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'Hike in fertilizer prices will neutralise cushion of MSPs'

It will increase financial burden, says former KAPC chairman

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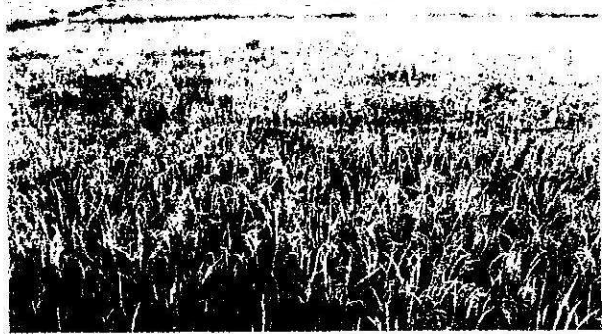
The sharp increase in prices of fertilizers is expected to add to the agrarian crisis in the State where farmers are already reeling under distress due to lack of scientific pricing mechanism for their crops, said agriculture economist and former chairman of Karnataka Agriculture Prices Commission (KAPC) T.N. Prakash Kammaradi.

It is the first time in the history of the country that fertilizer prices have seen a hike of nearly 58%, accounting for an increase of ₹1,400 a quintal.

Dr. Kammaradi, who had commissioned studies related to cost of production for various crops in Karnataka in his capacity as KAPC chairman, said increase in fertilizers' cost would almost neutralise the cushion being provided by minimum support prices with respect to a few crops, including paddy.

Citing an example, he said the "paid out costs", which include not just cost of production but also rental value of land and family labour, is already much higher than the revenues earned by farmers with respect to several crops, including paddy.

According to him, the cost of production of paddy on one acre is ₹37,578 of which



The cost of production of paddy on one acre is ₹37,578 of which fertilizers alone cost ₹7,314 as there is a requirement of about 400 kg, according to an expert. • FILE PHOTO

the fertilizers alone cost ₹7,314 as there is a requirement of about 400 kg. Of this, the DAP and NPK, which have seen hike in prices, account for 50% of quantity. This would mean there would be a jump of about ₹2,800 to ₹3,000 per acre of paddy. Pointing out that farmers get 27 to 28 quintals of paddy per acre on an average, he says, production cost would go up by a minimum of ₹100 per quintal of paddy.

With actual paid out cost of paddy already high at ₹52,453 per acre, the present fertilizer price hike would only increase the financial burden and make cultivation of various crops almost financially unviable despite MSPs, he argued.

Similarly, the growers of elakki variety of banana spend about ₹16,429 per

acre of plantation on fertilizers alone. Now, these expenses would increase, he pointed out. Same was the case of cotton where 333 kg of fertilisers is used per one acre. Even vegetable and fruits growers have been hit hard. According to an estimate, 290 kg of fertilizers is required for growing tomato on one acre of land while 505 kg of fertilizers is needed for growing dry chillies on one acre.

Even dairy farmers, who are struggling since milk procurement prices were reduced on account of COVID-19, are expected to be hit hard as a majority are dependent on fertilizers for cultivation of fodder. Dr. Kammaradi argued for restoring full quantum of subsidy that was being given for fertilisers to bail them out.