AGRO CHEM FEDERATION OF INDIA

ACFI NEWSLETTER

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NEWS

Dhanuka Agritech launches herbicide for maize, sugarcane crops

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

Dhanuka Agritech Ltd, an agri-input company, has introduced Tembotrax, an early post-emergence herbicide containing 'Tembotrione 34.4% SC', for weed management in maize and sugarcane cultivation across key agricultural regions of the country.

A media statement said Tembotrax is a systemic HPPD-inhibiting herbicide that disrupts carotenoid biosynthesis, causing visible bleaching of susceptible weeds while offering crop selectivity in maize and sugarcane when used as recommended.

Tembotrax offers broad-spectrum weed control against both narrow-leaf and broadleaf weeds through a single spray application, helping farmers manage weed competition in maize and sugarcane cultivation, it said.

KEY CHALLENGE

Quoting Rahul Dhanuka, MD, Dhanuka Agritech Ltd, the statement said: "Early-stage weed competition is a key challenge in maize and sugarcane cultivation as it can affect crop growth and farmers' productivity. Tembotrax helps control weeds during the critical early stages of crop growth, supporting effective weed management and helping farmers protect their crop potential."

Higher MSP for rabi crops an opportunity to boost mustard production, says SEA

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) has said higher minimum support prices (MSPs) for rabi crops offer an opportunity to boost domestic mustard production.

In his monthly letter to members on Wednesday, SEA President Angshu Mallick said the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had approved MSP hikes for all mandated rabi crops for the 2027-28 marketing season. The MSP for rapeseed and mustard was raised by ₹413 per quintal to ₹6,613 and that for safflower by ₹675 to ₹7,215.

"Improved price assurance for mustard can encourage farmers to maintain or expand cultivation and invest in better farm practices. However, the effectiveness of MSP support will also depend on procurement arrangements, market access and the prices farmers actually realise," he said.

KHARIF ACREAGE

Kharif oilseed acreage stood at 196.66 lakh hectares (lh) as of October 2, against 195.55 lh a year earlier. While overall coverage rose marginally, crop-wise trends were mixed.

Soybean acreage edged down to 123.16 lh, while groundnut remained broadly unchanged around 51 lh. Sesame acreage rose to 11.23 lh and sunflower to 1.29 lh, while castor acreage fell to 8.97 lh. In Gujarat, total oilseed acreage declined to 30.28 lh from 31.95 lh a year earlier, with groundnut coverage falling to 20.7 lh, Mallick said.

OILSEED TRADE

India exported 2.64 lakh tonnes (lt) of oilseeds valued at ₹3,324.05 crore during April-July 2026-27, while imports stood at 6.75 lt worth ₹3,733.55 crore. This resulted in a trade deficit of 4.11 lt by volume and ₹409.5 crore by value.

Groundnut and sesame supported exports, while soybean dominated imports, highlighting the need to improve domestic productivity, seed quality, farm economics and value-chain linkages to reduce import dependence.

Mallick said the vegetable oil and oilseed sector was navigating a changing global environment shaped by biofuel policies, shifting trade flows, price volatility and rising demand. This called for proactive policy engagement, diversified sourcing, stronger domestic production and greater value addition in India.

CII urges exporters to tap benefits under India-New Zealand FTA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, October 22

Domestic exporters, including MSMEs, should engage with New Zealand buyers, check product-specific rules of origin and leverage schemes such as the Export Promotion Mission to maximise the benefits from the recently implemented bilateral free trade agreement (FTA), CII's Sanjay Budhia said on Thursday.

Budhia, the Chairman of the CII National Committee on Exports and Managing Director of Patton International Ltd, said New Zealand can also serve as a gateway to the wider Oceania and Pacific Island markets.

On October 20, the two countries implemented a free trade agreement to boost trade and investment ties.

"I urge exporters, especially MSMEs, to move early, engage with New Zealand buyers, check product-specific rules of origin, and make full use of schemes such as the Export Promotion Mission. New Zealand can also serve as a gateway to the wider Oceania and Pacific Island markets," he said.

The pact, Budhia said, gives Indian exporters duty-free access across all tariff lines in New Zealand, with tariffs of up to 10 per cent on engineering goods, textiles, leather and footwear now at zero.

The agreement is set to benefit a wide range of industries – including engineering goods, chemicals, plastics, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and processed foods – alongside labour-intensive sectors like textiles and leather.

He added that streamlined SPS and TBT (Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade) procedures, electronic certification, and acceptance of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) and GCP (Good Clinical Practice) inspection reports will also help reduce compliance costs.

Dhanuka Agritech launches fungicide for rice blast disease in paddy

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

Dhanuka Agritech Ltd, an agri input company, has launched Fujita, a systemic fungicide for the control of rice blast (*Pyricularia oryzae*), one of the major fungal diseases affecting paddy cultivation.

Fujita is designed to provide systemic protection against rice blast and support effective disease management. Through products such as Fujita, the company continues to expand its crop protection portfolio to address key crop health challenges in Indian agriculture, it said in a statement.

India's exports reach $399 bn, eyes $1 trn next year: Report



NEW DELHI

INDIA's export engine is gaining pace and breadth, with combined merchandise and services shipments reaching about $399 billion in April–August 2026, lending weight towards reaching the $1 trillion export target for the year, a new report has said.

The report from European Times said China's sharp rise in imports from India also proved Indian exporters' ability to penetrate one of the world's most competitive markets.

Further, India is gradually building an export map spanning ASEAN, Africa, East Asia, Europe, and North America, with deeper participation in technology intensive production and global value chains.

Exports to Singapore surged by 96 per cent, Malaysia by 74 per cent, China by 39 per cent, and Tanzania by 129 per cent during the period, while exports to the United States also rose by 6 per cent.

Merchandise exports rose 17.8 per cent to $216 billion in April–August 2026, while services exports climbed 13 per cent to $183 billion, the report said. The combination of these factors suggested that "two complementary engines are supporting India's export expansion."

A report from European Times said China's sharp rise in imports from India also proved Indian exporters' ability to penetrate one of the world's most competitive markets

The report forecasted that if merchandise exporters continue to capture market share while services remain resilient, the country could substantially deepen its participation in global trade. Further, the report underlined that a strong services performance, rapidly expanding electronics and engineering exports, and exceptional growth in several emerging markets collectively paint a strong picture of growth in the coming period.

"Particularly encouraging is the performance of non-petroleum exports, which touched $181 billion, up 14 per cent," the publication said. Excluding petroleum and gems and jewellery, exports still grew 15 per cent to $169 billion, signalling a broad-based momentum beyond a narrow commodity set.

"India's underlying export base is becoming broader, more manufacturing-oriented and increasingly capable of responding to opportunities across global markets," the report noted.

Surge in electronic-goods exports from $2.9 billion in August 2025 to $5.5 billion in August 2026, up 89.8 per cent, was more striking as the sector sits at the heart of modern manufacturing and global value chains.

The growth in the electronics sector proved India's growing participation in technology-intensive production and international manufacturing networks.

"The next frontier is deeper domestic value addition through components, design, research, engineering and advanced manufacturing," the report noted.

Farmers oppose extension of new system of distribution of fertilizers through mobile app

Farmers have to get the unique identity issued by the Centre by registering their land holding in the FFS App

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUCHI

Farmers' representatives of Tiruchi district have opposed any move to extend the new system of distribution of fertilizers, introduced by the Union government as a pilot project in two districts in the State, to other districts.

The new system, implemented through the Framework for Fertilizer Sale (FFS) App, has been introduced in Erode and Sivaganga districts in Tamil Nadu on a pilot basis and is expected to be extended to other districts soon.



A farmer participating in the farmers' grievance redress day meeting at the Collectorate in Tiruchi on Friday. M. MOORTHY

New procedure

Raising the issue at the monthly farmers grievances meeting here on Friday, Aylia Sivasuriyan, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, affiliated to the Communist Party of India, pointed out that the Centre had introduced the new procedure to prevent irregularities in the distribution of fertilizers.

Farmers are required to obtain the unique identity issued by the Union Ministry of Agriculture by registering the extent of their land holding in the FFS App and get a token using a QR code to get fertilizers. Under the process, only land holding farmers can obtain the ID and tenant farmers who had been tilling the lands of temples and mutts for several years would not be able to get the same, Mr. Sivasuriyan said.

"Most of the tenant farmers are small and marginal farmers and they would not be able to get fertilizers at subsidised rates if the system is extended to all districts. Besides, they will face difficulties in accessing the schemes, including crop insurance, implemented by the Union government. A majority of small and marginal farmers do not own smart phones and will find it difficult to access the schemes through a mobile app," he said.

He called upon the government to retain a simple process for getting fertilizers and accessing schemes and ensure that they were available for tenant farmers too.

The district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, affiliated to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), V. Chidambaram, said tenant farmers were not able to register for crop insurance as they could not complete the owner verification process, which required an OTP.

Solution soon

Responding to the complaint, a district official handling crop insurance said that the issue had been taken to the notice of the Agriculture Production Commissioner/Secretary and an officer is being deputed to New Delhi to sort this out and a few other issues faced by farmers in crop insurance.

A section of farmers complained of meagre water flow in the tail-end areas of various canals in the district.

R. Subramanian, secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, said farmers in the tail-end areas of the Kattalai High Level Canal have not got water, affecting samba cultivation on about 9,000 acres.

P. Ayyakannu, president, Desiya Thennidiya Nadigal Innaippu Vivasayigal Sangam, said tail-end areas of the North Bank Canal had not got water and urged the Water Resources Department to shift its head sluice to the Mayanur Barrage as the canal's bed level was much higher than that of the Cauvery at Sriramasamudiram.

Official pulled up

In response to other complaints raised by farmers, District Collector Pratik Tayal, who chaired the meet, pulled up a Forest Department official for failing to convene a meeting with farmers to discuss the damage caused to crops by monkeys and other animals despite his instructions and directed him to notify the date of the meeting soon.

He told the farmers that details of power shutdown and government schemes would be shared on local/block-level WhatsApp groups.

Farmers protest paddy procurement and fertiliser shortage; call off NH-44 blockade

Jaskaran Singh & Kumar Mukesh | TNN

Kurukshetra/Hisar/Fatehabad: Farmers staged protests across Haryana on Monday over delayed paddy procurement, fertiliser shortages and alleged failure to procure crops at MSP, with BKU Charuni members threatening to block NH-44 in Shahabad and farmers blocking a road in Bhattu over delayed DAP distribution.

Farmers associated with BKU Charuni gathered at Shaheed Udham Singh Memorial in Shahabad with lathis following a call by union president



Kisan Sabha leaders submit a memorandum to the market committee secretary in Hisar

Gurnam Singh Charuni. They threatened to block NH-44 if officials did not address their concerns.

A meeting was held with principal secretary Amneet P Kumar, Kurukshetra DC Vishram Kumar Meena, SP Chandra Mohan and officials of the agriculture, food and civil supplies departments. Farmers later called off the proposed blockade after assurances that pending e-Kharid registrations would be verified and paddy lifting expedited.

Charuni said delayed lifting had left little space in mandis. He said govt also assured that crops exceeding district-wise average production limits would be re-verified and the entire quantity procured.

In Fatehabad, All India Kisan Sabha members protested at New Anaj Mandi, alleging that no kharif crop had yet been procured at MSP. In Bhattu, farmers blocked the Fatehabad-Chopta road after waiting since 4am for DAP and leaving without fertiliser. The blockade was lifted after officials assured them distribution would resume.

IFFCO Kisan Centre staff attributed the delay to a software glitch preventing batch numbers and farmer data from being updated, saying adequate DAP stock was available. In Hisar, Kisan Sabha members also protested over fertiliser availability, claiming around 800 bags were lying in a warehouse but could not be distributed because of portal-related technical issues.

DAP stockpile healthy ahead of rabi sowing season

Fertiliser stock* Inventories in most major rabi-growing states in northern India (in tonnes)

	Urea		DAP		NPKS		SSP	
	Overall stock*	Y-o-Y % chg	Overall stock*	Y-o-Y % chg	Overall stock*	Y-o-Y % chg	Overall stock*	Y-o-Y % chg
Andhra Pradesh	356,591.34	209.42	115,705.84	31.90	350,165.25	22.69	45,332.64	-8.9
Chhattisgarh	218,032.47	230.55	69,565.47	75.05	68,829.92	115.7	92,579.59	16.9
Haryana	404,497.66	93.01	88,982.75	0.91	50,429.40	11.0	71,043.18	21.5
Madhya Pradesh	539,741.75	153.24	240,949.16	26.71	377,127.70	17.9	373,895.35	-22.1
Punjab	422,498.24	12.25	159,384.20	17.60	65,844.64	7.1	76,195.75	1.2
Rajasthan	371,670.18	20.04	160,358.35	7.30	108,324.45	-4.37	214,870.09	-44.2
Uttar Pradesh	1,477,155.86	77.31	627,297.37	31.43	585,044.83	19.31	403,837.39	28.8
All-India total	**4,093,309.72**	**84.71**	**2,352,468.37**	**16.36**	**4,447,052.80**	**25.7**	**2,093,333.25**	**-4.5**

DAP: Di-ammonium Phosphate; SSP: Single super phosphate; NPKS: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), Sulphur (S)
Note: Total might not match as all states have not been included. *Data as on September 30, 2026

Source: Government of India and Trade sources

Discussions on phosphate (DAP) inventories in most major rabi-growing states in northern India were comfortable as of September 30, ahead of the peak sowing season that begins on October 1, according to the latest data sourced from government and private agencies.

Stocks were higher than a year earlier in Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Uttar Pradesh (UP), and Rajasthan, among the major rabi-producing states. Across the country, DAP stocks stood at an comfortable 2.35 million tonnes (mt) as of September 30, nearly 17 per cent higher than in the same period last year.

Wheat, mustard, chana, potato, and maseor are among the main rabi crops grown largely in North and West India, and DAP is widely used for these crops. Good DAP availability should help farmers mitigate some of the risks arising from a strengthening El Niño.

Punjab, Haryana, MP, Rajasthan, UP, parts of Bihar and Maharashtra are among the main states where rabi crops are grown. In southern India, paddy is also sown in some areas during the season.

In Haryana, DAP stocks stood at 88,983 tonnes as of September 30, 0.91 per cent higher than in the same period last year. In MP, one of the country's largest producers of wheat, chana, and mustard during the rabi season, stocks stood at around 2.40 lakh tonnes, about 35 per cent higher than a year earlier. The state has seen frequent DAP shortages in recent years.

In Punjab, the country's foremost wheat-producing state, DAP stocks were almost 16 per cent higher than last year at 1,59,384 tonnes. In UP, where potato cultivation is a major consumer of DAP, stocks were around 31.43 per cent higher than last year at more than 6,27,000 tonnes.

India uses 10-11 mt of DAP every year, making it the second-largest crop nutrient by volume after urea.

Following the West Asia crisis, supplies of major fertilisers were severely disrupted by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. DAP prices, like those of urea, surged, prompting the Union government and fertiliser companies across the public and private sectors to ensure their uninterrupted supplies.

In August, the average landed price of DAP in India was around Rs 52 per tonne (cost and freight, CFR inclusive), 14.32 per cent higher than in the same month last year. Sulphur, which is also used extensively in the production of DAP and other complex fertilisers, was priced at around Rs 150 per tonne (CFR), a 262 per cent increase from the same period last year.

This is expected to push up the domestic cost of producing DAP and increase the subsidy required for it. Retail prices of DAP are capped at around ₹1,350 per 50-kilogram bag, although there is officially no price control on the fertiliser.

According to official sources, the per-bag subsidy on DAP now from ₹3,562 below the West Asia crisis to more than ₹3,525 after the war broke out, an increase of 161.71 per cent. The price of imported liquefied natural gas rose from around $10 per million British thermal unit (mBtu) to $18-19 per mBtu after the war. All these factors are expected to push India's overall fertiliser subsidy requirement close to ₹2.00 lakh crore in 2026-27, against the Budget Estimate of around ₹1.71 lakh crore — a jump of 16.47 per cent. Overall, data showed that inventories of all major fertilisers were at comfortable levels as of September 30, compared with the same period last year.

Natural farming to beat El Niño, boost farm incomes

- **Agriculture special CS Rajasekhar says natural farming covers 22 lakh acres as against 25 lakh-acre target**
- **5 lakh more farmers to join by Feb 2027**
- **Successful models earn farmers up to Rs 2.71 lakh**

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ANANTAPUR

NATURAL farming has the potential to turn El Niño-related challenges into opportunities by protecting crops, maintaining green cover and improving farmers' incomes even under adverse climatic conditions, special chief secretary to agriculture and cooperation Budithi Rajasekhar said on Thursday.



Agriculture special chief secretary Budithi Rajasekhar addressing a workshop on natural farming in Anantapur on Thursday

Addressing the concluding day of a two-day workshop at the AF Ecology Centre here, he urged natural farming officials and field-level personnel to take pride in their work and demonstrate its economic benefits through scientific benefit-cost analysis.

Rajasekhar appreciated the efforts of Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF) teams for bringing 22 lakh acres under natural farming against the target of 25 lakh acres across the State. He also recalled the appreciation extended to the programme by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The workshop was attended by district project managers and staff from eight Rayalaseema districts, Nellore, Prakasam and Markapuram, along with RySS chief executive officer B Rama Rao and executive director Neeraja.

Rythu Sadhikara Samstha executive vice-chairman and retired IAS officer Thallam Vijay Kumar stressed the need to ensure year-round farm income through diversified cropping systems and one-time sowing techniques. He called for implementing the workshop's recommendations to maintain green cover in drought-prone regions.

He said natural farming interventions would be expanded through 1,357 high-risk Rythu Seva Kendras, covering around 9.60 lakh farmers. More than 3,000 community resource persons would be deployed across 11 districts by January 2027. The programme aims to bring another five lakh farmers from new villages under Natural Farming by February 2027.

The workshop highlighted successful farming models, including a one-acre rainfed 365-day green-cover model that generated a net profit of approximately Rs 90,000 during the Rabi season for Prakasam farmer Jhansi. Kurnool farmer G Sekhar earned Rs 2.71 lakh through vegetable cultivation under the Any Time Money model.

Discussions focused on pre-monsoon dry sowing, diversified cropping and timely crop planning to conserve soil moisture, protect crops during dry spells and strengthen climate resilience. The teams also outlined strategies to achieve 365-day green cover and improve sustainable farm incomes through June 2028.

Kharif losses likely to touch ₹20K cr in T as paddy acreage falls by 25%

Rainfall Issues May Extend To Rabi: PJTAU

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Hyderabad: Telangana's kharif crop losses are estimated at ₹20,000 crore, mainly in paddy and cotton, while rabi cultivation could shrink to 70 lakh acres from the normal 1.3 crore acres amid continuing rainfall deficit, according to Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agriculture University (PJTAU).

The university estimated kharif losses after factoring in a 25% decline in cropped area, damage to standing crops due to deficient rainfall and losses from land left uncultivated.

Losses higher in cotton

"Losses are higher in cotton because it is largely a cotton-growing area," vice-chancellor Aldas Janaiah said.

With rainfall concerns extending into the rabi season, which depends on the northeast monsoon from October, the university expects the cultivated area to nearly halve from normal levels.

"Rabi covers around 1.3 crore acres, including about 60 lakh acres under paddy. Paddy area is expected to decline by at least 40%, and we anticipate total cultivation coming down to around 70 lakh acres," Janaiah said.

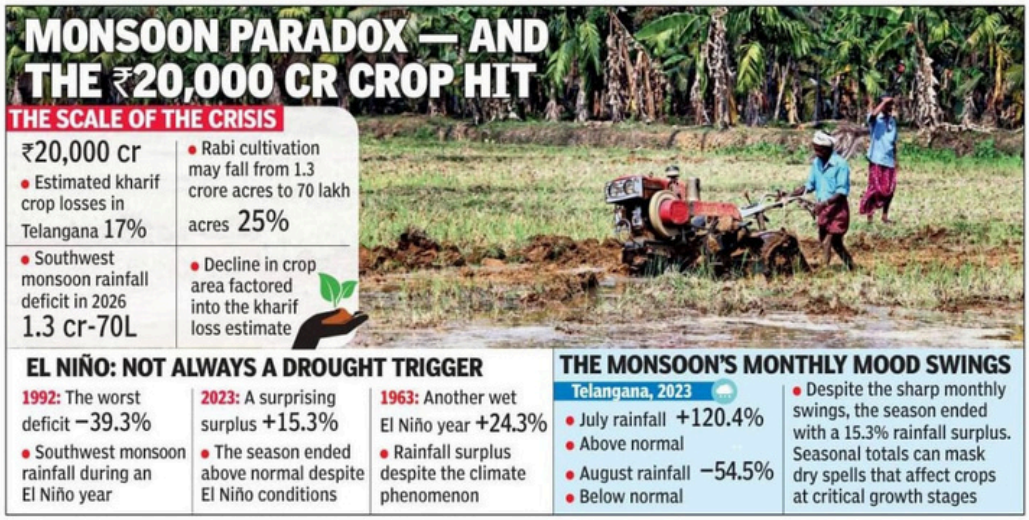
Officials said similar situations had occurred in previous seasons, but crop diversification had reached nearly 30% this time, the highest level recorded. Chief secretary Sanjay Jaju held 12 review meetings with officials on the El Niño scenario and ensured farmers were informed about the need to shift towards crops requiring less water, officials said.

Varsity authorities have advised farmers to adopt a loss-minimisation approach rather than sow crops without adequate water assurance. They said farmers should assess available soil moisture and water resources before investing in seeds, fertilizer and other inputs.

"Farmers must assess whether a crop can be grown successfully and yield returns before investing in it. If a crop cannot be sustained, avoiding cultivation can minimise losses. Income losses should not push farmers into debt," Janaiah said.

Officials have encouraged farmers to consider pulses and green manure crops, which require fewer resources and can improve soil health. The advice comes amid concerns that sowing water-intensive crops without sufficient rainfall or irrigation could leave farmers with additional expenditure and little chance of recovering their investment.

PJTAU's separate El Niño assessment gives projected combined kharif and rabi paddy production of 198–219 lakh metric tonnes, depending on water availability.



El Niño does not invariably lead to monsoon deficit in T

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Hyderabad: The southwest monsoon in Telangana ended with a 17% deficit in the 2026 monsoon season, contrasting sharply with 2023, when the state recorded above-normal rainfall despite El Niño conditions. Historical data presented at a seminar recently, shows that El Niño does not invariably result in a severe seasonal rainfall shortfall.

El Niño's effects on Telangana are shaped by other atmospheric conditions and weather systems, making the relationship between the phenomenon and the state's seasonal rainfall more complex than a simple drought-or-no-drought equation.

Telangana received 615.5 mm of rainfall against its normal of 740.6 mm during the June 1 to Sept 30 southwest monsoon season this year. Although the deficit was greater than 2023, when rainfall was above normal, it was less severe than the shortfalls recorded during several earlier El Niño years.

Examining 16 El Niño years between 1961 and 2023, it was found that rainfall outcomes varied widely, challenging the perception that El Niño invariably leads to drought.

The worst rainfall deficit among the years examined was recorded in 1992, when the southwest monsoon rainfall was 39.3% below normal. Other El Niño years also saw substantial shortfalls. Telangana had recorded a 35.7% deficit in 2004 and a 28.3% deficit in 2002.

The findings underline the need for localised agricultural planning, contingency measures and better management of water resources.

Avoid Rabi cultivation amid El Niño concerns, Ponguleti urges farmers



Hyderabad: Revenue and housing minister **Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy** on Sunday urged farmers to avoid Yasangi (Rabi) cultivation amid rainfall deficit and the potential impact of El Niño, warning of possible water shortages in the coming months. He assured farmers who had already cultivated Kharif crops that the govt would take steps to ensure irrigation supply. He also urged the public to conserve water and electricity, stressing that drinking water needs must be prioritised alongside agriculture. TNN

A problem of plenty in Haryana, Punjab

Haryana is already grappling with a paddy glut; Punjab could face similar pressures as its harvest enters the system. **Sanjeeb Mukherjee** analyses



Share of Punjab & Haryana declines

Rice procurement for central pool (mt)

TE-2019-20 TE-2024-25

Leading states	Actual procurement (mt)	% share in all-India procurement
Punjab	11.3 / 12.1	25.3 / 22.0
Haryana	4.1 / 3.8	9.1 / 7.0
Telangana	5.4 / 7.4	12.1 / 13.6
Chhattisgarh	4.1 / 7.1	9.31 / 13.0
Odisha	4.2 / 5.3	9.3 / 9.7
All-India total*	44.8 / 54.9	100 / 100

Note: TE: Triennium ended: 3-year block of continuous years; *Total might not match as all states have not been included
Source: Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices Kharif Report 2026-27

Paddy procurement is gathering pace across North India, but in Haryana, the bumper crop has become a problem for farmers. Congested mandis, delays in lifting produce and procurement bottlenecks are forcing farmers to wait three-four days, and sometimes longer, to sell their crop.

The trouble, which is beginning to acquire a political colour with the Opposition Congress making it a major issue, is also starting to resonate in neighbouring poll-bound Punjab. There, paddy procurement for the central pool has also started and is expected to gather full steam over the next 10 days.

Sources said farmers in Haryana are facing delays in procurement at mandis and are also troubled by a cap on per-acre purchases by agencies.

"The paddy crop in Haryana has turned out exceptionally well this year, with average yields in the range of 35-37 quintals per acre. However, there is an alleged cap of 25 quintals per acre in some regions that prevents farmers from selling their entire produce through the official procurement system," Inderjit Singh Goraya, national spokesperson of the All India National Kisan Congress, told *Business Standard*. "If the average yield is 35-37 quintals per acre, what is the farmer supposed to do with the remaining 10-12 quintals?"

He alleged that the government had also not completed the allocation of procurement agencies to mandis or clarified how much paddy each agency was expected to procure. Meanwhile, paddy procured last year was still lying in storage and had not been lifted.

"Farmers have been waiting in mandis for five-six days. Further, their produce is being purchased at ₹100-200 per quintal below MSP due to excess moisture," Goraya said. He alleged that while the Centre had fixed the paddy MSP at ₹2,441 per quintal for the 2026-27 season, farmers in many places were being forced to sell their produce for ₹2,200-2,300 per quintal.

Meanwhile, Punjab has targeted procurement of around 18 million tonnes (mt) of paddy in the 2026-27 season, against estimated production of around 19 mt. However, farmers said actual production could exceed 20 mt, given this year's good yields. They also argue that the prescribed moisture limit for paddy in Punjab is difficult to meet because some newly introduced varieties naturally have high moisture content. The problem is compounded when the crop is harvested mechanically, making it difficult to reduce moisture levels.

Experts and academics said the main problem is India's excessive paddy production and limited avenues for sale. This is beginning to strain the official procurement system, leading to bulging stocks in the central pool. The scale of the problem is evident in Punjab. It is planning to procure around 18 mt of paddy, which would yield approximately 12.06 mt of rice after milling. Yet, a report from the Union Ministry of Food shows that Punjab had around 15.3 mt of rice stocks from previous procurement as of August 31, 2026.

Punjab's combined wheat and rice storage capacity, with the Centre and state government taken together, was reportedly around 26.84 mt as of August 1, 2026. But, its total foodgrain stocks, stood at around 27.64 mt on August 31.

Haryana faces a similar situation. The Centre is believed to have set a target of procuring around 5.8 mt of paddy from farmers, translating into nearly 3.8 mt of rice after milling. According to the same ministry report, the state's rice stocks from previous years stood at around 4.3 mt as of August 31, 2026. Haryana's combined wheat and rice storage capacity was around 13.94 mt as of August 1. Its total wheat and rice stocks stood at around 14.32 mt on August 31, according to official records.

These figures pre-date the new procurement season and do not account for stock drawdowns during September and October. Even so, they underline the pressure on storage and procurement systems as a fresh crop arrives in two of India's major paddy-producing states.

Ecosystem services and role of farmers



While support for agriculture focuses mainly on the visible part of farming, little attention is given to groundwater recharge, carbon storage or pollination



SUVANGI RATH
KIRAN KUMARA TM
ADITYA KS

Every harvest season, the conversation around Indian agriculture turns to a single figure: how much grain, pulses or cotton a field has produced. What rarely enters that conversation is the far larger, unaccounted for output the same field has produced. Ecosystem services are the benefits people draw from natural and managed ecosystems.

In agriculture, the term covers everything the farmland produces besides the crop — the water it recharges, the carbon it stores, the nutrients it cycles, the pollinators it houses and the soil it holds in place. It is, in effect, the invisible half of every harvest.

That invisible half does not happen by itself; it is generated, season after season, by the farmer managing the land. Farmers are the managers of India's agro-ecosystems, and besides producing foodgrain, pulses, fodder, fish and fuel, they also generate some of the most important ecosystem service benefits enjoyed by society at large. A flooded paddy field recharges the aquifer beneath it. A bund slows runoff and holds the soil in place. Residue decomposing *in situ* locks carbon in the topsoil for a long period.

THE QUIET CUSTODIAN

What ties all of this together is that none of it is produced by leaving the land alone. It is produced through farming. It follows from the timing and depth of irrigation; from whether the plough goes in or the seed drill does; from what happens to the residue after harvest; from whether the field is bunded; from how much margin is left uncropped; from how many crops sit in the rotation; from whether trees are allowed to stand at the boundary. And that, ultimately, is what makes the farmer the pivot of the entire agricultural system. Not merely a producer of food, but the quiet custodian of everything else the land provides.

A natural question that follows is if farmers are producing all of this, why is so little of it recognised by them, the policymakers and the wider public? Unlike a harvested crop, which is visible, measurable and sold at the market within a season, most ecosystem services are invisible and take longer to realise. Because the benefits rarely return to the person who generated it, and rarely return sooner even when they do, farmers have little reason to notice or value what their everyday practices are generating.

Policy makes this gap even wider, instead of correcting it. Agricultural support in India, such as subsidies, procurement and extension services, focuses mainly on the visible part of farming. It rewards production and input use, but gives little attention to groundwater recharge, carbon storage or pollination. And underlying both of these is the deeper problem: there is no market for any of it.

Grains have a price that is determined every season at the mandi. In contrast, recharged groundwater and pollination services have no similar marketplace, buyer or price. However, carbon sequestered through farming practices is now being sold in the voluntary carbon markets.

Grains have a price that is determined every season at the mandi. In contrast, recharged groundwater and pollination services have no similar marketplace or price

The costs are not small. The FAO 2024 State of Food and Agriculture report puts the hidden costs of India's agrifood system at $1.3 trillion a year, the third-largest in the world; a substantial part of that is environmental. The Central Ground Water Board's 2025 assessment found that 730 of the 6,762 assessment units were overexploited and another 201 were labelled critical.

Our own valuation of irrigated and rain-fed paddy systems in Odisha points that the two differ not merely in crop yield, but also in the bundle of regulating and supporting services they generate. The comparison between them looks materially different once those services are counted. However, none of it shows up in farmer's income.

Meanwhile, farmers' incentives are aligned in the other direction. The Union Budget for 2026-27 sets aside roughly ₹1.71 lakh crore for fertilizer subsidy. Add free or near-free farm power in most major States, along with assured procurement of paddy and wheat, and India spends an enormous amount every year to make water-intensive, nitrogen-intensive cultivation the safest choice for farmers. Against this, the payments for doing the opposite are minimal.

PM-PRANAM

For example, under PM-PRANAM, States that cut the use of chemical fertilizers can retain half the resulting subsidy savings. In 2023-24, 14 States cut consumption by 1.4 million tonnes, generating an estimated ₹3,157 crore in savings. Now, nearly three years into the scheme, the incentives have not reached States because the disbursal mechanism has not been finalised. Similarly, in the case of Punjab's ₹1,500 per acre incentive for direct-seeded rice, the incentive is very miniscule and, hence, adoption is limited.

CARBON MARKETS, AN ANSWER

However, carbon markets are one of the solutions, and may have a role to play. But the first significant Indian soil-based carbon credit issuance, covering 30,000 acres in Punjab and Haryana, was verified in 2026 for practices adopted between 2019 and 2022. A seven-year gap between changing what you do and being paid for it is unworkable for small holders. What next? First, pay a direct incentive on per hectare, per year basis, rather than per tonne verified years later; let the aggregator or the State government take the risk.

Second, bundle the services. Income from carbon alone is very small to the Indian smallholder, but carbon, groundwater recharge, residue management and biodiversity, paid as one contract, can clear the threshold. Third, there is a need to develop transfer mechanism under PM-PRANAM scheme, rather than just an outlay.

Fourth, the ecosystem service programme in the country never sold ecosystem services at all. Andhra Pradesh's community-managed natural farming now reaches around 1.8 million farming families, and it grew because it cut input costs along with the environmental gains. Farmers respond to their own visible and tangible benefits. Therefore, there is a need for farmer-centric design.

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India's carbon market will need wider support systems

R.V. ANURADHA & PRACHI PRIYA



are, respectively, partner, Clarus Law Associates and a Mumbai-based economist.

India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) is a historic milestone. Specific obligated entities across nine notified sectors—iron and steel, aluminium, cement, chlor-alkali, pulp and paper, petroleum refining, petrochemicals, textiles and fertilizers—are required to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions below the assigned intensity target, for which they will be issued carbon credit certificates (CCCs). A CCC, representing 1 tonne of CO2 emission, could be sold on power exchanges or banked for future compliance needs. Projects in non-obligated sectors can also generate credits for sale to obligated entities. Trading in CCCs, which is expected to commence soon, will establish an explicit and observable carbon price in India, help drive investment in emissions reduction and influence policy.

CCC pricing will also help exports to markets such as the EU and UK, whose carbon border adjustment mechanisms (CBAMs) require the price differential of embedded emissions to be paid as a price for market access. The UK has recognized that the CCC price can be treated as a deductible for eligible products. But its immediate significance must not be overstated. Exporters will still bear the brunt of a carbon price gap with the UK market, estimated at $70-80 per tonne. CBAM frameworks in both the EU and UK are also expected to expand their reach to downstream products of steel and aluminium, other sectors like organic chemicals, and to transport and indirect emissions.

What we need beyond CCTS: Industrial decarbonization requires a more complex policy mix beyond price signals for the deployment of emerging technologies, support infrastructure and access to affordable finance. India has already demonstrated the value of targeted support in building clean-technology ecosystems through its production-linked incentive scheme for solar PV modules and its Sight programme for green hydrogen production and electrolyser manufacturing. Similar dedicated frameworks are needed for carbon capture utilization and storage (CCUS), hydrogen-ready industrial equipment, industrial electrification, advanced recycling and other low-carbon process technologies.

A Niti Aayog report earlier this year on *Scenarios Towards Viksit Bharat and Net Zero* estimates that we need $22.7 trillion in cumulative investment by 2070 and recommends strengthening transition finance for hard-to-abate sectors through verified transition plans, wider use of transition and sustainability-linked bonds, expanded guarantees and blended-finance mechanisms to de-risk investments, etc. Similarly, Niti Aayog's MSME Green Transition Roadmap calls for dedicated green-finance mechanisms, credit enhancement and risk-sharing instruments along with common technology, testing, certification and advisory infrastructure to reduce the cost and complexity for smaller firms.

We require a financing and institutional ecosystem that can turn climate ambition into industrial reality

Global experience is informative. Low-carbon industrial clusters such as the UK's East Coast Cluster and Hy Net programmes have lowered costs through shared infrastructure, risk-sharing mechanisms and coordinated public support. Sweden's Hybrit is an example of a state-supported, industry-led integrated value chain initiative linking green hydrogen—produced using fossil-free wind and hydropower—to iron and steelmaking processes to eliminate carbon emissions.

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Priority Sector Lending Directions also need expansion beyond renewable energy projects to recognize industrial decarbonization investments. Tax policy can reinforce this shift. India currently provides accelerated depreciation for specified energy-saving, waste-heat recovery, pollution-control, recycling and renewable-energy equipment. As industrial decarbonization technologies evolve, the eligible list could be periodically updated to include emerging low-carbon technologies needed by hard-to-abate sectors.

A national decarbonization fund could also play a crucial role in supporting technology deployment and prioritizing sectors with the highest abatement costs and greatest strategic importance. As for the question of where the resources will come from, here are some thoughts: *First*, a range of implicit carbon costs already exists in the form of coal levies, fuel taxes and electricity duties that influence behaviour but are not explicitly linked to financing decarbonization. Channelling a portion of these revenues into a dedicated fund would recycle resources from carbon-intensive activities into cleaner alternatives while improving coherence across instruments that operate in silos.

Second, India can leverage opportunities under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to mobilize finance and technology to enhance bilateral cooperation. Credible carbon accounting methodologies, institutional capacity and a pipeline of investable projects can accelerate the scaling up of such initiatives.

Most importantly, the finance ministry's draft Climate Finance Taxonomy of 2024 urgently needs to be finalized. A credible taxonomy will serve as a foundational enabler for our climate-finance architecture by providing a common basis for identifying genuine green-transition investments and channelling finance consistent with India's climate goals.

CCTS provides a price signal. India must now build the rest of the ecosystem that would enable industry to translate climate ambition into industrial reality.

SEA, Solidaridad propose measures to empower women farmers

Our Bureau
Mangaluru



The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) and Solidaridad have proposed four measures to improve women farmers' access to formal markets, boost price realisation and strengthen financial inclusion across vegetable oil value chains.

The recommendations emerged from a multi-stakeholder consultation in Bhopal on 'Scaling Gender-Inclusive Regenerative Vegetable Oil Value Chains: A Policy Roadmap'.

The discussion highlighted the need to translate women's contributions to agriculture into greater economic recognition, control over income and participation in formal supply chains.

FOUR KEY AREAS

The consultation identified four measures for policymakers and industry stakeholders.

The first calls for defined procurement targets for produce sourced directly from women farmers to improve their access to organised markets, corporate sourcing networks and formal supply chains.

The second proposes preferential pricing or premium for produce supplied by women farmers, recognising their contribution to sustainable farming and encouraging participation in regenerative agriculture programmes.

The third recommends payment mechanisms that strengthen women's financial inclusion and control over agricultural earnings. Where appropriate, joint bank accounts may be encouraged with the informed consent of account holders.

The fourth calls on companies to allocate at least 10 per cent of their corporate social responsibility budgets to integrating women farmers into supply chains through capacity building, regenerative agriculture, market linkages and access to technology.

Kribhco to supply 80,000 quintals of certified wheat seed to UP farmers during Rabi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Lucknow, 8 October



Ahead of Rabi sowing, premier national-level multi-state cooperative federation, Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO) will supply around 80,000 quintals of certified wheat seed to farmers in Uttar Pradesh, and pay farmers who grow its seed crop an incentive of about Rs 200 per quintal over the minimum support price.

Speaking at a media workshop organised by the Forum for Indian Journalists on Education, Environment, Health & Agriculture (FIJEEHA) in collaboration with Alliance for Change, Transformation & Innovation (ACTION), Rishipal Singh Rathore, State Manager, Kribhco Uttar Pradesh, said the seed is processed at KRIBHCO's plants in Gorakhpur, Aurai, Shahjahanpur and Gajraula and reaches farmers in certified, tagged 40-kg bags. The cooperative also supplies gram and lentil seed.

Mr Rathore said fertiliser supply in the state remains on course despite lingering uncertainty in global markets after the West Asia conflict, backed by the Government of India's strong resolve to keep supplies stable.

Besides, Kribhco supplies 10-12 lakh metric tonnes of urea and around 3 lakh metric tonnes of DAP in Uttar Pradesh every year, along with SSP, zinc sulphate, micronutrients, organic manure and bio-fertilisers.

"Our relationship with farmers is not limited to supplying products. Our aim is to make every farmer capable, aware, self-reliant and prosperous, producing more at lower cost while protecting soil and water," Mr Rathore said.

These inputs reach nearly 2.8 crore farmers through around 8,000 cooperative societies and 10,000 private dealers, besides 42 Kribhco Seva Kendras run on a no-profit, no-loss basis.

Kribhco also conducts around 1,500 training programmes a year for farmers and cooperatives on soil testing, balanced fertiliser use and water management, and has partnered in developing around 3,000 Kisan Samriddhi Kendras in the state.

The state is also home to the Shahjahanpur plant of Kribhco's wholly owned subsidiary Kribhco Fertilizers Ltd, which produced 11.02 lakh metric tonnes of urea and 6.68 lakh metric tonnes of ammonia in 2025-26, running well above rated capacity.

Kribhco has signed a joint venture with Dutch firm Farm Frites for a hi-tech potato processing unit next to the plant. Its Varanasi unit, one of three Kribhco bio-fertiliser plants in the country, produces a range of bio-fertilisers, including Rhizobium and Azotobacter.

Surplus grain stocks threaten to raise food subsidy bill

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, October 14

BUFFER TROUBLE



84.38 MT
FCI's foodgrain stocks against a buffer norm of 30.77 MT

₹2.47 lakh crore
Projected food subsidy outgo in FY27, against budgeted ₹2.27 lakh cr

₹83,000 crore
Food subsidy released to FCI so far, 54% of its annual allocation

₹50,000 crore
Ways and means advance to FCI for working capital

₹43.91/kg
Estimated economic cost of rice in FY27, up from ₹42.11/kg in FY26

₹31.45/kg
Estimated economic cost of wheat in FY27, up from ₹29.68/kg

WITH THE FOOD Corporation of India (FCI) holding 84.38 million tonne (MT) of foodgrains, nearly three times the prescribed buffer stock, rising costs of carrying the surplus could push the Centre's food subsidy expenditure beyond the budgeted amount in 2026-27.

The finance ministry has released ₹83,000 crore, or 54% of the ₹1.52 lakh crore budgeted for food subsidy through FCI, while a ₹50,000-crore "ways and means" advance has provided temporary working capital.

However, sources said the advance would be adjusted against FCI's allocation by the end of the current fiscal, requiring the finance ministry to provide additional funds to meet the rising costs of carrying the surplus stocks. FCI currently holds 84.38 MT of foodgrains, comprising 38.1 MT of rice and 46.1 MT of wheat, against the prescribed buffer stock of 30.77 MT for October 1.

This excludes 19 MT of rice receivable from millers.

With the minimum support price (MSP), carrying, storage and other costs rising, FCI's economic cost of rice and wheat is estimated to increase to ₹43.91 per kg and ₹31.45 per kg, respectively, in 2026-27, from ₹42.11 per kg and ₹29.68 per kg in FY26.

Sources said that against the budget estimate of ₹2.27 lakh crore for food subsidy in FY27, including allocations to FCI and states that have opted for the decentralised procurement system, the actual outgo could exceed ₹2.47 lakh crore if central pool grain stocks continue to mount.

In FY26, food subsidy expenditure stood at ₹2.27 lakh crore, of which ₹1.69 lakh crore was routed through FCI.

The finance ministry has released food subsidy funds in a timely manner over the past couple of fiscal years, ensuring that FCI does not have to rely heavily on short-term loans and cash credit limits, as provided for in its financing arrangements. More than 70% of the annual food subsidy budget is routed through FCI.

The allocation is largely used to supply free rice and wheat to more than 800 million people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), or the free ration scheme, and to maintain a buffer stock. Under PMGKAY, 810 million people are currently being provided 5 kg each of specified grains per month free of cost. The scheme has been extended until the end of 2028, at an estimated cost of ₹11.8 trillion to the exchequer.

FCI annually supplies around 36-38 MT of rice and 18-20 MT of wheat under the free ration scheme, while procurement has remained in the range of 80-85 MT for several years, leading to a build-up of stocks. To bridge cash-flow mismatches, FCI can avail itself of short-term loans of up to ₹1 lakh crore at any given time, with a tenure of 90 days. The annual interest rates charged by designated banks range from 5.55% to 7.4%.

In terms of debt, FCI has issued bonds worth ₹36,700 crore so far, repayable during 2028-2031.

India plans urea capacity boost by 2030 to meet 90% domestic demand

Vijay C. Roy
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NEW DELHI

India plans to add 13.7 million tonnes (mt) of annual urea production capacity by 2030, taking domestic capacity to about 43.7mt as the country seeks to cut import dependence and shield farmers from volatile global fertilizer prices, according to two people aware of the development.

India's annual urea demand stands at around 40mt and is growing at about 5%. Domestic production meets roughly 75% of the country's requirement, with imports making up the balance. The expansion is intended to reduce that dependence as the escalating West Asia conflict drives up global fertilizer prices.

An estimated 43.5–43.7mt production will be equivalent to about 90% of projected domestic demand of 48.6lmt by 2030. Every 1mt of domestic capacity that replaces imports can save about $500 million annually in foreign exchange, according to Satyam Shivam Sundaram, partner, Government and Public Sector, EY India.

The potential savings could ease the Centre's substantial fertilizer subsidy burden.



India plans to add 13.7mt of annual urea production capacity by 2030, taking domestic capacity to about 43.7mt. BLOOMBERG

"We expect an additional 13.5–13.7 million tonnes of urea production capacity to become operational by 2030," said one of the people cited above. The expansion includes 10mt of additional annual capacity envisaged under the National Investment Policy for Urea-2026 (NIPU-2026), alongside two domestic projects of 1.27mt each and a proposed venture involving a Russian fertilizer producer, this person said.

Mint reported on 26 September that the Department of Fertilizers had received 17 proposals from companies including GAIL (India) Ltd, Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Ltd (HURL), Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd (Kribhco), Chambal Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd and Matix Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd to set up new urea plants.

The greenfield and brownfield proposals are at various stages of examination by the department.

The Union cabinet approved NIPU-2026, which envisages 10mt of additional annual urea capacity, following a sharp rise in global fertilizer prices triggered by the West Asia conflict.

Queries sent on 12 October to the Department of Fertilizers, GAIL, RCF, Fertilizers Corporation of India, Assam Valley Fertilizer and Chemical Company, Oil India, National Fertilizers and Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corp. remained unanswered until press time.

Talcher Fertilizers Ltd, promoted by GAIL, Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Ltd, Coal India Ltd and Fertilizers Corp. of India Ltd, is setting up a greenfield urea plant in Odisha with annual capacity of 1.27mt using coal gasification.

Coal India in response to a *Mint* query said the project will cost and estimated ₹19,000 crore and it is expected to be completed in fiscal year 2028.

Assam Valley Fertilizer and Chemical Company Ltd is also setting up a 1.27mt-a-year plant in Assam.

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

{ AFTER VERIFICATION }

Haryana govt allows procurement beyond paddy yield limits

Neeraj Mohan
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CHARUNI RAISES QUESTIONS OVER VERIFICATION PROCESS; SEEKS 10% RELAXATION IN CURRENT PROCUREMENT LIMITS WITH A SIMPLER PROCESS

ROHTAK: The Haryana government has directed district authorities to ensure procurement of paddy beyond the prescribed yield limits during the Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2026-27 after due verification, following repeated protests by farmers who alleged that the restrictions were preventing them from selling their entire produce at the minimum support price (MSP).

The director of agriculture and farmers welfare department, directed all deputy commissioners (DCs) in the state to ensure that paddy produce exceeding the prescribed yield limits is procured after due verification, so that farmers do not face any difficulties.

According to the letter, the department noted that district-wise paddy yield limits for the current marketing season had been fixed earlier on the basis of the average yield of the preceding three years.

Representations subsequently received from farmers pointed out that actual yields in several cases were substantially higher than the prescribed limits. After considering the concerns, the government has clarified the procedure for handling such cases.

Farmers whose actual paddy yield exceeds the prescribed limit may submit a written request to the concerned secretary of State Agriculture Marketing Board. The secretary is to forward the claim to the concerned revenue authorities or the agriculture department for verification and verification is to be carried out on the basis of the farmer's previous production and sale records, wherever available, reads the letters.

Thus the claim for higher yield to be verified by the revenue authorities or the agriculture department within 48 hours. Once the higher-yield claim is verified by either authority, the additional quantity of paddy will also be procured, it added.

The BKU (Charuni) president Gurnam Singh Charuni objects to the use of past three years' average yields as the basis for current procurement limits and demands a 10% relaxation along with a simpler process for purchasing surplus produce.

A senior agriculture department officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said thousands of acres registered under Parmal paddy were found to be sown with Basmati varieties were removed from the records, ensuring genuine farmers did not face difficulties.

Cong wants 25% rise in fertiliser rates rolled back

Ahmedabad: Gujarat Congress has called for an immediate reversal of the recent Rs 500-per-bag increase in NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) fertiliser prices, saying it will worsen the state's debt crisis for its 5.8 million farmers.

Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said the price of NPK fertiliser had risen from Rs 1,950 to Rs 2,450 per bag, a nearly 25% increase. "Rising costs of fertilisers, pesticides and seeds, coupled with stagnant or subdued crop prices, have been pushing farmers into deeper debt," he alleged.

The party demanded higher fertiliser subsidies, regulation of input prices, a review of crop prices against production costs and targeted debt relief for small and marginal farmers. TNN

Crystal Crop's marigold R&D effort turns into export opportunity

Subramani Ra Mancombu
Chennai

One of India's first research and development (R&D) efforts to develop a hybrid marigold variety has led global companies to come to India and export the flower.

The R&D effort came from Crystal Crop Protection Ltd (CCPL) a few years ago, and the hybrid's seed has become the company's number 1 revenue earner in seeds.

"There is a good demand for the marigold seeds of our Vijeyta hybrid due to 2-3 reasons. It has begun to replace chrysanthemum in some places as it has a longer shelf life. This looks like a tennis ball and can be kept in cold storage for 20-25 days. Increasing religious activities, too, have resulted in this hybrid becoming popular," said Anurag Bajpai, Business Head, Vegetable and Flower Seeds, CCPL. Crystal Crop was the first to begin breeding marigold hybrids and is the leading company in research and development (R&D) of the plant.

"We began the research in 2012 and cracked it in 2014," said Ramamohan G, R&D Lead, Vegetable and Flowers Division, CCPL.

FLOWER'S FEATURE

The feature of this marigold is that it has a tennis ball shape and can return to its shape even when it is squeezed hard.

"This actually helps in transporting the flower to far-off places without worrying about damage," he said.

Bajpai said the Vijeyta hybrid's acceptance by growers saw foreign firms coming to India to breed the flower for production and exports.

With religious functions and marriages coming up every second month, farmers position their marigold crop to earn more.



IN FULL BLOOM. CCPL's Vijeyta marigold hybrid

"Prices generally will tend to rise to ₹60 and even ₹100 a kg sometimes during Deepavali. Farmers usually get ₹50-60," said Purshothama MG, Biotech Lead - Vegetable & Flowers Division, CCPL.

The new hybrid has been developed via the doubled haploid system, using the pollen.

CCPL developed the marigold, orange in colour, after deploying markers from pure lines in 2012.

Earlier, such marigold was being imported from Thailand.

KN Chandrasekharan, a farmer at Kajikalhalli village near Kolar in Karnataka, said, "In festival times, our income goes up to ₹80 a kg. Earlier, I was growing chrysanthemum, which is a lighter flower. Marigold is heavy and gives good returns," he said.

Bajpai said CCPL will launch another marigold hybrid, which will be yellow in colour, next year.

DIFFERENT USES

Ramamohan said the marigold hybrid had strong stems and there won't be lodging of the plant, which grows above 4 ft.

Bajpai said the flower had different uses in different parts of the country.

While the whole flower is used for religious purposes in the North, its petals are used to make garlands in the South, particularly Tamil Nadu, he said.

Purshothama said Crystal Crop is developing hybrids of orchids, too, another first in the country.

CHEAPER OPTION

"Developing a local hybrid means people here will get it cheaper than imported ones. India imports nearly ₹30 crore worth of orchids annually. The local orchids cost less than ₹400 for one," he said.

Ramamohan said, "We have developed orchids through tissue culture using local germplasm. They are 100 per cent Indian hybrids."

The writer was at CCPL's vegetable and seed R&D Centre in Bengaluru recently at the invitation of the company

Crystal Crop to launch early harvest sweet corn variety seeds

Subramani Ra Mancombu
Bengaluru

New Delhi-based Crystal Crop Protection Ltd (CCPL) will launch seeds of a new sweet corn variety next month, while introducing varietal seeds of seedless cucumber, cabbage, tomato and a long fresh chilli before the end of 2027.

"The sweet corn variety, Madhuram, can be harvested early and will be sweeter," said Anurag Bajpai, Business Head, VF (vegetables and flowers) Seeds of CCPL. The seeds division is headquartered in Bengaluru.

Most of the seeds that the company plans to introduce are early-harvest varieties, with a focus on disease tolerance and climate resistance, he said. "The seedless cucumber is not exactly shorn of seeds. But it will have a lesser number and will not stop consumers from enjoying it. It is an early harvest variety," said G Ramamohan, Vice-President, Technology, CCPL VF Seeds.

FLAVOUR TOMATO

In the case of cabbage, farmers can hold back from harvesting for 10-15 days if the market prices are low. "They can harvest it when the prices improve. Cabbage tends to open up on the farm if the harvest is delayed. This will help solve that issue," said Bajpai.

The tomato variety will be one with enhanced flavour and will be ready for harvest in 50-55 days.

"The last time we had a tomato with flavour was the Pusa one. Focus on transportation of tomatoes led to less flavour. We have focused on the taste component," said Purshothama MG - Biotech Lead - VF Division of CCPL.



Anurag Bajpai, Business Head, VF (vegetables and flowers) Seeds of CCPL

The long fresh chilli variety will be glossy with a higher yield, which is suitable for the northern parts, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, said Ramamohan.

Bajpai said Crystal had been actively breeding sweet corn varieties that could be adaptable for Indian breeding. These varieties are becoming popular as they are of short duration and are being used for feed.

SWEET CORN

"We are working on coloured sweet corn, particularly on the health aspects. These purple coloured corns are good antioxidants and are nutritionally superior," he said.

"Our research and development (R&D) is farmer-focused, directly connected with the 1.5 lakh farmers enrolled in our *Krishi Sampark* programme," said Bajpai, adding that CCPL is among the less than 20 Indian seed companies doing R&D in seeds and flowers.

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has recognised its R&D as it has all the technology required, he said.

NEW SWEET PEPPER

CCPL is making efforts to come out with a new *popti* (sweet pepper) variety that is popular in Maharashtra.

"It has a distorted appearance but we are creating a hybrid with a distinct flavour, though not looking attractive," said Ramamohan.

The company is focusing on this because it gives consistent returns, and demand is regular. Crystal is working on a hybrid of ice-box watermelon, a small and compact variety, that will be easy to transport and store. It is also trying to come up with beetroot varieties.

"Demand for beetroot is increasing as it is increasingly being used for health purposes," said Bajpai.

The writer was in Bengaluru at the invitation of CCPL

'Link Fertiliser Subsidies to Area & Crop Productivity'

New Delhi: India should gradually shift from product-based fertiliser subsidies to direct support for farmers, backed by digital records of cultivation and crop-specific nutrient requirements, to curb excessive urea use and improve soil health, according to Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations. Two policy briefs by Icrier have recommended linking subsidies to cultivated area and crop productivity rather than the type of fertiliser purchased. The reports call for bringing urea under a nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) framework as an interim measure. —**Our Bureau**

Bihar told to rethink on fertiliser ban

NEW DELHI: The Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) has urged the Bihar government to reconsider its ban on the sale of non-subsidised soil nutrients, saying it does not support tagging such products with subsidised fertilisers. On October 8, the state banned the sale of non-subsidised fertilisers after farmers complained that these were being tagged along with subsidised urea, DAP and complex fertilisers, pushing up their input costs. In a letter to the state government, FAI sought a review, arguing that the ban would adversely affect farmers' access to essential plant nutrients critical for soil health and crop productivity. "FAI has consistently opposed the tagging of non-subsidised fertilisers with other products," the letter said.

Centre to create 1 lakh soil health entrepreneurs: ICAR DG

POLICY PUSH. Regional consultations have been completed and the draft policy is ready; government plans to launch 1,000 such entrepreneurs soon

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

The government is planning to roll out a soil health policy soon, with the first draft ready, said ML Jat, Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Without disclosing further details, he said that the government aims to create 1 lakh soil health entrepreneurs across the country.

"We've been discussing with a range of stakeholders over the past one year to launch the Bharat Soil Health Policy. A draft is ready. We did a lot of regional consultations as well," Jat said at a roundtable on the fertilizer policy, organised by policy think tank ICRIER.

However, implementation remained a major challenge for the policy's success, he said.

"We are also now working towards reaching out to every farmer (on soil health), and that needs a different approach. So, we are discussing soil health entrepreneurs, and our target is 100,000 such entrepreneurs. Soon, we are going to launch at least 1,000 of those soil health entrepreneurs and then expand through public-private partnerships as well as CSR funding," he said.

The approach aims to raise awareness and empower local people to promote the balanced use of fertilizers, he said.

> We've consulted a range of stakeholders over the past year to launch the Bharat Soil Health Policy
>
> **ML JAT**
> Director-General, ICAR



NANO FERTILIZERS

On farmers' resistance to nano fertilizers, which were introduced to reduce the application of granular chemical fertilizers, Jat said that the rollout had been rushed.

"On nano fertilizers, I think we were in a big hurry. One of the problems with nano was 'one bottle versus one bag'. I think that generalised communication was a major problem. They didn't indicate that one bottle is needed at the last stage," he said.

When co-operative major Iffco launched nano-urea in 2021, the government then claimed that one 500-ml bottle of nano-urea could replace a conventional 45-kg bag of granular urea, containing 46 per cent nitrogen.

OVERUSE OF FERTILIZERS

Jat said that more than 100 districts had been identified, where farmers were using over twice the required quantity of fertilizers. "If you can skip even one application and apply water as a spray there, still there will be no problem," he said.

Stressing the need to explore indigenous mineral resources to improve crop yields and reduce the dependence on chemical fertilizers, Jat said that India was yet to fully explore potassium sources such as glauconite.

"We haven't explored a lot of potassium sources like glauconite and others. And now we are talking about this Gobardhan scheme... So, organo-mineral is another source of nutrients that we can generate within the country. We should be exploring those opportunities," he said.

Jat said that India could replace one-third of its chemical fertilizer use through organic resources and reduce the remaining requirement through judicious application.

Achieving this would require an appropriate policy framework or incentives for farmers, he added.

"Biologicals are a largely unexplored field. We haven't harnessed even 0.1 per cent of the power of biologicals. India has got a lot of diversity in terms of biologicals," the ICAR Director-General said.

NUTRIENT-USE EFFICIENCY

On recalibrating fertilizer policy, Jat said India needed to move from subsidy-led inefficiency to efficiency-linked incentives and from import dependence to greater use of indigenous nutrient sources.

The ICAR has been issuing advisories on soil health and the correct application of fertilizers, but a mechanism is needed to ensure that farmers acted on them, he said. Jat also said the ICAR had begun focusing on nutrient-use efficiency in its crop-breeding programmes, which had previously concentrated primarily on increasing productivity.

Confident of hitting $1 trillion exports target in FY27 : Goyal

HIMANSHI BHARDWAJ
New Delhi, 8 October

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that he was confident India would meet its $1 trillion target in exports in 2026-27 (FY27), despite global trade slowing. The target is nearly 16 per cent more than last year's record of $863 billion.

"I am confident looking at the first half numbers that we will get there," he said.

Speaking at the curtain raiser for the 31st CII Partnership Summit, Goyal said the target was being set at a time when global growth is expected to slip below 3 per cent and international trade is projected to grow only 2.5-3 per cent.

He credited the country's 63 million Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), global capability centres, and about 250,000 startups for the momentum. "It's not the government which has set the target, it is the people of India, the businesses of India," he added.



PHOTO: PTI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the economy is on track to reach $30 trillion by 2047

"India began building bridges when the world is building walls," the minister said. "We have set unto ourselves a big growth jump in exports and decided we will look at a trillion dollars of exports in the current year," Goyal added.

According to commerce ministry data, India's total exports between April and August this year are estimated at $399.27 billion.

Goyal said India had concluded nine free trade agreements (FTAs) with 38 developed countries in the past four and a half years. Together these countries account for $60 trillion of global gross domestic product (GDP), as compared to the FTAs signed with countries before 2014, which accounted for only $10 trillion of global GDP. "There was a time when we were afraid to engage with the developed world. We were defensive in our approach," he said.

He added that the agreements also open export markets for farm goods, marine products, and engineering and electronic goods made by small firms.

"Every agreement that we have entered into, protects the sensitive sectors, particularly of Indian agriculture, our fishermen, our MSMEs."

Pointing to the Reserve Bank of India's upgraded growth forecast of 7.1 per cent on Wednesday, Goyal said he expected growth of more than 7 per cent this year. He also said the economy is on track to grow from $4 trillion now to $30 trillion by 2047.

He urged the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to set up FTA utilisation desks in all its state councils, which would help MSMEs understand the market, access opportunities and rules of origin, and join trade delegations abroad.

Goyal said India would adopt the best global technologies rather than fear them. "Gone are the days when India would worry that new technologies may land up in creating job losses," he said.

"Today we have the courage of conviction that each of these technologies is going to provide new opportunities for our talented youth." He said opportunities would come through higher productivity, more competitive goods and services, and jobs in cybersecurity and application development.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, whose state hosts the summit in Visakhapatnam on November 12-13, said the state would launch an escrow account for industrial incentives at the event.

Naidu also listed a pipeline of upcoming projects, including 5 gigawatts (Gw) of additional data centre capacity in Visakhapatnam, a 10,000 acre semiconductor ecosystem in Tirupati, and a quantum computer launch at Amaravati in February 2027.

The state aims to export green hydrogen and ammonia, and plans to contribute atleast 160 Gw to India's 500 Gw renewable energy target, with about 110 Gw already underway.

Pesticides makers' body issues advisory for rabi sowing

Our Bureau
New Delhi

CropLife India, an industry body of pesticide manufacturers, has issued a four-point advisory to farmers for the Rabi 2026-27 season as sowing has commenced amid the weakest monsoon since 2015 that parched many areas and reduced moisture.

The industry body, in a statement, mentioned the judicious use of crop protection products to save on input costs without compromising on yields. "The advisory reflects established agronomic practice and is intended to help farmers make informed decisions at every stage of the rabi crop," it said.

On seed, the advisory identifies treatment before sowing as the most cost-effective safeguard against seed- and soil-borne diseases, including smut in wheat, which is aggravated by cool, moist conditions, and wilt and dry root rot in chickpea, which are aggravated by moisture stress and heat.

SOWING PRECAUTION

On sowing, it recommended termite treatment only in fields, with a history of infestation and where soil moisture is adequate for the treatment to be effective, and noted that mustard sown in the second fortnight of October, where moisture permits, faced lower aphid pressure at flowering.



The industry body mentioned judicious use of crop protection products to save on input costs

It advised that applications be guided by regular field monitoring rather than a fixed calendar; wheat aphids, for instance, warrant control only once they exceed 10-15 per tiller.

Unusual pest or disease outbreaks may be reported through the National Pest Surveillance System or the nearest Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

Farmers have been advised to purchase only from authorised dealers against a proper bill and also to verify the expiry date before use.

The association cautioned that a difficult season increased the risk of illicit products reaching farmers and reiterated its call for firm enforcement against unauthorised trade, including explicit regulation of online sales supported by licence verification and product traceability.

MONSOON IMPACT

"The weakest monsoon in over a decade has altered the starting conditions for rabi. Uneven soil moisture influences how crops establish, how pests and diseases behave and how effectively inputs perform, which means the decisions farmers take in the coming weeks will shape the entire season. The advisory is intended to help them make each of those decisions count. In a season such as this, precision is what safeguards both the harvest and the farmer's investment," said Durgesh Chandra, Secretary-General, CropLife India.

Four-fifths of budgeted fertiliser subsidy spent

Annual outgo likely to exceed ₹2.5 lakh crore

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, October 27

ELEVATED GLOBAL PRICES of finished products and LNG, the major feedstock for domestic urea production, resulted in the government spending over ₹1.32 lakh crore on fertiliser subsidies so far this fiscal year.

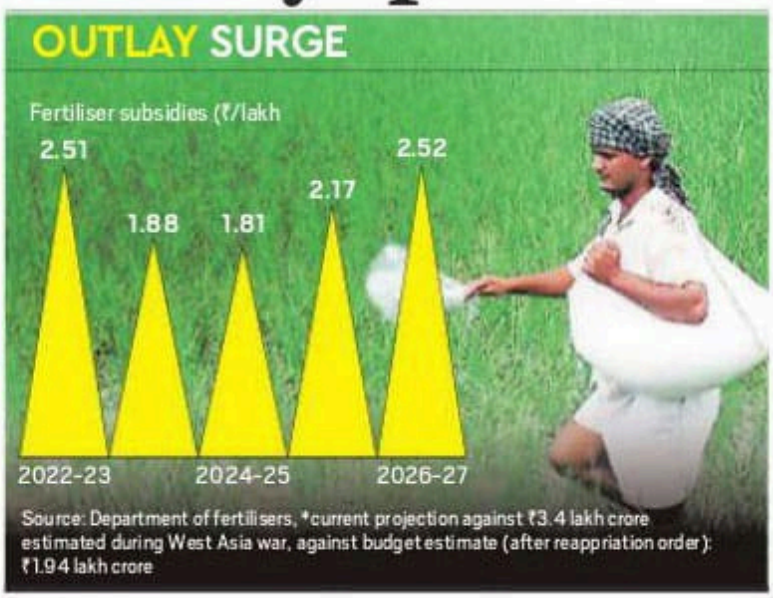
That's 77% of the budgeted fertiliser subsidy of ₹1.71 lakh crore for the year.

The fertiliser ministry's estimate of the subsidy requirement of the year after re-appropriation order currently stands at ₹1.94 lakh crore.

This estimate is likely to be revised further upwards.

Sources said that while urea prices fell from their peak in May, the overall subsidy outlay for soil nutrients is likely to exceed the previous record of ₹2.52 lakh crore in FY23.

According to sources, of the expenditure incurred, ₹92,251 crore has gone toward imports and domestic production of urea, the country's most consumed soil nutrient so far this fiscal year.



MP reduces fertiliser use by 11% via land-linked disbursal, saves ₹760 cr

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, October 28

IN A PIONEERING initiative, Madhya Pradesh has reduced fertiliser consumption to 3.2 million tonne (MT) in the kharif season, 2026, from 3.6 MT in previous year, by linking crops sown to land-holding.

The initiative e-Vikas covered all 5 million farmers in the state across 55 districts, and according to a senior state government official, has resulted in savings of ₹764 crore in terms of fertiliser subsidy outgo for the Centre in the kharif season 2026.

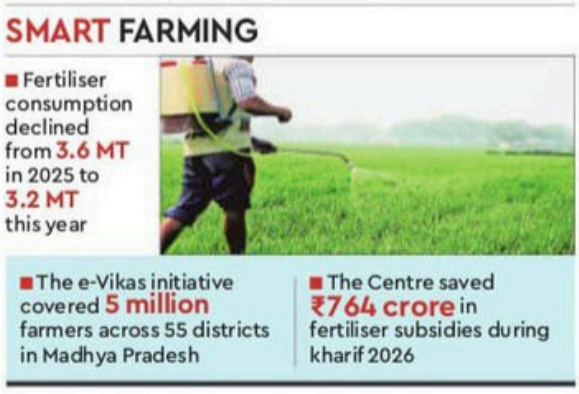
The biggest drop in fertiliser consumption was reported from maize and soyabean growing Rajgarh district, where sales of various soil nutrients -- urea, DAP and other soil nutrients -- dropped by 37% to 56,000 tonne from 93,000 tonne in the previous season. Predominantly paddy growing Hoshangabad district in the state reduced fertiliser consumption to 0.11 million tonne this year from 0.18 MT in kharif 2025.

Under the e-Vikas system, farmers in Madhya Pradesh receive digital tokens or e-coupons before purchasing fertilisers from distribution centres and the quantity of fertilisers allocated is based on land records, crop type, and seasonal requirements. Agriculture ministry officials say this system helps reduce overcrowding at fertiliser shops and improves transparency in distribution.

"Once a farmer's fertiliser purchase crosses 125% of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research recommendation based on area, crop size and soil type, we send a team to the concerned farmer regarding the need for purchasing excess urea or DAP against the requirement," Nishant Warwade, secretary, department of farmer welfare and agriculture development, Madhya Pradesh, told *FE*. To create awareness about the initiative, the Madhya Pradesh government conducted 700 training programme against the excessive use of fertilisers; even MLAs were trained on the initiative to generate awareness.

A similar initiative was taken on a pilot basis in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Telangana where Agri-stack fertiliser distribution was regulated using farmers digital registry.

Experts say this initiative may help improve balanced nutrient use in farming and reduce wasteful fertiliser consumption. Officials said the system uses digital tokens, QR codes, and crop-based allocation methods to distribute fertilisers more efficiently among farmers.



More Adoption of AgriPV Units will Bring Down their Cost: Joshi

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The cost of agrivoltaic solar energy units will reduce by scaling its adoption and the government looking to support them under the second phase of the solar pumps scheme Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM), renewable energy Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday.

The ministry is working on a policy framework to boost the adoption and iron out issues associated with its implementation.

Agrivoltaic projects work by elevating solar panels high above the ground or spacing them wide apart, which allows power generation without restricting farming.

Since elevated, tilted structures require additional infrastructure, agrivoltaic plants can cost 25-30% more than conventional ground-mounted solar.

"Our objective is to bridge this cost gap by supporting AgriPV capacity creation," Joshi said at the Agrivoltaics World Conference 2026 in the capital.

"The average cost of electricity supply was around ₹7/unit in 2025-26, while some agrivoltaic assessments indicate potential generation costs of ₹3.20 to ₹3.30/unit under specific assumptions."

This is still higher than the average cost of ground mounted solar which is around ₹2.6/unit.

The minister reiterated that the government was working to bring supporting measures and incentives for agrivoltaic projects under the second phase of PM KUSUM, which is currently in the works.

The govt is looking to support AgriPVs under the 2nd phase of the solar pumps scheme PM KUSUM

The idea for the proposed support under PM KUSUM 2.0 is to bridge the gap, secretary Santosh Kumar Sarangi said on the sidelines of the conference.

Study by TERI estimates that 47.5 million hectares, or around 30% of India's 160 million hectares of cropland, are technically suitable for agrivoltaics, Joshi said.

Minister Goyal reaffirms stronger trade relations with the Netherlands



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal with, Boudewijn Siemons, Chief Executive Officer of Port of Rotterdam

NEW DELHI

COMMERCE and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthen economic ties with the Netherlands, exploring new avenues for trade and investment, and deepening engagement with the Indian community.

His visit featured engagements with stakeholders in the maritime and logistics sector in Rotterdam, interaction with the Indian community in Amsterdam, and media engagement, according to an official statement.

Goyal undertook a tour of the Port of Rotterdam, accompanied by its Chief Executive Officer, Boudewijn Siemons.

The visit highlighted the strategic importance of Rotterdam, Europe's largest port, as a gateway for Indian goods to the European market and a key hub for international trade and global supply chains.

"We exchanged views on advancing port-led growth, enhancing logistics efficiency, strengthening supply chain connectivity, and unlocking new opportunities for trade and investment. As India modernises its existing ports and develops state-of-the-art maritime infrastructure, there is immense potential to collaborate with the Port of Rotterdam, draw on its expertise, and strengthen India-Netherlands cooperation," Goyal highlighted.

The Minister's visit to the Port of Rotterdam underscored the Netherlands' strategic importance as a gateway to Europe, particularly in the context of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement

The Minister's visit to the Port of Rotterdam underscored the Netherlands' strategic importance as a gateway to Europe, particularly in the context of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement.

With the Agreement expected to create significant new opportunities for Indian exporters, the Netherlands' world-class ports, logistics infrastructure and connectivity with European markets can play an important role in facilitating increased trade flows and strengthening India-Europe supply chains.

The minister also attended an Indian community interaction hosted by the Embassy of India at the Waldorf Astoria Amsterdam, with approximately 70 participants.

The gathering brought together members of the Indian community, including business and professional representatives, and provided an opportunity to engage with the diaspora, said the statement.

The engagement reaffirmed the importance of the Indian community in fostering closer connections between India and the Netherlands and in contributing to bilateral economic, cultural and people-to-people ties.

The programme also highlighted opportunities for stronger collaboration in maritime logistics and other areas of mutual interest, including in the context of the India-EU FTA and closer economic integration between India and Europe.

Fertilizer sales fall 28% under FFS pilot, help govt save ₹1,470 crore

VOLUME SLUMPS. In 222 districts, sales dropped to 13.35 lt in kharif 2026 from 18.3 lt a year ago

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

Under the Framework for Fertilizer Sales (FFS), launched in 222 districts across 29 States and Union Territories during Kharif 2026, fertilizer sales declined by 28 per cent, helping the government save ₹1,470 crore.

Under the scheme, farmers are eligible to buy subsidised crop nutrients based on their land holdings and the crops selected.

Also, the decline came despite more farmers purchasing fertilizers in kharif 2026 than in the year-ago period in the districts where the pilot was implemented.

WEAK RAIN IMPACT

According to a presentation made by Additional Secretary Pramod Kumar Meherda at the recently held annual Rabi Conference, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Karnataka, among the major agricultural States, reported a decline of up to 75 per cent in sales.



GROWING DEMAND. Nearly 47 lakh farmers purchased fertilizers — up from 44.55 lakh last year

Experts said that the drop in sales was also due to lower rainfall in some of these States. Meherda said that regulating sales through an app or online system had eliminated queues outside retail outlets as farmers receive a token indicating when they can collect the fertilizers.

POLICY RESISTANCE

Punjab and Madhya Pradesh were two important States missing from the list, as Punjab did not implement the pilot, while Madhya Pradesh discontinued it following protests by farmers.

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan defended the pilot when asked about Madhya Pradesh's decision to discontinue it. He said it was up to the States to decide as participation was not compulsory. However, he stressed that it was essential to reduce and check the excessive use of chemical fertilizers to protect soil health and prevent their diversion to non-farm uses, thereby reducing the subsidy burden.

As many as 46.97 lakh farmers in these pilot districts purchased fertilizers in Kharif 2026, compared with 44.55 lakh a year ago.

Similarly, sales stood at 13.35 lakh tonnes (lt) against 18.30 lt a year ago. Also, nearly 77 per cent of farmers had a digital Farmer ID (FID), while 15 per cent were tenant farmers, sources said.

Fertilizer Secretary Rajat Kumar Mishra last week appealed to the States to check the diversion of highly subsidised fertilizers for non-farming use and ensure that farmers practise balanced nutrient use based on soil conditions. He also said the States should promote organic and natural farming as much as possible.

While stressing that the opening stock of fertilizers in the country, as of October 1, would be the highest in three years, he urged the States to focus on curbing excess use of crop nutrients as the subsidy in the current fiscal could exceed ₹3 lakh crore amid high global prices.

At the annual Rabi conference, Mishra said due to the global price rise, the per-bag subsidy burden on urea (45 kg) had surged from ₹1,350 before the war (February 28, 2026) to ₹2,775 now — a 106 per cent increase.

Lift ban on sales of non-subsidised fertilizers in UP, Maharashtra, Bihar: FAI

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) has urged Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar to reconsider restrictions on the sale of non-subsidised fertilizers and speciality crop nutrition products by companies that supply subsidised fertilizers.

The restrictions, introduced in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra and more recently in Bihar, have affected farmers' access to specialised crop nutrition products covered under the Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), 1985, FAI said. The industry body warned that the restrictions during the current rabi season could affect farmers who rely on the products to meet crop- and soil-specific nutritional requirements. In a statement on Thursday, FAI called for a balanced approach that addresses concerns over inappropriate sales practices while ensuring farmers retain access to approved agricultural inputs.

CONVENTIONAL FERTILIZERS

Agriculture had expanded beyond conventional fertilizers to a wide range of science-based crop nutrition products, including micronutrients, water-soluble and beneficial-element fertilizers, liquid and organic-based inputs, biofertilizers, biostimulants and nano-fertilizers, FAI said.

"These products complement conventional fertilizers (urea, DAP, MoP) and are particularly relevant as Indian agriculture deals with multiple nutrient deficiencies, soil-health challenges, low nutrient and water-use efficiency and changing climatic conditions," it said.

Speciality products support balanced nutrient management and can improve nutrient-use efficiency, crop productivity and produce quality. FAI said the industry had invested significantly in research and product development, field extension, technical services and farmer outreach to develop and promote improved crop nutrition solutions.

Curbs on these products could discourage further investment and innovation, slowing the adoption of technologies aimed at improving nutrient-use efficiency and promoting sustainable farming practices, it said.

Farmers seek action over fertiliser shortage, booking

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Bhind

Farmers preparing for the rabi season are facing difficulties due to the shortage of fertilisers, with the online booking system adding to their problems. Farmers said they have been forced to wait for hours in queues for fertiliser, while the online system is proving difficult to access.

According to farmers, the fertiliser booking website remains open only for a few minutes before suddenly closing, leaving many unable to complete their bookings. They said the limited window makes it difficult to secure fertiliser.

The shortage has also led to allegations of fertiliser being sold above the prescribed rates. Farmers alleged that a urea bag priced at Rs 266 was being sold for Rs 500 to Rs 600, while more than Rs 2,000 was allegedly being charged for a bag of DAP. Farmers have demanded inspections of fertiliser stocks and sales in the area.

Farmers said preparations for rabi crops have already begun, with ploughing and sowing approaching. They said timely availability of fertiliser was essential at this stage and any delay could affect crops during their initial growth.

They also questioned the functioning of the online booking system, saying they were often unaware of when the website would open or how long bookings would remain available. Farmers from rural areas who are not comfortable with online procedures, they said, also need an alternative mechanism to obtain fertiliser.

Farmers have urged the administration to ensure adequate stocks and make the booking system stable and accessible. They also demanded regular checks of fertiliser dealers to ensure that stocks are properly maintained and fertiliser is sold at prescribed prices.

They called for technical monitoring of the online system to determine how long the booking portal remains open, how many farmers are able to complete bookings and how many are excluded because of technical problems.

Farmers said they need fertiliser during the crucial sowing period rather than assurances. They warned that if the shortage, alleged overcharging and online booking problems are not resolved quickly, the difficulties could directly affect preparations for the rabi crop.

Farmers have also sought clear information from the administration on fertiliser availability at distribution centres so they can plan their sowing schedules accordingly. They said a transparent system showing available stock, booking timings and distribution details would help reduce unnecessary queues and prevent farmers from repeatedly travelling to centres in search of fertiliser.

WATER | FIRST **State agriculture department advises farmers to avoid paddy from November**

El Nino threat looms over rabi season ahead

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 7

Telangana is set to face a rabi season that is drier and hotter than normal. Against this backdrop, the state agriculture department on Wednesday advised farmers to stay away from paddy during the rabi season beginning in November.

Agriculture secretary K. Surendra Mohan, during a video conference with district collectors, asked officials to encourage farmers to opt for irrigated dry (ID) crops such as pulses and oilseeds, which require less water. He said cultivation during the season would have to depend largely on available groundwater reserves.

"The IMD is predicting that rainfall during rabi will be 10 per cent below normal and temperatures will be around one degree Celsius higher in the coming months. Under these conditions, with lower water availability and a hotter climate, crops such as pulses and oilseeds will be the right choice for farmers," Surendra Mohan told *Deccan Chronicle* after the meeting.

He said the state government's efforts to encourage diversification away from paddy had yielded results during the kharif season, which will end later this month.

"Farmers planted about 11 lakh fewer acres of paddy during kharif, while cotton acreage increased by more than two lakh acres. The area under pulses increased by about 35 per cent. This was the result of repeated efforts to reach out to farmers and explain the risks of growing paddy during a poor monsoon season," he said.

According to the crop-area figures, oilseed acreage increased from 3.76 lakh acres last year to 3.97 lakh acres this year.

Surendra Mohan said the government wanted farmers opting for alternative crops to earn more than they would from paddy, even after taking into account the minimum support price and bonus.

"We are seeing farmers who raised pulses and oilseeds getting more than what they would have earned had they raised paddy," he said.

He said the combination of lower rainfall and higher temperatures would affect crops. "The irrigation department has been guiding us that whatever water is available in reservoirs will have to be conserved to meet drinking water needs and that it may not be able to provide irrigation. There is no alternative but to go for crops with low water requirements, such as pulses and oilseeds, this rabi," he said.

Underscoring the government's push away from paddy, scientists from the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, India Meteorological Department, Indian Institute of Rice Research, Indian Institute of Millets Research, Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research, Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University and Sri Konda Laxman Telangana Horticultural University participated in Wednesday's review.

Govt extends RELIEF scheme for exporters till March amid W. Asia crisis

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The Commerce Ministry has said the extension of the Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation (RELIEF) scheme by six months, until March 31, 2027, underscores the government's commitment to strengthening export resilience amid continuing geopolitical tensions and maritime logistics uncertainties.

Launched on March 19, RELIEF aims to cushion exporters against sharp increases in freight costs and insurance premia, as well as war-related export risks arising from disruptions in the Gulf and the wider West Asian maritime corridor, according to a Commerce Department statement issued on Monday. The latest extension follows an earlier extension of the scheme's timeline until September 30.



95% RISK COVER

"Component II of the initiative aims to encourage exporters to obtain Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) cover for upcoming shipments to specified regions by providing 95 per cent risk coverage. The benefit is available for standalone policies and whole-turnover policies obtained on or after March 16, 2026," the statement said.

Under this component, eligible exporters are protected against increases in insurance premia beyond pre-disruption levels during the eligible period. Coverage includes full container load (FCL), less than container load (LCL) and refrigerated (reefer) cargo, excluding energy shipments.

Some exporters have sought greater clarity on the documentation required to claim benefits under the scheme.

"We need more clarity on how to obtain shipping line bills that need to be submitted to avail of the scheme's benefits," a Mumbai-based exporter said.

The Commerce Department said exporters seeking coverage under RELIEF must submit claims and supporting documents through the ECGC customer portal.

Guidance on generating user IDs and passwords, completing exporter registration and submitting claims is available through dedicated video tutorials on ECGC's official YouTube channel, it added.

Bayer to distribute, market Inera's crop nutrition product

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Inera, the agricultural biotechnology arm of Absolute, and Bayer have entered into a strategic commercial collaboration to bring a climate-resilient crop nutrition solution to farmers.

The solution aims to improve nutrient use efficiency (NUE) and enhance soil and plant health.

Absolute's NIP platform houses over 35,000 unique microbial strains, biomolecules and enzymes sourced and characterised from extreme habitats worldwide, Inera said in a statement.

AI PLATFORM

Its AI platform, Nature+, analyses biological datasets to predict functions, identify promising molecules and proteins, and design candidates for experimental validation, product development and field trials.

Together, the platforms underpin Inera's agricultural innovation pipeline, which includes RNAi-based biocontrols, peptide-based inputs and AI-discovered bioherbicides designed for performance and stability.

Commercial engagement between the companies has begun, with Bayer set to market and distribute the Inera product through its sales network.

FIELD TRIALS

Inera's development efforts are backed by more than 50,000 field trials and farmer demonstrations across over 100 acres of dedicated trial grounds, which the company describes as among the largest programmes of its kind in India.

Agam Khare, Founder of Absolute, said the collaboration would help make homegrown biological solutions more accessible to farmers.

Inera focuses on solutions that support climate adaptation, biological pest control, soil health and nutrient use efficiency, he added.

Simon Wiebusch, Country Divisional Head of Bayer's Crop Science Division for India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, said that the partnership would combine Inera's expertise in biological solutions with Bayer's understanding of farmers' needs, agronomic capabilities and ability to scale innovation.

The collaboration comes amid growing interest in agricultural biologicals in India and aligns with national initiatives, such as the PM-Pranam scheme and the BioE3 policy.

India, Canada discuss advancing trade talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, October 13

INDIA AND CANADA on Tuesday discussed advancing negotiations for the proposed trade pact to provide deeper market access for each other's goods and services.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and his Canadian counterpart, Maninder Sidh, held the discussions.

"Discussed advancing the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations, with a focus on a balanced, mutually beneficial agreement that enhances market access and unlocks new trade and investment opportunities," Goyal said in a social media post.

He expressed confidence that the CEPA will provide fresh momentum to bilateral trade and strengthen our economic partnership for shared prosperity.

The minister, however, did not state any details about the discussions.

CEPA is a kind of free trade agreement, under which two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate import duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. It also eases norms to boost trade in services and investment.

The meeting was important, as India and Canada's chief negotiators concluded the fifth round of negotiations for the pact on October 9 in Canada.

Both sides aim to conclude the negotiations by the end of this year.

Bilateral trade in goods declined 8.23% to $7.95 billion in 2025-26 from $8.7 billion in 2024-25.

Agriculture dept tightens fertiliser enforcement during kharif

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE agriculture department has intensified enforcement of Fertiliser Control Order (FCO) regulations during the kharif season, seizing fertilisers worth Rs 5.18 crore and taking action against dealers involved in diversion, black marketing, illegal stocking, overpricing and linking fertiliser sales with other agricultural products.

Agriculture department director Dr Manazir Jeelani Samoon said on Monday that the kharif season, which concluded on September 30, witnessed extensive monitoring of fertiliser movement and distribution across the state. The enforcement drive was aimed at ensuring that fertilisers reached farmers without diversion or malpractice, he said. During the season, 27.07 lakh farmers were supplied with 5,30,320 metric tonnes (MT) of urea, 1,75,657 MT of DAP and 1,27,203 MT of complex fertilisers. Officials seized 2,371 MT of fertilisers valued at Rs 5.18 crore across the State. The highest-value seizures were reported in Kurnool at Rs.1.36 crore, followed by Manyam at Rs.1.06 crore and Anantapur at Rs.0.99 crore.

The department suspended 292 dealer licences and cancelled eight licences. Nandyal accounted for the highest number of suspensions at 71, followed by Guntur with 44 and Anantapur with 32. Officials also registered 67 cases under Section 6A, including 16 in Kurnool, the highest in the State. Seven FIRs were registered against persons for serious violations.

Dr Samoon said the department had adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards fertiliser diversion, black marketing and other unfair trade practices. Monitoring of the supply chain would continue to ensure fertiliser availability at prescribed prices and prevent linked sales, he said.

He urged farmers to report overcharging or compulsory purchase of other products while buying fertilisers to the local agriculture department officials.

For the rabi season, Dr Samoon advised farmers to follow soil-test recommendations and apply fertilisers in balanced quantities according to crop requirements. He also encouraged farmers to adopt organic and natural farming practices wherever feasible to improve soil health and reduce cultivation costs.

India-Chile FTA negotiations 'quite ripe' for conclusion, says Goyal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Hague, October 27

India is negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with several countries and groups, with talks with Chile "quite ripe" for conclusion and negotiations with Canada making good progress, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

He said that negotiations with the South Africa-led SACU (Southern African Customs Union) group have started. The two have inked terms of reference (ToR) to formally start negotiations towards a preferential trade agreement in August. The five members of SACU are Botswana, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa.

"I can see Chile's quite ripe for conclusion; Canada is making very good progress. We have just started SACU negotiations, so it may take some time (for conclusion)," Goyal told reporters here.

Talking about other pacts, he said Mexico is "very" keen to have an early harvest trade agreement.

Meanwhile, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal is in Mexico City for a two-day visit to advance India-Mexico trade and economic ties. "The visit will see the launch of PTA negotiations with the signing of the Terms of Reference (ToR), alongside engagements with the Mexican government and business community to deepen bilateral cooperation," the department of commerce said in a social media post.

The bilateral trade between India and Mexico dipped by over 9 per cent to $7.83 billion (exports $5.72 billion and imports $2.1 billion) in 2025-26. The trade gap is in the favour of India.

Goyal expressed hope that the continuity of the government in Brazil following the election would help speed up negotiations to expand the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with the Mercosur bloc.

Mercosur is a trade bloc in South America comprising Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay. The India-Mercosur PTA came into effect on June 1, 2009. The agreement provides preferential tariff concessions on 450 tariff lines or product categories by India and 452 tariff lines by the Mercosur side. Now both sides are looking to expand the scope of the pact.

He added that negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Israel for "obvious" reasons are slow due to the West Asia crisis, and it may take some time. "Though we are ready to speed up negotiations," he said.

The GCC comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE and was established in 1981 as a political, economic and security grouping. India already has a trade pact with the UAE and Oman.

"Eurasia FTA is only about goods; it doesn't include services. Hence, we are still assessing the benefits of entering into that agreement," Goyal said.

India and the five-nation grouping, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), on August 20 last year, inked the terms of reference to formally start talks for the agreement. The first round of negotiations was held in November 2025.

"Many other countries are talking to us. Ecuador (a South American nation) wants to do an FTA. Egypt has invited us to Egypt to discuss potentially how we can work more. Other African countries have been approaching us, either to have an FTA with all of Africa, or with the African Union or the sectoral FTA's," he said.

India to convert gas-fuelled ammonia and urea plant to renewable power

NEW DELHI

INDIA will convert an existing natural gas fuelled ammonia and urea plant to run on renewable power, creating one of the world's largest green ammonia plants with an annual output target of about 1.1 million tonnes, a new report has said.

The report from Singapore-based Asian Power (AP) said the project will be developed by AM Green Ammonia (India) Private Limited and is backed by financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan.

It marks their first joint investment under the Action for Creating Energy Security for Long-term Resilience (ACCEL).

ACCEL was launched by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Japan in May 2026 as a joint initiative that helps Asia-Pacific nations and businesses handle high energy costs, fuel swings, and supply limits.

The financing includes a $100 million loan from the Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund 2, financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and administered by ADB, the report said.

"By using renewable energy instead of fossil fuels, India can produce it with far lower emissions and at a scale that can help reshape this industry," the publication cited ADB President Masato Kanda.

"The initiative has two tracks: short-term support for corporate liquidity, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, and longer-term support for more diversified and sustainable energy systems," the report said.

ACCEL brings together financial support and investment to help countries manage immediate shocks and build stronger energy systems for the future, a statement from ADB said.

India has crossed 300 GW of installed non-fossil fuel-based electricity generation capacity as of July 2026, with around 55.29 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity during FY26.

The country has also set a target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030. Solar and wind energy are going to make major contributions towards achieving this target.



DIGITAL AGRICULTURE MISSION

Govt issues 110 mn farmer IDs linked to land records

IDs issued five months ahead of deadline

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, October 24

IN A MAJOR boost to digital infrastructure, 110 million unique farmer IDs linked to land records have been generated under the Digital Agriculture Mission, according to the agriculture ministry.

The government has achieved its target of creating farmer IDs referred to as Kisan Pehchaan Patra, containing the details of the farmers' land holding, crops grown in the field and other details across the country five months ahead of the March 2027 deadline, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in a statement on Saturday. The digital agriculture mission was approved by the cabinet in September, 2024. States which have provided a significant number of IDs to farmers include Uttar Pradesh (25.5 million), Maharashtra (14.1 million), Madhya Pradesh (12 million), Rajasthan (9.1 million), Gujarat (6.4 million), Telangana (5.4 million), Andhra Pradesh (5.2 million), Tamil Nadu (3.6 million) and Odisha (2.51 million). As per the agriculture census of 2015-16, these IDs cover over 75% of the total operational land holding in the country, says an official note. With the exception of Jharkhand, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Mizoram, ID issuance has been initiated across states. About 81% farmers, who were provided with digital IDs, belong to marginal and small operational-holding categories.

An official told *FE* that 28,680 cultivators, including eligible tenants and sharecroppers, have been registered in Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Assam, as per the state-decided mechanism for identification of cultivators. Additionally, 0.31 million forest rights holder registrations have been recorded across Assam, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Tripura. Chouhan said the farmer ID system would significantly reduce the need for farmers to repeatedly visit government offices and banks or submit the same documents for different schemes.

With farmer IDs, they can have access to several key services including bank loans and issuance of Kisan credit cards, an official said. "It enables the integration of Direct Benefit Transfer schemes such as registrations under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna (PM Kisan), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna, Minimum Support Price (MSP) based procurement, access to credit delivery, input distribution, and disaster relief," a government statement in parliament said. The digital system also helps eliminate the role of intermediaries in the government's procurement process and ensures that farmers receive the full value due for their produce.

Officials said that these farmers' IDs are being extensively integrated with the Integrated Fertiliser Management System of the Department of Fertilisers through an integrated information technology platform accessible through mobile and web interfaces. The Framework for Fertiliser Sales, according to an official noted, has led to over 37% reduction in fertiliser sales in select border districts between the kharif seasons of 2025 and 2026.

The agriculture ministry's initiative to develop a database of farmers is based on Karnataka's Fruits Farmer Registration & Unified Beneficiary Information System software which facilitates single registration using an Aadhar card and state's Bhoomi digitised land record system for authenticating ownership. In Karnataka, through FRUITS software, farmers can access benefits of schemes such as cash incentives under PM Kisan, payment for MSP for crops, special financial assistance, caste certificate authentication, and ration cards.

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN,
AGRICULTURE MINISTER

The farmer ID system would significantly reduce the need for farmers to repeatedly visit govt offices and banks or submit the same documents for different schemes



■ These IDs cover over **75%** of the total operational land holding in the country

28,680 eligible cultivators, have been registered

Govt to ask ryots to shift from paddy to short-duration crops

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File photo



Farmers with adequate irrigation facilities and assured water supplies can continue with rice cultivation, said the agriculture department

Panaji: With Goa recording its driest monsoon in five decades and rainfall falling nearly a third below normal, the agriculture department is preparing to advise farmers in water-stressed areas to reconsider paddy cultivation during the upcoming rabi season and opt for short-duration vegetables and pulses instead.

Director of agriculture Chandrahas Desai said the department would issue an advisory guiding farmers to choose crops according to the availability of water, warning that a further lack of rainfall could lead to a shortage of irrigation water.

"Wherever there is a shortage of water, farmers can go for pulses and vegetables, which have a short growth duration of around 60 days. Wherever sufficient water is available, they can go for paddy," Desai told **TOI**.

The proposed advisory comes at a juncture with the state having received substantially less rainfall than normal during this monsoon season. "Rainfall is deficient by around 35%. If we do not receive sufficient post-monsoon rainfall, there could be a scarcity of irrigation water," he said.

TOI had earlier reported that Goa received approximately 2,055.4 mm of rainfall from June to Sept, against the seasonal normal of 3,007.8 mm, translating into a deficit of nearly 32%, according to India Meteorological Department data. The shortfall has been described as the highest in the state's rainfall records dating back to 1980.

The consequences have already been felt in paddy fields, particularly in upland areas where farmers depend heavily on rainfall. The agriculture department's preliminary assessment has so far indicated crop damage across around 25 hectares of land.

The department's proposed advisory is intended to prevent farmers in water-deficient areas from investing in crops that may not receive adequate irrigation.

"We will promote short-duration paddy varieties for the Rabi crop, where conditions permit cultivation. The selection of varieties and crops would depend on the water available in individual farming areas," Desai said.

The advisory, however, is not a blanket recommendation to abandon paddy cultivation across Goa. "Farmers with adequate irrigation facilities and assured water supplies can continue with rice cultivation, while those in water-stressed locations are being encouraged to consider alternatives," he said.

The rainfall shortfall has also prompted state govt to constitute a 10-member task force headed by chief minister Pramod Sawant to monitor water availability, rising temperatures and climate-related concerns. The panel is expected to meet monthly to assess the evolving situation and coordinate responses across departments.

India-EU trade deal likely to create up to 2 mn jobs by 2040

BIG BOON TO TRADERS

- India-EU bilateral trade reached $136 bn in 2024-25
- Trade deal offers tariff concessions on 92.2% of items, covering 99.6% of India's exports
- Sectors such as pharma, textiles, chemicals, jewellery, processed foods to
- benefit from the deal



NEW DELHI

THE India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement is likely to generate between 1 million and 2 million new direct and indirect jobs in India by 2040 while boosting industrial competitiveness and attracting high quality investment, an industry chamber said on Friday.

As the India– European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) completed its first year, the statement from Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) said the pact carries a commitment from EFTA to facilitate $100 billion of investment in India over 15 years, including $50 billion in the first decade.

"The commitment must be converted into real projects, manufacturing facilities, clean-energy ventures and employment opportunities. Advanced manufacturing and green hydrogen are expected to drive this next phase," the statement noted.

The pact saw a confident beginning for India's partnership with Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. It is steadily evolving from a trade agreement into a platform for investment, innovation and jobs.

"The next step is to translate TEPA's ambition of $100 billion in investment and one million direct jobs into viable projects and employment opportunities," said Nirmal K. Minda, President, ASSOCHAM. "Advanced manufacturing and green hydrogen offer great potential, and MSMEs must be an integral part of these partnerships," Minda added.

TEPA has opened wider market access for Indian exporters, the statement said, adding that EFTA has offered tariff concessions on 92.2 per cent of its tariff lines, covering 99.6 per cent of India's exports.

The industry chamber forecasted sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, engineering goods, chemicals, jewellery, processed foods and marine products to benefit from the momentum. Meanwhile, India's commitments protect sensitive sectors including dairy, soya and coal.

Bilateral trade has reached $26.7 billion, creating a strong base for further expansion. EFTA's annual imports of about $628 billion from the world present a major opportunity for Indian businesses.

"India's 8.9 per cent share of its organic chemicals imports shows what is possible, and this can be replicated in pharmaceuticals, machinery, electrical equipment, automobiles, medical devices and textiles," said Saurabh Sanyal, Secretary General, ASSOCHAM.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and states in the North East can benefit from exports of agro-products, seafood, coffee and spices, while TEPA also offers opportunities for large industries as well as MSMEs, start-ups and farmers.

"Green hydrogen is an emerging area for cooperation. India's target to produce at least five million tonnes annually by 2030 aligns well with Norway's maritime technology, Iceland's geothermal strength and Switzerland's electrolyser expertise," the statement noted.

Over 519 lakh metric tons of paddy procured from 80 lakh farmers in UP: CM Yogi

STATES MAN NEWS SERVICE
Lucknow, 10 October



HE SAID THE MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP) FOR PADDY HAD ALSO BEEN INCREASED BY RS 71 PER QUINTAL THIS YEAR TO ENSURE REMUNERATIVE PRICES FOR FARMERS' PRODUCE. SHARING A POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA ON SATURDAY, THE CM SAID THAT UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI, THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING FACILITIES TO FARMERS FROM SEED TO MARKET.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that between 2017 and March 2026, more than 519 lakh metric tonnes of paddy has been procured from over 80 lakh farmers in the state, with payments totalling Rs 1,03,833 crore made directly to them.

He said the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy had also been increased by Rs 71 per quintal this year to ensure remunerative prices for farmers' produce. Sharing a post on social media on Saturday, the CM said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state government is providing facilities to farmers from seed to market.

He said that before 2017, farmers struggled with debt, poverty and middlemen, but were now benefiting from improved seeds, irrigation facilities, MSP-based procurement, direct benefit transfers (DBT) and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

Yogi said irrigation projects that had remained pending for decades have been completed in the state. Uttar Pradesh contributes approximately 21 per cent of the country's total foodgrain production, he added.

According to him, the state's agricultural growth rate has increased from eight percent to 18 percent. Uttar Pradesh also ranks first in the country in milk, sugarcane, and wheat production.

The CM said that farmers are the foundation of the state's economic strength and prosperity. The government is working to respect farmers' hard work, ensure fair prices for their produce, and strengthen the agricultural sector.

He said that protecting farmers' rights and ensuring their prosperity is the state government's priority. Efforts are being made to benefit farmers through irrigation, improved seeds, government procurement, and direct payment systems.

Bumper paddy yield a procurement challenge

Production of non-basmati paddy may exceed 220 lakh tonnes this season against 180-lakh tonne quota fixed by Centre

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Labourers load bags of paddy into a truck at the New Grain Market, in Patiala. ANI FILE

CHANDIGARH : Punjab is heading towards a challenging paddy procurement season, with the state's expected production likely to exceed the procurement quota of 180 lakh tonne fixed by the Union ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution.

The state's total non-basmati paddy production — which is procured by government agencies for the public distribution system — is expected to exceed 220 lakh tonnes this season. Given the historical trend of around 90% of the total production reaching mandis for procurement, the quantity arriving in the markets could surpass the Centre's approved quota, putting pressure on the state's procurement machinery and finances.

"The procurement scenario seems tougher this season, as we have been signalled by the Union ministry that the crop beyond the defined quota will not be accepted. We hope to stay within the limits; otherwise, we will seek an extension," a senior official in the Punjab food and civil supplies department said.

Haryana experience raises concerns

The state government's concerns have been heightened by the Centre's handling of excess paddy procurement in Haryana during the previous season. Against a quota of 36 lakh tonnes, Haryana procured 62 lakh tonnes in 2025, exceeding its approved limit by 26 lakh tonnes.

The Centre's refusal to accept the additional quantity has served as a warning for Punjab, which is now preparing to manage a potentially similar situation.

For the current season, Haryana has been allocated a procurement quota of 59 lakh tonnes.

Punjab officials believe the Centre's approach towards Haryana indicates that exceeding the approved procurement limit could create serious complications for the state.

Initially, the Centre had fixed Punjab's procurement target at 156 lakh tonnes, equivalent to the quantity procured during the previous season. Following representations by the state government, the Centre considered the average procurement over three years and revised the target to 171 lakh tonnes.

The state food department subsequently sought a further increase, following which Punjab was permitted to procure 180 lakh tonnes.

The state may have to approach the Centre again if the actual procurement exceeds the sanctioned limit. Such a request could involve revising the procurement quota and increasing the financial arrangements required to purchase the additional grain at the minimum support price (MSP).

Paddy yield rises by nearly 9 quintals per hectare

"According to the results of crop-cutting experiments, the production is 67.35 quintals against last season's production of 58.6 quintals per hectare. We are expecting a bumper harvest of 220 lakh tonnes or maybe more," Punjab agriculture director Gurjeet Singh Brar said.

Punjab cultivated paddy over 32.76 lakh hectares during the current kharif season. Of this, approximately 6.5 lakh hectares were under premium basmati varieties, which are not procured by government agencies for the public distribution system. Consequently, around 26.25 lakh hectares fall under the non-basmati paddy area generally covered by government procurement at the MSP.

Favourable factors for high yield

Explaining the increase in paddy production, former Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) vice-chancellor BS Dhillon said Punjab could witness higher crop output even during drought conditions because of several favourable factors.

According to Dhillon, increased sunshine, reduced incidence of diseases, lower nutrient leaching and the availability of adequate irrigation water can contribute to higher yields despite deficient rainfall. He said the authorities would have to determine how best to procure and manage the additional grain generated by the bumper crop.

PAU director of extension Makhan Singh Bhullar said increased paddy production creates additional challenges for the government.

Existing rice stocks add to storage woes

Punjab's procurement concerns extend beyond the immediate challenge of purchasing the current crop. The state's godowns already hold approximately 150 lakh tonnes of rice from the previous three seasons.

With the current season's procurement expected to generate at least another 120 lakh tonnes of rice, the total stock could increase substantially, adding to the pressure on storage facilities and grain management arrangements.

Punjab has cash credit limit of ₹42,786 cr

To facilitate procurement, Punjab has been sanctioned a cash credit limit (CCL) of ₹42,786.68 crore to purchase 180 lakh tonnes of paddy, pay farmers the MSP of ₹2,441 per quintal and meet administrative expenses.

However, if arrivals exceed the approved procurement quantity, the state may have to seek an increase in the CCL to finance the purchase of additional paddy.

According to Varinder Sharma, director of the Punjab food and civil supplies department, they have received an assessment from the agriculture department indicating that arrivals would remain within the approved limit, and arrangements were made accordingly.

"We are taking all caution so that nothing from outside the state is allowed in Punjab mandis and the state farmers are able to sell their produce," Sharma said.

Agri experts advise farmers to cultivate rabi crops early

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Margao: With scanty and erratic rainfall already denting this year's kharif harvest, agricultural experts have advised farmers to start rabi cultivation at the earliest, while the soil still holds moisture, and to switch to pulses and other low-water crops. They also want the agriculture department to set up demonstration plots for such crops to give farmers confidence.

The experts said the window is short. The recent showers have restored some moisture, but if sowing is delayed by 20 days to a month, the soil will dry out and seeds will not germinate.

Fr George Quadros of Don Bosco Loutolim Society estimated that about one-third of the paddy area was affected, including fields where farmers did not plant because of the late and erratic rain.

"The higher areas will not have the production because they rely totally on the rain that was absent," he said, adding that low-lying fields, where most of Goa's paddy is grown, will be spared.

According to the Economic Survey 2025-26, in 2024-25, kharif paddy production fell to 77,768 tonnes from 1,01,688 tonnes the previous year, with average yield dropping from 4,335 to 3,257 kg per hectare. Rabi paddy was steadier at 37,110 tonnes, and total paddy production slipped to 1,14,878 tonnes from 1,42,056 tonnes. The Survey's figures show rabi pulses on 3,829 ha produced 3,539 tonnes, and vegetables from 8,863 ha yielded 1,10,880 tonnes.

TOI



The recent rain has restored some moisture, but if sowing is delayed by a month, the soil will dry out and seeds will not germinate, said experts

Former director of agriculture Nevil Afonso agreed that kharif has been hit this year only in areas where crops were sown late. While he said kharif yield will be greatly reduced, the rabi crop may not be affected if water bodies get filled by the post-monsoon rainfall.

Quadros was more pessimistic about paddy in the rabi season that depends entirely on water bodies as some lakes were not desilted and some bunds were closed too late to harvest water. He foresees rabi paddy falling by as much as 50% on average. Areas such as Curtorim, the granary of Salcete, are an exception, he said, as the bunds there were closed early and the lakes are full.

For farmers who cannot grow paddy this rabi, the experts suggested alternatives. Sachin Tendulkar, an agro researcher, recommended short-duration crops like moong, which thrive on residual moisture. He also suggested bajra, which doubles as fodder, and said farmers need not limit themselves to field crops, as ancillary crops are an option.

"Farmers should go in for rabi crop now when there is enough residual moisture. Also the dew in the air will add to the soil moisture," he said.

Afonso explained the usual rabi pattern. After harvesting kharif paddy, farmers go for vegetables or chawli (black-eyed pea). Chawli is grown on sandy soils with good water-holding capacity and survives on the little moisture in the soil. Watermelon is grown the same way in Nuvem, Majorda and Cansaulim, whereas hinterland farmers must water regularly. In hilly areas, farmers depend on streams, ponds, wells and, in parts of South Goa, the Selaulim dam. The other main pattern is vegetables, about 80% of which is chilli, along with radish, onion and others. Many fields in Salcete are irrigated from lakes, and vegetable cultivation needs enough water in streams, lakes and nallahs, he said.

Tendulkar said the department must back the shift to alternate crops. "Adequate demo plots should be set up by the agriculture department to promote crop change," he said. He asked the department to plan alternate crop selection and to bear the input costs of demo plots so that farmers are willing to take the risk.

The experts also picked holes in Goa's water management. Quadros said no preparations were made for a poor season and that farmers were caught unprepared. He wants govt to invest in ponds and water preservation through village-based plans drawn up with farmers and tenants, rather than a top-down scheme. Funds, he said, should go only to villages with good planning and execution.

Tendulkar said water distribution societies exist "just for name's sake" and have not been revived or strengthened. He called for a water audit to establish how much of the water released is actually used and where it leaks. He also suggested a citizen alert system, on the lines of the traffic or garbage sentinel schemes, for reporting leaks so they are fixed immediately. Revival of traditional water conservation techniques would help make fields self-sufficient, he said.

Afonso called for long-term water conservation measures backed by community support.

'Restoring degraded landscapes can boost rural income'

AJ Vinayak
Mangaluru

Restoring degraded landscapes can be a viable strategy for improving rural incomes, provided restoration is planned and steered by local communities with an aim to enhance livelihoods and the sustainable use of natural resources, according to Ruchika Singh, Executive Programme Director - Food, Land and Water, WRI India.

She said that almost of half of India's agricultural soils have poor soil health and low soil organic carbon impacting agricultural productivity. This is due to excessive use of chemical fertilisers, monoculture of crops, soil erosion, etc.

WRI India works with district administration and local communities in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district to bring water and greenery back to farms and forests. In Maharashtra, it is working with tribal villages in Korchi block of Gadchiroli district on a plan to restore their forests, farms and water sources.

In an e-interaction with *businessline*, Singh said the experiences of Gadchiroli and Sidhi highlight the importance of an integrated landscape approach that links ecological restoration with agricultural productivity, livelihood security and local enterprise development.

AIDING INTERVENTIONS

Practical interventions such as bringing rice fallows under cultivation, promoting agri-horti forestry, scaling nutri gardens (home gardens for nutritional security), adopting integrated nutrient and pest management strategies, water efficient paddy cultivation, tree-based interventions, and conservation and management of water sources have the potential to increase cropping intensity, address food and nutrition security gaps, contribute to the flow of key ecosystem services and generate additional livelihoods while restoring landscapes and building resilient communities in Gadchiroli.

A key lesson that can be replicated across districts is the need to align restoration opportunities with local development priorities, strengthen community institutions, converge public financing and build viable market linkages for restoration-associated products.

Stating that restoration interventions cannot be replicated uniformly, she said they must respond to local ecological conditions, land-use and ownership considerations, available natural resources, community priorities and existing livelihood systems.

Gadchiroli's predominantly rain-fed agriculture, forest resources and post-monsoon water stress require a context-specific combination of agricultural, forest and water-management interventions, she said.

A carbon market for agri-based income



SHASHANK PANDEY

The author is a 1991 Fellow with Mercatus Centre at George Mason University, Washington DC. He is working on the carbon market operation in Uttar Pradesh

The Aadi private carbon project, which has paid farmers for something they could prove, has set a benchmark that is as much legal as agronomic

ON SEPTEMBER 17, the director general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), in Ludhiana, initiated direct benefit transfers of over ₹2.9 crore to 2,550 farmers in Punjab and Haryana. The money was payment for carbon stored in their soil. Between 2019 and 2022, these farmers adopted direct-seeded rice, reduced tillage, and residue management under the Aadi programme, a private carbon project run by GrowIndigo, with technical guidance from ICAR, and registered with Verra under its agricultural land management methodology. The first issuance covered about 30,000 acres and produced more than 50,000 credits—individual farmers received between ₹3,000 and ₹15,000, depending on the credits verified from their own fields.

The transfer of funds is significant for the future of the agriculture-based carbon credit market in India. This is one of the first instances where an Indian farmer has been paid, through a traceable public process, for a measured environmental outcome rather than for acreage or inputs. Three features of the transaction deserve attention, because together they describe what a credible farm carbon market requires, and because much of what is being built elsewhere in the country does not yet meet that standard.

The first is that payment was done post-measurement. The practice was adopted in 2019, and the credits were issued in 2026; the funds were released only after independent verification. Farmers waited seven years to receive payment, highlighting one of the biggest barriers to the carbon market: delay. But the delay is a normal incident of the existing domestic carbon market. A carbon credit represents a tonne of CO_2 that would otherwise be in the atmosphere, and the market for it depends on the claim being demonstrable. Farmers with similar holdings received different amounts because their fields sequestered different quantities, which is precisely how an outcome-based instrument should behave. Compare the tendency across several state programmes to announce projected credit volumes and rupee values years before any issuance. Uttar Pradesh's agroforestry scheme has publicised 42 lakh credits and ₹202 crore, while the registry entries for its six forest circle projects record annual estimates that are a small fraction of that figure; actual disbursement is in the region of ₹50 lakh. Projection is not a substitute for verification, and a market that confuses the two will discount everything that comes out of it.

> **The project will be judged on whether its second monitoring cycle, covering farmers who joined after 2022, holds up under scrutiny**

The second is that the terms were disclosed. The ministry's statement recorded the acreage, the number of credits, the per-farmer range, and the revenue-sharing arrangement: farmers could choose an assured upfront payment, funded by the developer before the credits were sold, or 75% of net proceeds after sale. That contract can be evaluated by farmers. Most Indian farm carbon arrangements, state and private, disclose none of it. The rate per credit, share retained by the aggregator and the verifier, treatment of advances on failure, and forum for disputes remain unpublished, and the enrolment instrument itself is rarely available. A cultivator who commits land to a 20-year crediting period on those terms is not a participant in a market. He is a supplier of a commodity, whose price he does not know, to a buyer he cannot identify. Disclosure of the kind seen in Ludhiana should be the minimum condition of any programme that describes itself as farmer-centric.

The third is the division of labour. Aadi is a private project, but its measurement protocols, soil sampling, and remote sensing were developed through agricultural universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras; a public official initiated the transfer through the DBT architecture. The state supplied scientific credibility and payment infrastructure; the developer supplied aggregation, capital, and market access. This is a more defensible structure than either of the alternatives now in circulation, like a state forest department acting as project proponent, aggregator, and seller of credits generated on private land, as in Uttar Pradesh. It concentrates every role in one office and leaves the farmer's legal entitlement to the carbon resting on an unpublished form. A purely private aggregator with no public scientific anchor, as in several grouped projects now listing across the Indo-Gangetic plain, leaves consent and measurement to the developer's discretion, and recent field reporting from Uttar Pradesh found village heads unaware of projects enrolled in their jurisdictions.

None of this makes Aadi a complete model. It sits in the voluntary market, outside the offset mechanism of the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme whose start-date rule excludes projects that began before January 2025. It relies on a single standard's methodology. And soil carbon is among the more contested credit types globally, because reversal is easy and measurement is expensive. The programme will be judged on whether its second monitoring cycle, covering farmers who joined after 2022, holds up under scrutiny.

But it has set a benchmark, which is as much legal as agronomic. Any farm carbon programme in India should now be expected to pay against verified issuance, disclose its terms before enrolment, and separate the functions of scientific measurement, aggregation, and payment. The Model Rules for Felling of Trees in Agricultural Lands, issued in June 2025, already give states a registry framework for trees on farmland; a comparable parcel-level register for soil carbon is the obvious next step, and the Centre's agriculture carbon framework should require it. The farmers in Ludhiana were paid for something they could prove. That should be the rule, not the exception.

T explores sat tech to optimise fertilizer use

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Hyderabad: Telangana is exploring satellite-based technology to assess soil nutrient availability and provide fertilizer-use recommendations to 70 lakh farmers in view of the anticipated impact of El Nino.

At a review meeting at the secretariat on Wednesday, minister Tummala Nageswara Rao discussed a digital agriculture system presented by German representatives.

Using satellite data and AI, the technology estimates nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and other nutrients in soil, enabling recommendations tailored to crop requirements.

Representatives said the system could identify excessive fertiliser use and nutrient deficiencies, with comprehensive information on fertiliser consumption. Tummala said farmers depended on urea and NPK fertilizers, stressing the need to promote balanced nutrient application.

Fertiliser security is food security, and BRICS offers India a way to strengthen both



SS YADAV



From the Red Fort on 15 August, the Prime Minister drew attention to the strategic importance of ensuring affordable access to fertilisers amid rising global costs and growing geopolitical uncertainties—a reality well understood by those working across the fertiliser industry. He noted that the Government has absorbed massive costs to provide internationally priced urea costing around ₹3,000 for less than ₹300, and DAP costing over ₹5,000 for just ₹1,350. He further added that essential resources are increasingly being weaponised in the world today.

That difference of nearly ₹2,700 on a single bag of urea is, in the first instance, a measure of protection. It is the reason a farmer in Bundelkhand or Bolangir can plan a sowing season without tracking international commodity prices, and in a country of small and marginal landholdings, the Government's decision to carry that weight has kept millions of cropping decisions viable. The size of the gap is also a reminder of where our vulnerabilities lie, because it reflects how much of the fertiliser supply chain sits beyond our borders. The more useful question, therefore, is not whether the protection is justified, but how well we use the stability it creates.

Against this background, the agriculture provisions of the New Delhi Declaration, adopted at the 18th BRICS Summit in the capital last month, deserve closer attention than they have received. The Declaration does not treat fertiliser as one more line in a trade schedule, but places fertiliser shortages within the larger framework of food security, agricultural productivity and resilient supply chains. BRICS leaders emphasised the need to mitigate acute price volatility and abrupt supply disruptions, including fertiliser shortages, and called for international coordination to strengthen the availability, accessibility, stability and affordability of agricultural and food production inputs.

For those of us in the fertiliser industry, this language reflects a shift we have already witnessed. The long-standing assumption in global fertiliser trade was that a buyer with the means to pay could always find a seller. Export restrictions, energy price volatility and disruptions to shipping routes have made that far less certain, with availability increasingly becoming the constraint rather than price.

India has pursued two complementary objectives: strengthening domestic capability while building dependable international partnerships. Government data shows domestic urea production rising to 306.67 lakh metric tonnes in 2024-25, about 35 per cent above the level a decade earlier, while production of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers has also increased significantly over the same period. At the same time, Indian companies have moved beyond reliance on spot purchases, building long-term supply arrangements with major fertiliser-producing countries, including Saudi Arabia, Russia, Morocco and Jordan. These partnerships have helped create more predictable and diversified supply channels, strengthening India's resilience against disruptions in global fertiliser markets.

This is where BRICS becomes relevant to our sector, because the grouping brings together in a single forum both some of the world's largest agricultural economies and several of its most significant fertiliser producers. India's growing fertiliser relationship with Russia shows what such cooperation can achieve when pursued patiently. The larger opportunity, however, lies in moving beyond a collection of bilateral arrangements towards a predictable shared framework, in which rules are clear and responses to disruption are better coordinated across the wider BRICS agricultural ecosystem.

The Declaration points in that direction. It calls for facilitating intra-BRICS trade in agricultural products and production inputs through resilient and non-discriminatory supply chains, and supports further work on the proposed BRICS Grain Exchange, with a launch target of 2027 and scope for extension to other commodities. Of particular significance for our sector is the establishment of BRICS AGRIN, the Agro-Inputs, Genetic Resources and Information Network, conceived as a collaborative, voluntary and farmer-centric platform, complemented by closer cooperation on agroecology, regenerative agriculture and digital agriculture.

Frameworks of this kind are, it must be said, easier to draft than to operationalise, and their value will be judged by how quickly their provisions become working institutions with defined timelines. That is why India's position matters at this juncture. As host of the Summit and one of the largest fertiliser consumers within the grouping, it is well placed to help ensure these commitments are carried forward with seriousness and pace.

This complements the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Self-reliance in fertilisers is sometimes misunderstood as a withdrawal from global markets, which it cannot be, since geology rather than policy determines where the world's potash and rock phosphate reserves lie. It means building enough capacity, storage and sourcing flexibility to engage with world markets from a position of confidence rather than compulsion.

It is here that the cooperative sector has a particular responsibility: farmers should not have to bear the volatility they had no part in creating. At KRIBHCO, we work at the point where national policy either reaches a farmer or fails to, and our task is not simply to place fertiliser in a village at the right time, important as that is. It is also to ensure that every kilogram of nutrient entering a field does the work it is meant to do, through balanced nutrient management, soil test based application, more efficient products, and the patient work of changing practices followed for generations. A country that imports less and wastes less is doubly secure, and efficiency, in that sense, is domestic capacity by another name.

The question before us is therefore changing in character, from how we secure the next consignment to how we build a fertiliser system that holds when the external environment turns uncertain. The Prime Minister's message from the Red Fort was, in the end, about preparedness, and about national capability being the most dependable form of insurance.

India should continue to build at home, deepen its partnerships abroad and work collectively through platforms such as BRICS. When the security of fertiliser supply is strengthened, so is the security of the Indian farmer, and with it the food security of the nation.

The writer is Managing Director, KRIBHCO

'TO BE IMPLEMENTED ONCE WE GET COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE'

India-US trade pact 1st phase finalised & legal drafting underway, says Goyal

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi, October 15

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said the first phase of the India-US trade pact has been finalised and is undergoing legal drafting.

He expressed the hope that the legal drafting too would be finalised soon and operationalised once India secures a competitive advantage over its peer countries.

"US bilateral trade agreement's first tranche has been finalised and it is going through final contours, the legal drafting, and we hope to be able to finalise that soon and operationalise that once we get the comparable advantage or competitive advantage over our peer countries," Goyal said here at the SRCC Centenary Conclave.

The minister added that his comments on the US-India pact "are consistent and exactly what I've said yesterday and what I said a week ago and what I said three months ago. So nothing new in that".



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal

THE INDIA-EU FTA WILL BE INKED IN DECEMBER AND WOULD COME INTO FORCE FROM FEBRUARY OR MARCH NEXT YEAR, HE SAID

He also said that the free trade agreement between India and the European Union will be inked in December and would come into force from February or March next year.

Later, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that the negotiations on the US trade pact are moving in the right direction.

"Probably we are in a very good zone. We anticipate closing the deal and signing the deal at the earliest possible time," he told reporters here.

Agarwal added that the trade deal has to be signed when the overall tariff structure would be formalised in the US.

"So there is a parallel work being done in the US also to get back the tariff structure and based on some of the outcomes under (Section) 301, we will progress towards signing the deal at a mutually agreed time," he said.

Regarding the legal drafting of the pact, Agarwal said it is going on.

"The idea is when you do a trade deal, the trade deal has also a very important component that it gives you not only market access in each other's market, it gives you preferential market access in each other's market. So in that context, India has to get a preferential market access with their competitors. And that is something which will come as a part of the new tariff framework that the US is working on," the secretary said.

On whether the framework will take into account the US Trade Representative's Section 301 investigations on concerns related to excess capacity, he said: "I think all other issues will get settled as part of the deal".

Earlier this month, India and 14 other countries called for coordinated global action to curb excess industrial production that distorts markets, hurts domestic industries and contributes to an imbalance between supply and demand.

On this, the secretary said: "Excess capacity due to non-market forces or non-market interventions has been something which India has also been opposing in a big way". He added that excess capacity being created as a result of non-market policies is detrimental to global trade.

When asked if the US' Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, which authorises US President Donald Trump to impose tariffs up to 100 per cent on largest buyers of Russian oil and gas, will also be part of the new tariff framework, he said "hopefully when it (pact) is signed, hopefully we will have more clarification on that. But definitely India will look at more tariff stability and trade stability as a part of the deal".

Earlier this month, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the US and India were working to finalise a bilateral trade deal but an agreement was not imminent.

KEY POINTS

- Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that the negotiations on the US trade pact are moving in the right direction
- 'Probably we are in a very good zone. We anticipate closing the deal and signing the deal at the earliest possible time,' he told reporters here
- 'There is a parallel work being done in the US also to get back the tariff structure & based on some of the outcomes under (Section) 301, we will progress towards signing the deal at a mutually agreed time," he said

Deficient rains take toll on paddy plantation, acreage dips 15.6L ha

Surya S Pillai
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

Rice emerged as the worst-hit major kharif crop this season, with the area under cultivation declining by 15.56 lakh hectares, or 3.5 per cent, compared with the corresponding period last year, according to the Agriculture Ministry's final crop-wise sowing data released on Tuesday.



FILE PHOTO

As of October 2, paddy had been sown on 433.62 lakh hectares, down from 449.18 lakh hectares a year earlier.

The decline in rice acreage was significantly steeper than that recorded for any other major kharif crop, underscoring the impact of uneven and below-normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon season on paddy cultivation.

Among the states, Telangana recorded the sharpest fall in rice acreage, with the area under cultivation declining by 4.26 lakh hectares to 22.99 lakh hectares from 27.25 lakh hectares last year. Karnataka followed closely, reporting a decline of 4.23 lakh hectares, with acreage falling to 6.2 lakh hectares.

Uttar Pradesh, the country's largest rice-producing state, saw paddy acreage decline by 1.84 lakh hectares to 69.21 lakh hectares, while Madhya Pradesh recorded a fall of 1.75 lakh hectares. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu reported declines of 1.7 lakh hectares and 1.41 lakh hectares, respectively.

Jharkhand and Maharashtra also recorded substantial reductions in paddy acreage, with declines of 1 lakh hectares and 1.15 lakh hectares, respectively.

The overall decline was partially offset by increases in a few states. Odisha recorded the largest gain, adding 0.66 lakh hectares under rice cultivation, followed by Assam at 0.59 lakh hectares and Bihar at 0.26 lakh hectares. Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab also reported marginal increases.

The data showed a mixed trend across other kharif crops.

Total pulses acreage increased by 2.57 lakh hectares to 122.39 lakh hectares. Within the category, urad acreage rose by 2.96 lakh hectares and arhar by 1.49 lakh hectares, while moong acreage declined by 1.17 lakh hectares. Among coarse cereals, acreage under jowar increased by 1.30 lakh hectares and bajra by 2.09 lakh hectares. Maize, however, recorded a decline of 2.8 lakh hectares.

Oilseeds registered a marginal increase of 1.11 lakh hectares to 196.66 lakh hectares. Sesame acreage rose by 1.37 lakh hectares and sunflower by 0.59 lakh hectares, while castor acreage declined by 0.80 lakh hectares. Cotton acreage stood at 110.53 lakh hectares, down 0.55 lakh hectares from 111.08 lakh hectares a year ago. Sugarcane acreage also declined marginally, falling by 0.26 lakh hectares.

The sowing data comes against the backdrop of an uneven southwest monsoon, with rainfall deficits affecting agricultural operations in several regions. The sharp contraction in paddy acreage is significant given rice's role in India's foodgrain production and security.

Rabi MSP hike to help farmers: Agri minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 30

Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu on Wednesday welcomed the Centre's decision to increase the minimum support prices (MSP) for all designated rabi crops for the 2027-28 marketing season, saying this would be of great help to farmers.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to Atchannaidu, the MSP for wheat has been fixed at ₹2,610 per quintal, barley ₹2,286, gram ₹5,958, masur ₹7,390, rapeseed and mustard ₹6,613 and safflower ₹7,215.

Compared with the previous season, the minimum support prices for safflower has been increased by ₹675 per quintal, rapeseed and mustard by ₹413, masur by ₹390, barley by ₹136, gram by ₹83 and wheat by ₹25.

The minister said the higher support prices for pulses and oilseeds would encourage farmers to diversify their crops and help strengthen the agricultural economy.

Atchannaidu said the state government was taking steps to ensure timely availability of seeds, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs to farmers.

Where necessary, market intervention would also be undertaken to ensure remunerative prices for farm produce.

Bihar Joins Maha, UP in Curbing Sale of Non-subsidised Fert

Shambhavi Anand

New Delhi: Bihar joined Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh in restricting the sale of non-subsidised fertilisers by companies supplying government-subsidised products such as urea, di-ammonium phosphate, NPK complexes and muriate of potash, a decision that industry executives say could affect farmers' access to newer crop nutrition technologies.

The restrictions could potentially limit the range of products available to farmers through existing distribution networks. For the companies that sell specialty fertilisers, micronutrients and other crop nutrition products alongside conventional fertilisers, this could cause an up to ₹120 crore loss in margins, according to industry estimates. The move comes at a time when fertiliser industry executives say they are seeking to promote the use of more efficient nutrients and encourage farmers to adopt advanced crop nutrition products to improve yields and soil health.

Unlike conventional fertilisers, whose retail prices are either controlled or supported by government subsidies, non-subsidised products are generally sold at market-determined prices. In a joint letter dated October 9, some top industry players urged the Bihar government to review its order, warning that the move could restrict farmers' access to essential nutrients and affect soil health and crop productivity. Bihar's low soil organic carbon levels make balanced nutrient application particularly important, said the letter, which **ET** has seen. "Restricting these products could discourage investment in new crop nutrition technologies and reduce farmers' access to alternatives that may help improve fertiliser-use efficiency," said a top executive at a large fertiliser manufacturer that sells subsidised and non-subsidised products.

Move comes amid industry efforts to promote advanced crop nutrition products to improve yields and soil health

This could also disrupt manufacturing operations of fertiliser companies producing organic and sulphur-based products, as well as supplies routed through dealers under the government's one-stop fertiliser outlet model, the official said. The restrictions are aimed at preventing tagging, a practice in which dealers or suppliers make the purchase of non-subsidised products a condition for obtaining subsidised fertilisers. In UP, the restrictions took effect on January 1, 2026, covering non-subsidised products sold by major fertiliser suppliers.

'Centre has entered rabi season with 34% higher fertiliser stock'

Pallavi Singhal
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said the Centre has entered the 2026-27 rabi season with 16.4 million tonnes (MT) of fertiliser in stock, 4.1 MT more that at the start of the last year's rabi season. The opening stock was 12.3 MT last year, which means the stock this year is about 34% higher.

Addressing a press conference during the National Agriculture Conference, the minister said the government has assessed the total fertiliser requirement for rabi 2026-27 at 38.1 MT. Of this, urea accounts for 19.9 MT, diammonium phosphate (DAP) for 5.5 MT, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK) fertilisers for 7.9 MT, single super phosphate (SSP) for 3.1 MT and muriate of potash (MOP) for 1.6 MT.

"This year's stock is higher than last year and will help meet the season's requirement," Chouhan said.

The higher opening stock comes as fertiliser sales during the ongoing kharif season have remained below the government's assessed requirement.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

According to official figures, as of September 25, fertiliser utilisation during kharif remained below the assessed requirement. Urea requirement stood at 19 MT, against sales of 17.8 MT, while DAP sales were 4.5 MT, against a requirement of 5.6 MT. Overall fertiliser requirement was 38.4 MT, compared with sales of 32.3 MT.

The government attributed part of the decline in sales to tighter monitoring under its digital fertiliser sales framework. It said total fertiliser sales had fallen by about 27% from last year, while sales in border districts declined 37.56%. About 88.2% of purchases were made within the government's recommended fertiliser-use framework, while around 11.8% of purchases were outside it, according to the government.

Meanwhile, the government has also reported a surplus in certified seed availability for rabi crops.

Against a requirement of 30.7 million quintals, about 4.9 million quintals of additional certified and quality seed are available, according to the briefing.

The government said seed availability is adequate across major rabi crops, including cereals, potato, pulses and oilseeds. States and agencies have been asked to coordinate to ensure timely movement of seed to areas where it is required.

The Centre has also asked states to join the SATHI portal, which is intended to improve monitoring of the seed supply chain and help check the sale of fake and poor-quality seeds.

The government is also pushing for faster payment to farmers selling pulses. States have been asked to maintain a 'Revolving Fund' with government procurement agencies so that farmers can be paid within 72 hours of selling their produce.

Telangana seeks 100% MSP procurement amid drought

Half of State's mandals are drought-hit; Agriculture Minister suggests lifting of 25% procurement cap on major crops; the '*khet bachao abhiyan*' will be implemented from October 22, he adds

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Drought conditions are prevailing across 315 out of 621 mandals in Telangana and different sections are awaiting relief measures from the Centre, State Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has said. He has requested the Centre to provide wage employment work to farmworkers and water conservation works widely under the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) programme.

Mr. Rao said that the *khet bachao abhiyan* would be implemented in the State from October 22 to 30 with the national agricultural institutions and universities. During a virtual meeting chaired by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, he sought additional budgetary allocation for micro-irrigation implements and inter-cropping seed.



Dashed hopes: Paddy crop withering without rain in Pulkal mandal in Sangareddy district of Telangana. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Reiterating the request for 100% procurement of maize, jowar, and other major crops, Mr. Rao suggested lifting of the 25% cap on the procurement of such crops under the minimum support price-price support scheme operations. He further wanted the Centre to rationalise the prices of fertilizers and subsidies.

He said that such measures were necessary in the wake of the El Niño impact on the State as they would help farmers control the loss to some extent.

He felt that farmers would adapt to the crop pattern changes only if their produce was procured entirely at MSP.

FTAs will unlock export opportunities for farmers, MSMEs

PM Modi wants to ensure FTA benefits reach workers and small businesses, says Commerce Minister Goyal

NEW DELHI

COMMERCE Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday that the multiple free trade agreements (FTAs) concluded in recent years have opened immense opportunities for India's exporters, and the Narendra Modi government's focus is on ensuring these benefits reach the farmers, workers, women, youth, MSMEs, and small businesses, enabling them to take more Made in India products to global markets.

"To help them make the most of these opportunities, the Centre's Department of Commerce is organising dedicated FTA outreach initiatives in collaboration with state governments," the minister said in a post on X.

Appreciating Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's participation in one such outreach event in the state and his efforts to encourage local businesses to explore new export markets, Goyal said: "More such initiatives will be organised across the country to help every state unlock its unique export potential, ensure greater utilisation of our FTAs and give fresh momentum to India's export growth."

The India-New Zealand FTA came into force on Tuesday with duty-free access for 100 per cent of Indian exports. The FTA will unlock significant opportunities for MSMEs, farmers, women, youth and labour-intensive sectors. It also opens new pathways for our professionals, while safeguarding India's core interests.

Goyal had pointed out that India's farmers will gain wider market access for fruits, vegetables, spices and other agricultural produce, alongside cooperation to improve productivity, support higher incomes and strengthen livelihoods.

The minister also said that sensitive sectors, including dairy, remain protected, keeping farmers' welfare at the heart of the government's approach.

He further stated that New Zealand's commitment to facilitate $20 billion in investment into India holds immense potential to strengthen manufacturing, infrastructure, services and innovation, supporting enterprise and employment.

"As we embark on this promising journey tomorrow, I extend my best wishes to our exporters, businesses, MSMEs and entrepreneurs. I encourage them to make full use of this agreement, build lasting partnerships and translate its potential into tangible gains for our people," the minister further stated.



Goyal had pointed out that India's farmers will gain wider market access for fruits, vegetables, spices and other agricultural produce, alongside cooperation to improve productivity, support higher incomes and strengthen livelihoods

Trade agreement may double bilateral business in 2-2.5 years: BRISEC chief

NEW DELHI

INDIA's annual trade with New Zealand could double in two to two-and-a-half years, well ahead of the five-year target, following the implementation of the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA), BRISEC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Harvansh Chawla said on Tuesday.

Chawla said the agreement would make a significant difference to bilateral trade, although its impact may take six months to a year to become visible. India's current annual trade with New Zealand stands at around $2.8 billion, and the target is to double it over the next five years.

"As I mentioned, I believe our target of doubling trade within five years could be achieved in just two to two-and-a-half years," Chawla said.

"I also believe that, in the coming years, India and New Zealand will become very important trading partners for each other. New Zealand will be important for India, and India will be important for New Zealand," he told IANS.

He said the expansion in bilateral trade could also create employment opportunities as businesses grow and new factories are established. "I believe that as our trade doubles, employment will also increase. New factories will be set up and businesses will expand. For instance, a company with a turnover of Rs 100 crore today could see it rise to Rs 125 crore. This will have a positive impact on everyone," he stated. Highlighting the need for government support to ensure that the benefits of the trade agreement reach ordinary citizens, Chawla said exporters needed better access to affordable financing and dedicated support schemes.

"Indian traders currently need cash the most. The government should introduce schemes specifically to support exports. Schemes already exist, but they need to be expanded," he said.

"Interest rates on export financing must be reduced. Traders may receive orders, but they need funds to execute them, which largely come from banks. Banks should introduce more flexible schemes for exporters with lower interest rates," he added.



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CAIT chief hails India-NZ FTA as PM's Dussehra gift to traders

NEW DELHI

THE India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) -- which comes into effect -- is a major gift from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the country's business community on Dussehra, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Secretary General and Chandni Chowk MP Praveen Khandelwal said on Tuesday.

In an interview with IANS, Khandelwal said the biggest feature of the agreement is that Indian goods exported to New Zealand will attract zero per cent duty, making Indian products more competitive in the global market.

"I am confident that traders, industries and small artisans across the country will gain significant business opportunities through exports. On behalf of the country's nine crore traders, I extend my Vijayadashami greetings and thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this initiative," he said. Khandelwal said many Indian sectors, especially automobiles, auto spare parts, grains and pulses, electronics, electrical and pharmaceuticals, will now get access to a large market in New Zealand.

He said the FTA reflects India's growing manufacturing strength and supports the vision of 'Local to Global', 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Viksit Bharat'.

Khandelwal said the pact would create significant export opportunities for sectors including textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, automobiles and auto components, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, agricultural produce and processed food products.

According to CAIT, zero-duty access to the New Zealand market is expected to enhance the competitiveness of Indian products and benefit MSMEs, artisans, farmers, manufacturers, women entrepreneurs and exporters.

The agreement also provides for New Zealand to facilitate $20 billion in investments into India while expanding opportunities for Indian professionals and youth.

India and New Zealand have set a target of achieving bilateral trade in goods and services worth NZ$7 billion by 2030, with industry representatives describing the FTA as a potential driver of exports, employment generation and economic growth.

Khandelwal said the pact demonstrates how Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trade-focused diplomacy is helping Indian businesses access new global markets while continuing to safeguard sensitive domestic sectors. He urged traders, manufacturers and MSMEs to leverage the agreement to expand the global footprint of 'Made in India' products.

Gains for India

New Zealand is giving 100 per cent duty-free market access from Tuesday itself. It covers all tariff lines or product categories and 100 per cent of India's current exports to New Zealand.

This is the first FTA for India where it receives full duty-free access across all tariff lines from entering into force. Elimination of import duty would remove the existing tariff disadvantage of pre-FTA rates of up to 10 per cent faced by Indian exporters in the New Zealand market. The major sectors that would be benefited include fruits and vegetables; coffee, tea, cocoa and spices; cereals; processed foods; textiles and clothing; leather and footwear; pharmaceuticals; engineering goods; marine products; plastics and rubber.

India protects sensitive sectors

India's exclusion list primarily includes products considered sensitive from a domestic perspective.

The major categories are dairy products (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese); animal products (other than sheep meat); vegetable products such as onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds); sugar and artificial honey; animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils.



CAIT Praveen Khandelwal

Khandelwal said many Indian sectors, especially automobiles, auto spare parts, grains and pulses, electronics, electrical and pharmaceuticals, will now get access to a large market in New Zealand

Urea offers fall in sign of easing global fertiliser costs

India, a major fertiliser importer, received offers in a urea tender nearly 10 per cent below its August purchase price, signaling some relief for global farmers who have faced surging input costs this year. Indian Potash Ltd, which also imports urea on behalf of the government, received offers for the west coast between $356.25 and $416.50 a ton in a tender that closed Wednesday, according to traders with direct knowledge of the tender.

Offers for supplies to the east coast ranged between $352.10 and $465 a ton, they said. In both regions, the total volume offered was more than double the amount the agency is seeking. India's purchases are watched as a price benchmark for other importers, who have faced volatile costs this year after the war in Iran curbed the vital West Asian supply. The country paid as much as $959 a tonne for urea when the conflict began. BLOOMBERG

Fertiliser sales plunge in border districts after farmer-ID checks

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE
New Delhi, 23 October

Fertiliser sales fell by 37.56 per cent in select border districts between the kharif seasons of 2025 and 2026, after purchases began to be linked to farmer IDs, crop requirements and land records via AgriStack and other digital platforms, according to a government analysis.

The sharp decline in offtake has raised questions about the extent of earlier fertiliser diversion, including the possible cross-border smuggling of subsidised urea into neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar, where prices are higher, officials said. The findings come as the fertiliser subsidy bill threatens to touch ₹3 trillion in FY27, significantly above the Budget Estimate of about ₹1.7 trillion.

Urea is sold in India at a heavily subsidised price of about ₹265 for a 45 kg bag, or roughly ₹6 per kg. By comparison, the estimated global landed price was about ₹1,674 for a 45 kg bag in September 2026, based on a price of $392 a tonne and an exchange rate of ₹94.88 to the dollar. Landed prices had touched $950 a tonne in May. The price differential also creates an incentive to divert subsidised agricultural-grade urea for industrial use. Technical grade urea, intended for industrial applications, currently costs about ₹70 per kg in India, officials said.

Government data shows that the decline in fertiliser offtake ranged from 17.35 per cent in select border districts of Meghalaya to 81.42 per cent in border districts of Tripura after sales were linked to AgriStack and related platforms.

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Farmers in Punjab & Haryana bag highest share in urea subsidy

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, October 23

INDICATING A SKEWED distribution across states, farmers in Punjab and Haryana cornered the largest share in the average annual nitrogen/urea subsidy over the three years till FY25 — five to ten times more than their counterparts in Keralam, Assam and Himachal Pradesh.

The annual per-hectare outgo for farmers in Punjab stood at ₹25,701, in Haryana ₹21,071 and in Uttar Pradesh ₹16,535, according to a policy paper released by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) on Friday. Farmers in Keralam received ₹2,540, Assam ₹4,703 and Himachal Pradesh ₹4,701. Farmers in Bihar (₹16,416) and Telangana (₹14,651) also received significantly higher subsidies.

In terms of value of crop output, the contrast is similarly wide among states, indicating uneven distribution of subsidy outgo. Fertiliser subsidy accounted for 9.9% of crop output value in Punjab and 9.2% in Haryana, compared with only 1.4% and 1.5% in Keralam and Himachal Pradesh, according to the paper. Urea is currently sold at ₹266.50 per 45-kg bag against global prices exceeding ₹4,000 a bag. This price has remained unchanged since March 2018, and 40 million tonne of urea was consumed in India in FY26. Fertiliser subsidy is likely in the range of ₹2.42-3.32 lakh crore in FY27.

UNEVEN OUTGO



Top five states in terms of share in urea/nitrogen subsidy
(₹/per hectare/annum)



Source: ICRIER, all data based on average of three years ending FY25

Bayer Plans to Launch Products Addressing Side Effects of GLP-1

ET Q&A **JULIO TRIANA**
PRESIDENT, CONSUMER HEALTH DIVISION, BAYER

Bayer AG is assessing opportunities to bring products addressing side effects associated with glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) obesity drugs to India, as the nearly €46 billion German crop and life sciences company seeks to expand its presence in the country. The company is exploring opportunities across digestive health, nutrition, multivitamins and protein supplements to address side effects such as constipation, nausea and muscle loss among patients on GLP-1 therapies, Julio Triana, president of Bayer's Consumer Health Division and member of the Board of Management of Bayer AG, told ET's **Rica Bhattacharyya & Vikas Dandekar**. Bayer aims to triple its consumer health business in India by 2030, anticipating that the country will become its third-largest consumer health market globally. Edited excerpts:

How important is India to Bayer's consumer health business, and what is your growth ambition?
We should be able to triple the India business in terms of the revenue between now and 2030. We have five markets that are a priority for us in consumer health, including the US, which is the largest market in the world for consumer health, China, Germany, and then India and Brazil. In this pecking order, I hope India will get to third. We also would need to be able to bring in more colleagues to be able to drive that business.

Which product categories offer the biggest growth opportunities in India?
There's a huge opportunity in derma. Derma for us makes up about 25% of our business worldwide. And here (in India) it's very small, but the category is huge and it's growing, and it's even growing faster than the pain category (in which the company sells Saridon). But we need to continue to innovate in terms of what the Indian consumer wants. Same thing with Supradyn.

Another important area is digestive health, especially in markets like India (which face significant challenges with gut health).

We also have a lot of new entrants in our space. We're not only competing against the typical companies like us, the global players, but we are competing with local players, too, who can sometimes be even fiercer. So, we are now running Bayer with a new operating system, which has empowered the local teams to pick up all the market and consumer signals and move as quickly as they can.

GLP-1 drugs are transforming obesity treatment. What opportunities do you see in products addressing their side effects?
The GLP-1s have brought in a seismic sort of innovation into the market. It is something that benefits too many people. But, as with any such medications, they do have a lot of side effects that other products can help address. In the US, we have a product called MiraLAX for constipation. One of the side effects of GLP-1s is constipation – nausea and sarcopenia are some other effects. And there we have a full range of products in terms of nutrition, multivitamins and single supplements.



EXPANSION PLAN
We should be able to triple the India business in terms of the revenue between now and 2030

Will Bayer bring these products to India?
Yes. The team is doing an assessment. We will support the team to bring whatever products they want to bring to India after scanning the market. We also have a very good network of contract manufacturing here. From the idea to be able to have something in the market in India, it should be very quick.

Will Bayer consider acquisitions or partnerships to expand in India?
We would run the business ourselves, so we're building our own distribution – and so we would not look for a distributing partner... the more products we bring in, we would look for partnerships in manufacturing... And we would look out for inorganic growth opportunities.

How will you compete with Indian companies that often have a pricing advantage?
We have a strategy that we call "road to billions". As part of that, in consumer health, our aspiration is that we bring as many of these solutions to as many people as possible. We don't want our products to only be for rich countries that can buy expensive vitamins, etc. It's a strategy that makes sure that our products are reaching as many households as possible.

How do you view India's regulatory environment for over-the-counter medicines?
I believe that right now that's not an impediment for the plans that we have. We're of the opinion that self-care is really important. There's got to be a significant level of responsibility.

Centre extends scheme to fund post-harvest infrastructure

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The Union government has approved the continuation of its flagship Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme beyond 30 September 2026, extending its operational timeline until 31 March 2027. The move would bolster agricultural infrastructure and improve access to financing for projects in the farm sector, said two people aware of the development.

The extension is expected to boost investment in post-harvest infrastructure and community farming assets, improving storage, processing and supply-chain efficiency.

This is significant given that India loses agricultural produce worth ₹1.53 trillion annually to post-harvest inefficiencies. "The Department of Expenditure has conveyed its approval for extending the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund scheme until 31 March 2027. The extension will ensure continuity of the programme and give eligible beneficiaries more time to undertake agricultural infrastructure projects," said one of the two people cited earlier.



Centre extends Agriculture Infrastructure Fund scheme until 31 March 2027. MINT

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund scheme provides financing support for post-harvest infrastructure such as cold storages, warehouses and grading units through interest subvention and credit guarantee benefits. By facilitating the creation of such facilities closer to farms, the government aims to reduce crop wastage and help farmers store their produce until they can sell it at better prices.

According to government data reviewed by *Mint*, as of 25 October, lending institutions sanctioned about ₹1.03 trillion under the fund for 228,428 projects since launch in 2020-21. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund scheme has mobilised over ₹1.75 trillion for the agriculture sector. The data shows that Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat are among top beneficiaries of the fund.

"The extension of the scheme ensures continued support for strengthening agricultural infrastructure and enhancing post-harvest management across the country," said Puneet Singh Thind, founder and director, Northern Farmers Mega FPO, a federation of farmer-producer organizations from five North Indian states.

Queries emailed to the Union ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare on 23 October remained unanswered till press time.

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

5 dists attract ₹11,732 cr investment proposals

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 26

The five districts of Tirupati, Chittoor, Annamayya, Kadapa and Nellore are set to attract proposed industrial investments of ₹11,731.68 crore through 67 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) exchanged at the concluding regional investment conference held at KREA University in Sri City on Monday. The proposals have the potential to generate 20,879 jobs.

The conference marked the conclusion of Andhra Pradesh's series of five regional investment conferences held in Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Amaravati, Anantapur and Tirupati. Across the five meetings, 195 MoUs worth ₹85,561.42 crore were exchanged, with the potential to create 1,56,241 jobs. Another 68 projects worth ₹5,714.06 crore, expected to generate 13,488 jobs, were grounded or inaugurated.

Of the 67 MoUs exchanged at Tirupati, 50 projects are planned in Tirupati, Chittoor, Annamayya, Kadapa and Nellore districts. These proposals involve investments of ₹7,380.68 crore and could generate 16,612 jobs. Sri City alone is expected to host 18 projects. The remaining 17 agreements cover projects in other districts or across multiple locations.

Electronics and semiconductors, auto components, footwear, tourism and food processing were among the sectors attracting investment proposals. Six MoUs in electronics and semiconductors involve investments of ₹2,105 crore and the potential to generate 4,540 jobs. Five agreements in auto components and electric mobility account for ₹1,600 crore and 2,250 jobs.

Hilltop SEZ Development India proposed a footwear manufacturing project in Tirupati district with an investment of ₹700 crore and the potential to create 3,000 jobs. Tourism and hospitality attracted 22 MoUs worth ₹1,538 crore, with 2,812 jobs envisaged, while nine food processing proposals involve investments of ₹1,096 crore and could generate 2,130 jobs.

S.S. Rawat, Special Chief Secretary for Youth Advancement, Tourism and Culture, said the regional conferences aimed to distribute industrial investments across the State by leveraging local resources and business opportunities. He said 21 MSMEs participated in the Sri City conference.

Industries and Commerce Department Secretary Y. Yuvraj said the government was focusing on regional investment, youth employment and industrial growth. He said the proposed 'One Family, One Entrepreneur' initiative would encourage self-employment and help improve household incomes.

CII Andhra Pradesh vice-chairman G. Sambasiva Rao said the conference explored business opportunities, advanced manufacturing technologies and knowledge-based industries. He stressed the need to support local entrepreneurs and strengthen skills and infrastructure.

The MSME Banking Grievance Redressal Mechanism was also launched at the event.

Amudavalli Ranganathan of CavinKare called for strengthening the supply chain to connect tomato farmers in Madanapalle with international markets and improve their returns. Tirupati District Collector Dr. S. Venkateswar also spoke. The 31st CII Partnership Summit will be held in Visakhapatnam on November 12 and 13, 2026, on the theme 'Navigating the New World Order: Trade, Technology, Trust and Thought Leadership'.

New genetic tools are breathing fresh life into India's staple crops

As new tools like apomixis become more widely available and private companies shift focus to Indian seeds, it is as important to think about how our system will adapt to these changes as it is to focus on investing in fundamental research in plant genetics, physiology, and host-pathogen interactions

K. VijayRaghavan

Technology is rapidly changing the way we cultivate rice and wheat, and India has the opportunity to lead the pack if we restore the attraction of fundamental research in plant sciences to our students. The shrillness of anti-GMO voices has driven aspiring biology researchers to other areas of life sciences, which use much the same methods. We need to bring them back to plant research, too.

India's food security largely depends on rice and wheat, which take up more than half our farmland and provide most of the calories Indians eat. Scientists and breeders designed today's wheat and rice varieties at a time when the consequences of excess fertilizer use on soil were not sufficiently anticipated, when pesticides were used to hit insects and other pests with a metaphorical hammer, and when water and electricity were abundant or heavily subsidised.

Today, however, climate change, extreme weather events, droughts, and floods are more immediate concerns. This together with demands for sustainable and moderated use of pesticides and fertilisers, but without compromising yield, has created a high bar of demand in a competitive world. In addition, science and technology are but one component of solutions that also involve politics, economics, and global supply chains.



India's food security largely depends on rice and wheat, which take up more than half our farmland and provide most of the calories we eat. THOMPSON LI/UNSPLASH

Public institutions

The supply of seeds to farmers, for crops such as rice and wheat, has had a strong public-sector presence. The National Seeds Corporation (NSC) was established in 1963. The NSC partners with State seed corporations and State agricultural universities to ensure reliability in the early stages of seed supply. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) laboratories and State agricultural universities ensure supply of 'breeder seeds', certified to be of the highest quality. These are then amplified by partners, which include private companies to generate 'foundation seeds', which are distributed.

For wheat, public institutions dominate the supply of certified seeds, with private players being present in only about 5% of the market. However, their share is growing rapidly, at about 8% each year. In the case of rice, private companies dominate the market for hybrid seeds, with public institutions mainly supplying farmers with small-holdings.

In India, public institutions play a large role in wheat and rice, unlike with maize and cotton, where private companies dominate. The new varieties they develop are available to any registered seed company, public or private. The government has a system in place to make and distribute these new varieties widely, cheaply, and fairly – a system which works reasonably.

India took a big step forward in 2025 in using new gene-editing technology to improve rice, and became the first country to allow farmers to grow rice that had been edited using this technology. The scientists also grew these rice strains in fields, and the approved seeds are now being given to farmers.

Two types of rice, DRR Dhan 100 and Pusa DST Rice-1, were developed by Indian researchers using the CRISPR gene-editing technology. Researchers tested these new rice types widely in 2023-2024. The advances were significant. One variety DRR Dhan 100 took 130 days to mature, compared to 150 days of the baseline strains. It produced close to 20% more rice, at about 5.4 tonnes per hectare, and reduced water use and labour costs. Pusa DST Rice-1 was developed to grow reasonably in salty or alkaline soils. Its yield in these conditions was about 10-30% more than the baseline strains. Government announcements point to lowered water and fertiliser use and, consequently, lowered greenhouse gas emissions as well.

Tale of two varieties

The story behind these two strains is worth understanding for how fundamental research on rice flowering leads to application. The targeted gene in DRR DNAs-1 encodes a product that degrades cytokinin, the hormone driving spikelet formation on a rice panicle. This process caps how many grains a plant can produce.

ICAR's CRISPR edit partially reduces, but does not eliminate, this enzyme's activity, letting cytokinin accumulate just enough to boost spikelet and grain number without the stunted growth seen in complete knockouts. In 2005, Motoyuki Ashikari's team in Japan had already traced a grain-number trait to a natural small deletion in the corresponding gene in a high-yielding wild rice relative, and ICAR recreated that two-decade-old discovery by design, in weeks rather than through years of conventional breeding.

The PUSA DST-1 story is equally interesting. In 2020, a team at ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute, led by Viswanathan Chinnusamy, used the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool to delete a stretch of a rice gene called OsDST, in a particular strain, producing plants with broader leaves, fewer stomata, and sharply better survival under salt stress (over 65% versus just 20% in unedited plants).

This engineered mutant reproduced the effects of a naturally occurring chemical mutation found years earlier in a completely different rice subspecies, confirming that disabling DST itself rather than some editing side-effect of the edit had conferred the stress tolerance. Pusa DST Rice 1, released five years later, is the commercial maturation of this already published laboratory mutant, illustrating a journey from a characterised gene to seed ready for farmers to use.

In both cases, the residues of the gene-editing tools were not detected in the final strains. Thus, while genetic engineering tools were used, the results are equivalent to those that would come from conventional mutagenesis and breeding, only much faster and more accurate.

Work on apomixis

Scientists at public institutions conducted the work on the rice, and the resulting seeds will not be tied up in restrictive patents or licensing agreements. The developers have also made sure that the technology used to create it will not be a bottleneck for public breeding programs.

Other innovative approaches are now on the horizon and will likely be deployable in the near future, led by a method called apomixis. It was first successfully demonstrated in rice by Venkatesan Sundaresan and his colleague Imtiyaz Khanday at the University of California, Davis, in 2018. In apomixis, plants are engineered to bypass the normal process of sexual reproduction and fertilisation. This allows desirable traits of the parent plant, known as hybrid vigour, to be preserved indefinitely, rather than being lost in the next generation. The efficiency of this method has improved significantly, with success rates reaching around 90% in rice. Various research groups are now exploring apomixis in other crops, such as maize and sorghum.

Sundaresan's work on plant development earned him a share of the prestigious Wolf Prize in agriculture in 2024, alongside Elliot Meyerowitz and Joanne Chory. In December 2025, Sundaresan and Khanday received the VinFuture Special Prize for their work on self-cloning crop technology, which has the potential to revolutionise agriculture.

There is still a big gap between the lab and the field. Tests in different environments are required to get regulatory approval and to set up systems to produce seeds in large quantities. Because adding foreign genes is not required to make apomixis work, many of these techniques could potentially follow a simpler regulatory process. The technology makes sense for small farmers. If they can save seeds from high-yielding crops and replant them without losing any quality, they will not have to keep buying new seeds every year. This is currently a big expense for many smallholder rice and wheat farmers.

Driving progress

India has not seen a gene-edited wheat released yet, but there are some conventional developments in the pipeline. For instance, the government recently introduced HI4 new crop varieties across 25 different crops, including some climate-resilient wheat lines that are expected to reach farmers within the next three years. Hybrid wheat has been a challenge for breeders due to the complexities of wheat's floral biology. It is harder to hybridise than rice or maize. Despite this, hybrid wheat has been gaining traction in India, due in part to private companies like Mahyco and Nuziveedu.

Currently, the most advanced genetically engineered trait in wheat is called HB4, developed by an Argentine company called Biocrres Crop Solutions. This trait uses a gene from sunflowers to help wheat plants tolerate drought. This is not a new type of gene editing but a traditional genetically engineered trait. HB4 is already being grown commercially in Argentina, and on a smaller scale in Brazil and Paraguay.

In August 2024, the U.S. Department of Agriculture gave the green light for HB4 wheat to be grown in the country, making it the fourth to approve its production. However, it may take a few years before we see large-scale commercial planting in the U.S., since more field trials need to be done and the trait needs to be integrated into American wheat varieties. Additionally, export markets need to approve the trait as well.

Australia is taking a two-pronged approach to improving wheat yields, with two separate programmes running side by side. The Australian government has given the green light for field trials of HB4. This trial started in 2024. At the same time, the University of Adelaide is working on a project to engineer wheat and barley to produce higher yields, using genetic modification techniques. This project is set to run until 2026.

Meanwhile, an Australian breeding company called InterGrain has teamed up with a U.S. firm called Inari to try out CRISPR gene-editing. They are hoping to boost wheat yields by 10% and have already started field trials in the 2025 growing season. In a significant development, Australian Grain Technologies and China's Qihe Biosciences have announced that they will be working together on cross-border field trials of a new CRISPR-edited wheat variety. This is important as it shows that international collaboration is driving progress in wheat gene-editing, unlike some other crops like rice.



India's approach to breeding wheat and rice is still largely controlled by the public sector, which means new techniques like editing genes without adding foreign ones can be made available to farmers. GETTY IMAGES

Reviving a tradition

India's approach to breeding wheat and rice is still largely controlled by the public sector, which means new techniques like editing genes without adding foreign ones can be made available to farmers.

As new tools like apomixis become more widely available and private companies start investing more in Indian seeds, it is as important to think about how our system will adapt to these changes as it is to invest in fundamental research in plant genetics, physiology, development and host-pathogen interactions.

We have had a great tradition here, and it should be revived.

(K. VijayRaghavan is the DAE-Homi Bhabha Chair, TIFR-National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru. vijay@ncbs.res.in)

'UK-India deal could boost annual trade by £25b'

Suresh P Iyengar
Mumbai

The UK-India trade agreement could generate an additional £25 billion (₹3.26 lakh crore) in annual trade over the long term, said UK Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, who led a large British business delegation to India for exploring investment and commercial opportunities.

The delegation, among the largest the UK has taken to any country, comprises three Cabinet ministers, seven mayors and about 200 businesses.

Reynolds said businesses were identifying opportunities across sectors, including advanced manufacturing, life sciences, sports and culture, following the agreement's entry into force. "There's no sector of either



A file photo of UK Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds ANI

of our economies that could not potentially strengthen their relationships," he said.

UK-MAHA PACT

Reynolds also met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, where the two sides signed a UK-Maharashtra Growth Partnership aimed at translating the trade agreement into commercial opportunities at the State level.

He said the agreement would benefit Indian businesses across a range of sectors, including agriculture, jewellery and leather goods, through tariff reductions. The provisions would also make it easier for businesses and professionals to operate across the two countries.

His meeting with Fadnavis also covered infrastructure development and emerging sectors, particularly financial technology.

LONG TERM BENEFITS

Under the social security arrangement, Indian nationals working in the UK would contribute to India's social security system, while British nationals working in India would contribute to the UK system, reducing the burden of dual contributions and facilitating short-term business mobility.

Reynolds said the benefits would expand over time as tariffs were progressively reduced, creating opportunities for businesses across the UK, including in Manchester.

Highlighting the complementary nature of the two economies, he cited the automotive sector, where businesses in India and the UK serve different market segments, creating scope for collaboration.

Reynolds said he was impressed by Mumbai's infrastructure development and Maharashtra's fintech ecosystem, including developments in tokenisation that could broaden access to asset ownership. "If we can show how it can work here, there's a blueprint there for other parts of India, other Indian States," he said.

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