,522 illegal bags of subsidised agriculture grade urea were also seized after conducting raids on godowns and impounding vehicles in the district.

"We are trying to nail persons involved in illegal trade of subsidised agriculture grade urea. The department is keeping an eye on such fertiliser dealers, who are not maintaining the stock in the prescribed format and violating other norms," said Aditya Pratap Dabas, Deputy Director of Agriculture (DDA), Yamunanagar.

The subsidised agriculture grade urea is being used allegedly by some plywood factories to prepare glue (an adhesive), as the rate of the technical grade urea is higher than the subsidised agriculture grade urea.

"Agriculture grade urea can be used only for agriculture purpose. It is illegal to use it in the industry and for any other purpose," said Dabas.

14 FIRs FILED

- The Agriculture Department has got 14 FIRs registered against fertiliser dealers, owners of plywood factories and other persons for their alleged involvement in illegal trade of subsidised agriculture grade urea
- Besides, 7,522 illegal bags of subsidised grade urea were also seized after conducting raids on godowns and impounding vehicles

India, Australia ink agreement for organic products

INDIA AND AUSTRALIA on Wednesday signed a Mutual Recognition Agreement for organic products that will ease trade of these products between the two countries. This agreement covers organic produce grown in India and Australia and covers unprocessed plant products, processed foods composed of one or more ingredients of plant origin and wine.

Icrisat scientists, partners crack stem rot resistance in groundnuts

Our Bureau
Hyderabad

Scientists at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) and its partners have identified 13 genomic regions and 145 candidate genes linked to resistance in a groundbreaking study that could transform the way farmers combat the stem rot disease.

Stem rot disease, caused by the soil-borne fungus *Sclerotium rolfsii*, is one of the biggest threats to groundnut farming.

Three key genes (AhSR001, AhSR002, AhSR003) were validated as markers, accounting for 60 per cent of resistance. The findings of the study were published in the *Plant Genome* journal.

"With these markers, we can fast-track resistant groundnut varieties that save farmers money and build resilience against disease and climate shocks," Manish Pandey, Principal Scientist at Icrisat, said.

COST SAVING

"By reducing the need for costly fungicides and preventing catastrophic yield losses, resistant varieties could save farmers and economies millions of dollars each year. Fungicides provide only partial control and are environmentally unsustainable. Genomics-led breeding offers a durable, cost-effective solution," an Icrisat official said.

This discovery opens new opportunities to develop disease-resistant groundnuts, significantly reducing risks for farmers and strengthening global food and nutrition security.

Groundnut, a protein-rich legume and vital oilseed, is grown on over 30 million hectares worldwide, producing about 50 million tonnes annually. It is central to diets, incomes and trade in Asia and Africa, with India, Nigeria and China together dominating global supply.

"This advance shows the high returns agricultural research delivers to economies, turning discovery into practical solutions," Icrisat Director General Himanshu Pathak said.

'Plant protection', the catch in India's farm exports to Russia

DIFFERING POINT. Moscow insists on pest-free zone to enable more shipments

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

TOGETHER FORWARD. Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan with Deputy PM of Russia Dmitry Patrushev during a meeting in New Delhi last week

India and Russia are looking to expand their cooperation in trade and education in the agriculture sector by removing some bottlenecks, but given the resistance to move forward with suitable reforms, it may take time to reach some agreements.

As Russia has been insisting on earmarking a pest-free zone for enabling more exports, India has been arguing it should be based on testing of products for pests. Several agri products like potato, pomegranate, fisheries and dairy items have been identified by India, where there is scope for expansion. The Russian side wants exports of products only from pest-free zones, so that those are better monitored, the sources said.

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on September 26 met visiting Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Patrushev in New Delhi. Both leaders discussed a broad range of issues of mutual interest, with particular emphasis on deepening bilateral trade and cooperation in the agriculture sector, according to an official statement.

PHYTO SANITATION

Patrushev conveyed Russia's keen interest in further deepening agricultural trade ties between the two countries and showed interest in to formalise this partnership through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

As the visiting delegation also included Sergey Dankvert, Head of the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance, it indicates the importance of plant protection issues needing to be sorted out if agri trade is to get a boost, officials said.

The discussion focused on balancing bilateral trade and strengthening technical partnerships between the two countries.

Chouhan expressed optimism for the timely resolution of outstanding issues as both sides also agreed to deepen cooperation in academic exchanges and scholarship opportunities for students and to explore joint initiatives in seed traceability systems, with the aim of promoting innovation and advancing technology-driven solutions in agriculture. Currently in the farm sector, India imports pulses, sunflower oil, marine products, alcoholic beverages and prepared cereals, among others, worth about $45 million (in 2023). Besides, there are also imports of fertilizers from Russia. On the other hand, India exported $856 million (in 2024-25) worth farm goods including marine products, coffee, tea, basmati rice and processed food items.

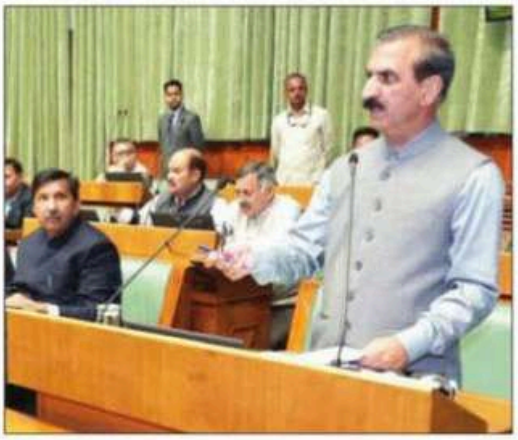
He said innovations and marketing are two major aspects to attracting a larger number of non-Indians to the Indian food products.

On the other hand, India's agricultural exports to the US were $6.25 billion in 2024-25, up from $5.52 billion in 2023-24, whereas US farm product exports to India were $373 million in CY2023, official data show.

After the US slapped 50 per cent duty on Indian products, exporters are looking for market access in other countries amid fear of a slump, even though trade negotiations are continuing for a bilateral trade agreement.

Yellowing disease in paddy & maize crops echoes in Himachal Assembly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Shimla, 21 August



The growing concern over yellowing disease in paddy and maize crops was raised in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly on Thursday, with legislators seeking immediate action to safeguard farmers' interests.

During Zero Hour, MLA Kewal Singh Pathania drew the House's attention to the alarming spread of the disease in Shahpur and several adjoining areas.

He said large sections of crops had been destroyed, causing immense hardship to farmers who depend on these harvests for their livelihood. Stressing the need for urgent intervention, he asked the government to clarify how the affected cultivators would be compensated for the losses.

He also pressed for sending a team of agricultural experts to the affected fields to conduct a thorough assessment.

Replying to the issue, Agriculture Minister Chander Kumar acknowledged the seriousness of the problem, explaining that the yellowing was primarily caused by a fall armyworm infestation.

The pest has damaged between 20 to 50 percent of maize and paddy crops in several areas, he said. Scientists from agricultural universities have already studied the outbreak and advised spraying antibiotics and other medicines to curb its spread.

Field visits are being carried out regularly, but the pest is spreading at a fast pace, particularly in regions experiencing higher temperatures. The minister informed the Assembly that the government is taking steps to amend the Relief Manual so that crop losses exceeding 30 percent can be brought under compensation provisions and at present, no such clause exists. Once incorporated, this will allow relief measures for affected farmers, he said.

Kumar also added that agricultural scientists are engaged in ongoing research to develop effective long-term strategies to control the pest and minimize its recurrence in future seasons.

He assured the House that the government is committed to addressing the crisis both through immediate containment measures and by ensuring relief to farmers who have suffered substantial damage.

Sale of poor quality seeds to be non-bailable offence now

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 29

The Punjab Vidhan Sabha on Monday passed six Bills, including a legislation making sale of spurious seeds a non-bailable offence.

The legislations will now be sent to the Governor for approval, a necessary step before their implementation.

Under the Seeds (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2025, the first offence by a company will attract a punishment of one to two years and fine ranging from Rs 5 to 10 lakh.

A repeated offence will attract punishment of two to three years and fine of Rs 10 to 50 lakh. A similar misdeed by a dealer or any other person will attract a punishment of six months to one year and a fine of Rs 1-5 lakh for first offence and a term of one to two years and fine of Rs 5 to 10 lakh for a repeated offence.

Earlier, the fine was Rs 500 for the first offence and Rs 1,000, along with a jail term of up to six months, for the repeated offence. After the legislation was introduced in the House by Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian, Congress MLA Rana Gurjeet Singh termed the Bill as half-hearted approach.

He said the state seed certification agency should be empowered for proper certification of seeds so that farmers were not cheated.

Congress legislator Pargat Singh, while supporting stricter penalties for seed fraud, criticised the lack of mechanisms to support farmers, a weakened PAU research capacity and dilution of punishments for water pollution into mere fines.

House also passes Bill to boost urban infra

OTHER BILLS PASSED

- Punjab Apartment & Property Regulation (Amendment) Bill
- The Punjab Right to Business (Amendment) Bill
- Punjab Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill
- The Punjab Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill

Aimed at generating revenue from the disposal of properties worth crores of in 23 improvement trusts, the House approved the Punjab Town Improvement (Amendment) Bill, 2025. It would enable the government to utilise financial resources for infrastructural upgrade in 167 civic bodies of the state.

Through the amendment, the government will be able to transfer funds from the improvement trusts to the Municipal Development Fund, enabling the government to utilize the funds in any of the civic bodies.

Earlier, the Punjab Town Improvement Act, 1922, restricted the use of the improvement trust funds outside its jurisdiction. Accusing the state government to drain out resources of the civic bodies, Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa said it was diverting financial resources of improvement trusts for other works.

225 bags of illegally stored Urea seized in Garhwa

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Garhwa Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Sanjay Kumar conducted a raid targeting the black marketing of fertilizers and seeds in the Kandi block area on Sunday, . During the operation, a suspicious godown-like room located behind Ayush Khad Beej Bhandar (operated by Sanjay Kumar Prasad) in Kandi's main market raised concerns. Using a mobile phone to record through a gap under the door, the SDM spotted stacks of yellow bags. Upon opening the godown, authorities discovered over 225 bags of illegally stored urea.

In the presence of Kandi Police Station In-Charge Mohammad Ashfaque Alam, the SDM questioned the shopkeeper, who initially tried to mislead officials. The shopkeeper claimed the stock belonged to someone from Daltonganj or another individual, Rajesh Shukla. However, when pressed about the godown's keys, which were in his possession, he admitted the urea was procured from Sethi Store two months earlier. Instead of selling it, he had falsely reported zero stock online and offline, indicating intentions of overpricing and black marketing.

Local villagers gathered at the scene and reported that the shopkeeper was selling urea and zyme buckets together for ?1,000. Shivri resident Lallan Paswan and Ratangarh resident Rakesh Kumar Singh informed the SDM that just four days prior, the shopkeeper sold them one bag of urea for ?500 along with a zyme bucket for ?500.

Taking the matter seriously, the SDM sealed the godown on the spot and handed the keys to the Kandi block's Nazir. He directed the Kandi Circle Officer to file an FIR against the shopkeeper and instructed the District Agriculture Officer to take possession of the stock and dispose of it as per regulations.

SDM Sanjay Kumar stated, "As per the Deputy Commissioner's directives, a continuous drive is underway across the district to curb the black marketing of fertilizers and seeds. Those exploiting farmers for profit through illegal practices will face strict action." The raid was supported by Kandi police personnel, and a large number of local villagers were present, expressing satisfaction with the SDM's swift action.

Freeze ends, China to restart fertilizer supply to India soon

Shipments are set to arrive ahead of the rabi sowing season, when timely availability is critical

Vijay C. Roy
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NEW DELHI

Amid the supply disruption from China, Indian firms were actively sourcing water-soluble fertilizers from Belgium, Egypt, Germany, Morocco and the US.. MINT

After months of disruption in supply, India is set to receive consignments of specialty fertilizers from Beijing in the coming 20–25 days, following assurances by China's foreign minister Wang Yi during his recent visit. The move will ease supply disruptions and also signal warmer bilateral engagement.

Alongside specialty fertilizers used in high-value crops, India is also likely to receive urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) consignments from China within a fortnight, according to two people aware of the development.

The shipments are set to arrive ahead of the rabi sowing season, when timely fertilizer availability is critical, and are expected to ease pressure on supplies and prices for the farm sector.

During his India visit, China's foreign minister had given an assurance to mitigate concerns related to sectors including fertilizers, rare earths and tunnel boring machines.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to visit China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit later this month.

"We are in touch with specialty fertilizer suppliers in China and expect that the consignment will start pouring in the domestic market in the next 20-25 days," said Rajib Chakraborty, national president, Soluble Fertilizer Industry Association (SFIA).

20-25 days
For India to receive fertilizer shipments from Beijing

Nearly 80% of India's specialty fertilizer imports, including water-soluble nutrients, liquid foliar sprays, slow and controlled-release formulations, and biostimulants are sourced from Chinese manufacturers, according to industry estimates.

Specialty fertilizers include polymer-coated urea that is released slowly into the soil and is available to plants over a long period, chelated micronutrients that are effective in alkaline soil, water-soluble fertilizers such as monoammonium phosphate and potassium nitrate as well as stabilized nitrogen fertilizers with urease inhibitors that allow efficient nitrogen use on soil.

On the quantity of the import orders, Chakraborty said the number was "difficult" to ascertain. "But there is already a backlog of around 50,000 tonnes that was supposed to be delivered around May-June but was not delivered amid the supply disruption."

80%
The share of India's specialty fertilizer imports from China

In a reply to a query in the Lok Sabha on 25 July, minister for chemicals and fertilizers, J.P. Nadda said China had withheld export of specialty fertilizers to India for the past two-three months.

Specialty Fertilizers are not covered under the ambit of Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme administered by the department of fertilizers, and therefore they are not subsidized. Fertilizer firms are free to import as per their needs.

Amid the Chinese supply hit, Indian firms actively sourced water-soluble fertilizers (WSF) from alternative suppliers in Belgium, Egypt, Germany, Morocco and the US to address the shortfall. India imports a major quantity of micronutrients from Greece, Turkey, the US, Spain, Singapore and Netherlands, while a small quantity of zinc sulphate monohydrate was sourced from China, Nadda had said.

India's annual demand for specialty fertilizers is pegged around 1.2-1.3 million tonnes. Micronutrients have the top share of 50-55% in specialty fertilizer use, tailed by WSF (25-30%), sulphur (12-15%) and liquid fertilizers. India depends on inputs & finished specialty fertilizers from China, Russia, Norway, Tunisia and Morocco.

Industry experts say specialty fertilizers make for 3-5% of the market. In 2023, India's overall fertilizer market was about $40.5 billion.

An emailed query to the ministry of fertilizers as well as of agriculture remained unanswered till press time.

For an extended version of the story, go to livemint.com.

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