

ವಿಶ್ವವಾಣಿ

ಆರಾಮ

ಅನುದಿನವೂ ವಿರಾಮಕ್ಕೆ ಒಂದು ನೆಪ

ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ವಿಸ್ಮಯ ಲೋಕ

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ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು
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ಸೋಮವಾರ

ಗೋವಾದ ಪೋಂಡಾ ಪಟ್ಟಣದ ಬಳಿ ಇರುವ ಈ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಪ್ರಪಂಚವು, ಹಲವು ಪ್ರಭೇದದ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಆಶ್ರಯ ನೀಡಿದೆ; ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ಅಧ್ಯಯನ ಮಾಡುವವರಿಗೂ ಇದು ಉತ್ತಮ ತಾಣ. ಬಣ್ಣ ಬಣ್ಣದ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ನೋಡುವ ಅವಕಾಶವೂ ಇಲ್ಲಿದೆ.

• ಸುರೇಶ ಗುದಗನವರ

ಹಾ ರುತ್ತಿರುವ ವರ್ಣರಂಜಿತ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ ನಾವೆಲ್ಲರೂ ಮೋಡಿಗೊಳ್ಳುವುದು ಸ್ವಾಭಾವಿಕವಲ್ಲವೇ? ನಾವೆಲ್ಲರೂ ಬಾಲ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಅವುಗಳನ್ನು ಹಿಡಿಯಲು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸಿಲ್ಲವೇ? ಹಲವು ಬಣ್ಣಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಈ ಆಕರ್ಷಕ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ನಾವು ಯೋಚಿಸಿಲ್ಲವೇ? ಇಂತಹ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ಸಂರಕ್ಷಿಸಲು ಕೆಲವರು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ನಡೆಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಗೋವಾದ ಪೋಂಡಾದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಲಯವು ಯಶೋಧನ್ ಮತ್ತು ಜ್ಯೋತಿ ದಂಪತಿಗಳ ಮಿದುಳಿನ ಕೂಸು. ಅದುವೇ ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್. 'ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್' ಎಂಬ ಹೆಸರು ಎನಿಡ್ ಬ್ಲೈಟನ್ ನೀತಿ ಕಥೆಯಿಂದ ಹೊರಹೊಮ್ಮುವ ಕಾಲ್ಪನಿಕ ಕಾಡಿನ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ಸೃಷ್ಟಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ನಿಜಕ್ಕೂ ಇದು ವಿವಿಧ ರೀತಿಯ ಸಸ್ಯಗಳು, ಹೂವುಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಮರಗಳಿಂದ ತುಂಬಿರುವ ಹಸಿರಿನ ಸಾಗರವಾಗಿದೆ. ಪ್ರಕೃತಿ ಪ್ರಿಯರಾದ ಡಾ.ಜ್ಯೋತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಯಶೋಧನ್ ಜೆಟ್ಟೆಕರ್ ಅವರು 2006ರಲ್ಲಿ ಪೊಂಡಾ ಪಟ್ಟಣದಿಂದ 6 ಕಿ.ಮೀ. ದೂರದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಬಂಜರು ಬೆಟ್ಟದ ಇಳಿಜಾರು ಪ್ರದೇಶದ 4 ಸಾವಿರ ಚದರ ಮೀಟರ್ ವಿಸ್ತೀರ್ಣದ ಸ್ಥಳವನ್ನು ತೆಗೆದುಕೊಂಡರು. ಅವರು ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಆಹಾರ ಮತ್ತು ಸಂತಾನೋತ್ಪತ್ತಿ ಮಾಡಬಹುದಾದ ಮರಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಪೊದೆಗಳನ್ನು ನೆಡುವ ಮೂಲಕ ಬಂಜರು ಭೂಮಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಯೋಗ ಮಾಡಲು ನಿರ್ಧರಿಸಿದರು.

ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್

2009ರಲ್ಲಿ ಜೆಟ್ಟೆಕರ ದಂಪತಿಗಳು ಬಟರ್‌ಫ್ಲೈ ಕನ್ಸರ್ವೇಟರಿ ಆಫ್ ಗೋವಾ ಎಂಬ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಸಿದರು. ನಂತರದ 2021ರಲ್ಲಿ ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್ ಎಂಬ ಮರುನಾಮಕರಣ ಮಾಡಿದರು.

ಇಲ್ಲಿನ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳು ಹೂವುಗಳಿಂದ ಆಕರ್ಷಕವಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ, ಆದರೆ ಬದಲಾಗಿ ಇಲ್ಲಿರುವ ವಿಶೇಷ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಮಯ ಸಸ್ಯಗಳಿಂದ ಆಕರ್ಷಿತವಾಗುತ್ತವೆ. ಸಂತಾನೋತ್ಪತ್ತಿ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಪ್ರಭೇದದ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಮೊಟ್ಟೆ ಇಡಲು ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಪ್ರಭೇದದ ಗಿಡ ಬೇಕು. ಗಾರ್ಡೇನಿಯಾ, ಬಾರ್ಲೇರಿಯಾ ಮುಂತಾದ ಹೂ ಬಿಡುವ ಸಸ್ಯಗಳು ಈ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಸ್ವರ್ಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೇರಳವಾಗಿವೆ. ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್‌ನ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಲಯವನ್ನು ಉದ್ಯಾನವನದಂತೆ ವಿನ್ಯಾಸಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಇಲ್ಲಿಯವರೆಗೆ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಲಯವು 130ಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಜಾತಿಯ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ದಾಖಲಿಸಿದೆ.

ಈ ಉದ್ಯಾನವನದಲ್ಲಿ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಅನುಭವ ದೊಂದಿಗೆ ಪ್ಯಾರಿನ್ ಕೊಳವು ಶಾಂತತೆಯ ವಾತಾವರಣವನ್ನು ನೀಡುತ್ತದೆ. ನಿಮ್ಮ ಕಾಲುಗಳನ್ನು ಕೊಳದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೆಲವು ಕ್ಷಣಗಳಿಗೆ ಬಿಟ್ಟು, ಮೀನುಗಳು ಚರ್ಮದ ಸುತ್ತ ಸ್ಪರ್ಶಿಸುವುದನ್ನು ನೋಡುವುದು ಒಂದು ವಿಸ್ಮಯದ ಅನುಭವವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಉಲ್ಕಾಶಿಲೆಗಳು

ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್‌ವುಡ್ಸ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಅವರೂಪದ ಕಲ್ಲುಗಳು, ಉಲ್ಕಾಶಿಲೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಪಳೆಯುಳಿಕೆಗಳ ಮೊದ್ದ ಸಂಗ್ರಹವನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ ಆನಂದಿಸಬಹುದು. ಈ ಪ್ರಾಚೀನ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಪ್ರತಿಯೊಂದು ಆಕರ್ಷಕ ಭಾಗವನ್ನು ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಲು ವುದು ಮತ್ತು ಅವುಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಯಶೋಧನ್ ಅವರ ವಿವರಣೆ ಅದ್ಭುತವಾಗಿದೆ. ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಸ್ಫಟಿಕ ಶಿಲೆ ಮತ್ತು ಬಣ್ಣದ ಬೆಣಚು ಕಲ್ಲುಗಳನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಬಿಳಿಗಿದ ಸಸ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಖರೀದಿಸ ಬಹುದು. ಉದ್ಯಾನವನದ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಿ ವಿಜಯ ಅವರು ಹಿಂದಿ, ಮರಾಠಿ ಮತ್ತು ಕೊಂಕಣಿ ಭಾಷೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿವರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ.

ಪರಿಸರ ಸ್ನೇಹಿ ಮನೆ

ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್‌ನ ಸಮೀಪದಲ್ಲೇ ಇರುವ ಜ್ಯೋತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಯಶೋಧನ್ ಜೆಟ್ಟೆಕರ್ ದಂಪತಿಗಳ ಪರಿಸರ ಸ್ನೇಹಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಹುಲ್ಲು ಹಸಿರಿನ ಆತರ್ಗತ ನೀರು ಕೊಯ್ಲು ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಸುಂದರವಾದ ಮನೆ ಆಕರ್ಷಕ ಎನಿಸಿದೆ. ಮನೆಯ ಛಾವಣಿಯ ಮೇಲ್ಭಾಗದ ಉದ್ಯಾನವು ಮಳೆ ನೀರು ಕೊಯ್ಲು ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡುತ್ತದೆ. ಇದು ಮನೆಯ ಟ್ಯಾಂಕುಗಳಿಗೆ ಮಳೆ ನೀರನ್ನು ಕೆಲವು ನೂರು ಮೀಟರು ದೂರ ದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಮಿಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವುಡ್ಸ್ ಉದ್ಯಾನವನದ ಬೆಟ್ಟದ ತುದಿಗೆ ಪಂಪ್ ಮಾಡುವುದಲ್ಲದೇ, ಅದನ್ನು ಮತ್ತೆ ಕೆಳಗೆ ತರಿಯುವಂತೆ ಮಾಡುತ್ತದೆ. ಆಯುರ್ವೇದ ವೈದ್ಯ ಪತ್ನಿ ಜ್ಯೋತಿಯವರ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ಮತ್ತು ಮನೆಯ ಭಾವನೆಯು ಉದ್ಯಾನದ ಪ್ರೇರಕ ಶಕ್ತಿ ಎಂದು ಯಶೋಧನ್ ಜೆಟ್ಟೇಕರ್ ಹೇಳುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಇದು ಗೋವಾದ ವಿಶೇಷ ಅವರೂಪದ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಲಯ. ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಪ್ರಪಂಚ ಒಂದು ವಿಸ್ಮಯ ಲೋಕ. ಇಂತಹ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ಗೊಂದು ಆಪೂರವದ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ರಕ್ಷಿಸಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯ.

ಈ ಪಕ್ಷಿಧಾಮದಲ್ಲಿ ಬ್ಲಾಕ್ಸ್, ಜಾವಾ ಪಿಂಚ್ ಗಳು, ಸನ್ ಕೋನೂರ್ ಗಿಳಿಗಳು, ಕಾಕಟಿಯಲ್ಸ್‌ನಂತಹ ವಿಲಕ್ಷಣ ಪಕ್ಷಿಗಳ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಮಯ ಗೂಡಿದೆ.

ಹಳೆಗಾಲ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಇಷ್ಟ

ಆಗ್ಸ್ಟ್‌ನಿಂದ ನವೆಂಬರ್‌ವರೆಗೆ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳ ಕಾಲವಿದ್ದು, ಪ್ರತಿಯೊಂದು ಚಿಟ್ಟೆ ಪ್ರಭೇದವು ಮೊಟ್ಟೆಗಳನ್ನು ಇಡುವ ಸಸ್ಯಗಳ ವಿಷಯದಲ್ಲಿ ತನ್ನದೇ ಆದ ಆದ್ಯತೆ ಹೊಂದಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಇದಲ್ಲದೇ ಚಿಟ್ಟೆಗಳು ಆಹಾರಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ತಮ್ಮ ನೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಸಸ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿವೆ. ಪ್ರತಿ

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Vishwa Vani Pg.11

Urea shortage: More than meets the eye

Kumar Buradikatti
Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
Girish Pattanashetti
KALABURAGI/BELAGAVI/HUBBALLI



Early and copious rainfall has led to increased demand for crystalline urea from the farmers. ARUN KULKARNI

The increased demand for urea and reported non-availability of the same in the market, leading to protests by farmers in some districts of North and Central Karnataka, have more to it than what meets the eye.

Early and copious rainfall has led to increased demand for crystalline urea by the farmers who believe in conventional farming and are averse to the use of nano urea despite efforts to promote it.

After the Chief Minister wrote to the Centre on the need for more supply, a delegation of MPs from North Karnataka also met the Union Minister concerned seeking more supply for the kharif season. But it will take some time for the supply to reach.

Recurring issue

The issue of scarcity of fertilizers is not new in Karnataka. Variations in the demand-and-supply chain have caused problems earlier also, the worst being the police firing in Haveri in 2008, when protests over fertilizers turned violent ultimately resulting in the death of two farmers and a few being crippled for life.

This year's situation has brought to the fore several other related issues, including the black market.

In Davangere district, where paddy and maize cultivation has gained momentum, the administration has cancelled the licences of eight wholesale dealers for illegally selling urea to other districts and suspending the licences of six retailers for fleecing the farmers. Now each farmer gets two bags of urea.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Davangere G.M. Gangadharswamy, panic was owing to increased demand although the district has additional stock of 3,000 MT of urea. Now the district administration has also launched awareness campaign to promote nano urea instead of crystalline urea.

In an attempt to cut overuse subtly, the government has reduced the standard urea bag size from 50 to 45 kg.

While the increased demand is one aspect, the larger issue lies elsewhere, says Chamarasa Mallipatil, honorary president of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha. "Stockpiling by dealers during the off season to sell at inflated prices, and efforts to push nano urea, which is far more profitable for manufacturers, are the real causes," he argued.

Sidagouda Modagi, Krishik Samaj leader, says the lack of efficient rural cooperatives is another key factor. "On the other hand, the Central government that enjoys a near monopoly on the urea stocks and transport and the State government that manages the last-mile delivery have not done their job properly," he said.

Multiple reasons

According to Vithal Benagi, former director of extension in University of Agriculture Sciences, Dharwad, urea scarcity is brought on by factors including change in rainfall patterns, overuse by farmers, and policy errors by the government.

Most farmers tend to overuse urea for its nitrogen content. Nitrogen makes plants greener and succulent and increases yields slightly. However, overuse leads to acidification of soil, nitrate pollution in water, and damage to the ozone layer, due to air pollution.

It also makes plants susceptible to pest attacks, forcing farmers to use more pesticides. This is a vicious cycle. Moreover as urea is available for ₹280 to ₹300 per bag, it is preferred over other inputs.

Sidharam Patil, of College of Agriculture under the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, underlines how overuse of urea is affecting soil health and also public health.

"The problem is particularly acute in North Karnataka, where black calcareous soils, rich in calcium carbonate and low in iron, are especially vulnerable. This iron deficiency often leads to chlorosis (yellowing of leaves), which should ideally be corrected with micronutrients like iron sulfate. However, farmers often resort to urea instead. While it temporarily restores the green appearance of plants, it does not address the root cause," Prof. Patil explained.

Human health at risk

Rising nitrate levels in groundwater owing to excessive urea use is another matter of concern which has direct impact on public health, informs Prof. Patil. "High nitrate levels in drinking water are contributing to cases of blue baby syndrome (infant methemoglobinemia), where infants develop bluish skin owing to reduced oxygen levels in the blood," Prof. Patil said.

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The Hindu Pg.08

'Banana prices to dip after Vara Mahalakshmi'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



FARMERS who chose to grow the one-year banana crop this season are seeing bumper income.

In Kolar too, the yelakki banana is being sold in the retail market at Rs 120 per kg, while wholesale dealers are purchasing it from farmers at Rs 80-90 per kg depending on size. Puniyamurthy, a wholesale trader from EVK Mandi, said the prices could climb another Rs 10 over the next two to three days and will come down after the Vara Mahalakshmi festival.

Farmer Ganesh Gowda, who is also a representative of the Raitha Sangha, said this year, he chose to grow bananas only in two acres as he sustained losses over the last two years due to heavy rain. "The two-acre plantation will give me more returns than what I gained over the last two years. Many major banana farmers gave up growing the fruit this year because of losses two successive years," he said.

Those who have not harvested bananas over the last 10 days expecting better prices ahead of the festival will get good returns, farmers said.

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Farmers defend their reliance on fertilizer

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI/ BELAGAVI/ KALABURAGI

While experts emphasise the need to scale down the use of urea, many farmers defend their increased reliance on the supplement.

"Floods have become more frequent in recent years. When fields remain submerged for days, crops, especially cotton, bananas, and chillies, suffer severely. Leaves turn yellow, plants wilt, and often wither. Applying urea at that stage works like a miracle. Within a week, the crops bounce back - green, healthy, and growing again," said Sharanabasappa Mamshetti, district president of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha.

Nano urea

Although nano urea is promoted as a more efficient alternative, farmers are not still convinced about its efficacy, he said.

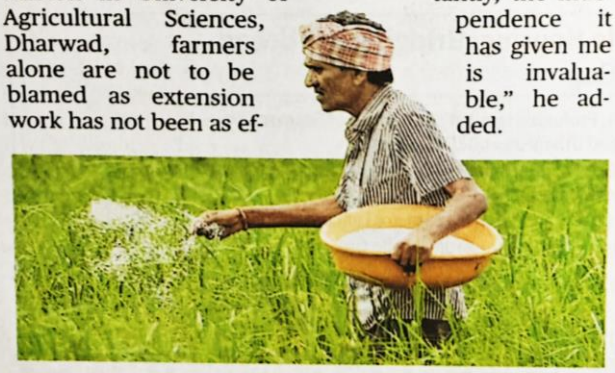
According to Vithal Benagi, former director of extension in University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, farmers alone are not to be blamed as extension work has not been as efficient as it should have been.

On the other hand, Raju Teggelli, head of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Kalaburagi), under the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, acknowledged the difficulty in changing established practices. "We have been working to educate farmers on the importance of balanced nutrient management. But old habits die hard," he said.

Alternatives

Meanwhile, there are farmers who have adopted alternatives to tackle the issue. Prakash and Anuradha Kulkarni, certified organic farmers from Honnihal village in Belagavi district, say they have managed to grow a variety of crops without using urea for over 14 years now.

"I no longer depend on the market or the government for inputs like fertilizers or pesticides. I prepare all my inputs on my farm. It has reduced my cost and increased profits. Importantly, the independence it has given me is invaluable," he added.



04-08-2025
The Hindu Pg.08

'Bio-fortified potatoes to hit Indian market soon'

Dr. Heck said India has the strongest momentum for potato production and farmers wanted better varieties of potato that grew well with fewer agrochemical input and they also wanted to be part of the market chain, including food processing. He expressed hope that the centre will help farmers access better quality seeds and provide them better exposure to markets.

The CIP believes that the location chosen for the new centre near Agra, in the heart of the potato belt of India, is ideal as the Indo-Gangetic plains is the largest potato-producing area in the world.

Dr. Heck said the Uttar Pradesh government had made available the land and handed it over to the National Horticulture Board, which invited the CIP to establish the centre. The agreement between the CIP and the Union Agriculture Ministry, signed in the last week of July, was set up following the demand from the Government of India in recognition of the potential for economic growth from the thriving potato sector.

"It may be noted that international companies, especially potato firms from Europe and North America, are increasingly investing in potato production in India," he said.

Part of market chain

"What they [farmers] needed is access to potato seed of the right quality, of the right variety, and at the right time of the year. There are constraints. They do not have enough potato seeds or they come too late for planting or they are not of good quality. We need to build the capacity for companies to multiply potato seeds. That will be a major contribution of the CIP," he said. The CIP was working with private companies and public research institutes to make sure that farmers throughout India would have access to good quality planting material, right from the initial breeding of new varieties, through multiplication every year, in the right locations.

He said the CIP would also ensure that the vulnerable parts of society had access to nutritious potato. There were number of opportunities along the road; one was to work with the government, with public sector food procurement, for school feeding programmes, such as mid-day meals. This would give children access to nutritious potato through the programmes, more specifically and consistently, he said. Another one was to breed potato that was more nutritious, he added.

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Minister MB Patil has said that the Karnataka's proposal to increase the height of Almatti and Hipparagi dams has nothing to do with the floods in upstream Maharashtra. Patil said that floods in Maharashtra's Sangli, Satara and Kolhapur districts are a result of the simultaneous release of water from the Koyna, Rajapur and other dams, along with rampant encroachment

LOOKING AT A SEASON OF LOSS



BIG PICTURE

Despite the monsoon bounty, farmers in the state are restless over shortage of fertilisers, especially urea and diammonium phosphate. Usually, every crisis also throws up an opportunity. Is this the time to move away from excessive use of fertilisers that has leached the earthiness out of our soil, and embrace organic solutions? While protecting farmers' livelihood is vital, keeping sustainable farming as an attainable goal should not be forgotten altogether

Hope of bumper crop fading fast

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

GURU, a farmer, is seen running from one fertiliser shop to another in Hullahalli, Nanjangud, Mysuru, and other places. He spends more time in search of urea than he works in the fields. Reason: He knocks on the shops around 20-25km from Daripura in Mysuru taluk, with a request for diammonium phosphate — DAP 10-26-26 and 20-20-20 – as local shops have no stock for more than three weeks. He has to approach shops in neighbouring towns for fertilisers since he badly needs them for his ginger, banana, tomato and beans grown in 20 acres of land. He fears that failure to add fertilisers on time would impact the yield and shatter his hopes for a bumper crop.

"I tried my best, and even offered Rs 100 more per bag as I can't let my labourers sit idle waiting for fertilisers. Shopkeepers with 'no stock' boards suggest the use of organic manure. I'm not for the fertilisers of their choice. My experience suggests that I need DAP and similar component fertilisers that are not available now," he says.

On the other hand, Guru is upset as the increase in prices of fertilisers has made a big hole in his pocket. "I used to spend Rs 4 lakh on fertilisers four years ago. Now prices of agriculture inputs have doubled. I need at least four bags per acre and cannot get even one for a month now.

"I used to spend Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000 to grow tomatoes on an acre but it has crossed Rs 1.3 lakh as prices of mulching sheets, bamboo logs, pesticides and fertilisers have shot up, doubling the cost of cultivation. How can farmers survive as wages have shot up from Rs 250 to Rs 400 for women from neighbouring villages, and Rs 600 for men who work for five to six hours," he asks. Labourers don't turn up if they are not provided to-and-fro autorickshaw fare and lunch on time. However, he says the cost of cultivation can be reduced by 30 per cent if family members work in the fields and have their own land with better water resource. This is not the case if cultivation is taken up in leased land with hired labourers, he adds.

Guru has pledged the land to a moneylender to invest in standing crops and for agricultural inputs to get bumper crops. "I have stocked ginger grown during the previous year. I did not want to sell it for a throwaway price. I am confident that prices will shoot up in a couple of months," he says.

Coffee grower braces for a bitter brew

PRAJNA GR @ Madikeri

KODAGU is no exception to the fertiliser crisis in the state. To curb hoarding of urea and illegal sales, the agriculture department and police are conducting inspections at fertiliser shops.

With the district receiving heavy rainfall, the Coffee Board has urged growers to apply urea to stop the dropping of coffee beans. Shortage of urea is, however, affecting maintenance works across estates even as growers said they were spending extra money to protect the coffee yield.

Harish Madappa, a grower in South Kodagu, owns a coffee estate. He also grows paddy. He says the coffee estate has to be sprinkled with urea during the pre-monsoon period and the same was carried out without interruption as urea was available then.

"From various VSSN facilities to private fertiliser shops, not even a kg of urea is available anywhere now. While we have been advised to use urea to prevent the dropping of coffee beans, there is no urea anywhere." The Coffee Board has also suggested using ammonium sulphate as an alternative to urea. However, Harish says, "While a bag of urea costs Rs 227, a bag of ammonium sulphate costs Rs 990. Further, the coffee plants require increased nitrogen supply which is abundant in urea. While urea has 46% nitrogen, ammonium sulphate has only 20% nitrogen. So, instead of one bag of urea that costs about Rs 227, we have to use two bags of ammonium sulphate that costs Rs 1980, increasing maintenance cost eight times."

He explains that each plant requires a certain calculated amount of urea depending on the size and yield the crop provides. "While alternatives to urea are available, they are not feasible to small growers. Further, even nano spraying of fertilisers can be done, but this too is not cost-effective and requires large amount of labour," he says.

'Now is the time, we can't wait any longer'

FIROZ ROZINDAR @ Vijayapura

GOUDAPPA Babaleshwar is worried that his crop would not yield enough this year if he fails to get fertilisers such as urea and Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) within the next fortnight. Having 5 acres of land in Hittinahalli village of Vijayapura taluk, Babaleshwar said farmers are not getting sufficient quantities of fertiliser. "Last year, we got fertilisers easily from Raita Samparka Kendra (RSK) in our village itself, but this year we are struggling to get it even at higher prices in the open market. Only a few have been able to collect fertilisers," he said.

Babaleshwar used to grow jowar, Bengal gram and onion, but a decade ago began to cultivate tur dal extensively as it fetches a good price. "Tur essentially needs urea and DAP for higher yield, and without it, the yield reduces significantly. Without urea and DAP, we get four to five bags of tur – each bag weighs 90-70kg – while with urea and DAP, we get close to 10 bags," he said. Babaleshwar said he spent around Rs 4,000 last year on urea and DAP, but this year, farmers are spending at least Rs 2,000 more for the same 5-acre land.

"The increasing price of fertiliser is like rubbing salt into wounds. Farmers are already in distress due to falling prices and loss due to vagaries of nature, the unavailability of fertilisers will only add to our woes," he says. Babaleshwar says farmers should get fertilisers within a month as this is the right time. "After that, even if we get fertilisers in tonnes, it will be of no use for the crop."

Grim prognosis of crop loss

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Kalaburagi

THOUGH his field did receive sufficient rains to get a good yield during the kharif season, Sunil Guttedar, a small farmer with 15 acres of land at Nagur in Kalaburagi district, is worried of possible crop loss as till date he could not administer urea to his crops.

Sunil has cultivated sugarcane on 10 acres of land, and tur in the remaining land. Growth is good but for further growth, Sunil needs at least 50 bags of urea and 50 bags of DAP. "With great difficulty, I managed to get 50 bags of diammonium phosphate (DAP). I need 50 bags of urea immediately to spray on standing crop. If I don't, it will affect the growth and yield of the crops," says Sunil.

"Usually fertiliser would be sprayed on the crops in July. I visited the nearby Raitha Samparka Kendra several times, but each time the person in charge trots out some excuse or other and till date I have not got urea," he adds.

Sunil has borrowed Rs 2 lakh for cultivation this year, and is the sole breadwinner for his five-member family. "If I suffer crop loss, my family would be hit hard," he says, worry darkening his face.

Shortage casts long shadow

ARPITHA I @ Shivamogga

Jagadeesh Naik, a farmer from Malavagoppa village, is facing a crisis just when the monsoon has revived hopes of a good crop. Despite owning eight acres of land where he grows arecanut, paddy and vegetables, Naik says rising prices and shortage of fertilisers have cast a shadow on the season. "Rain has come on time this year, but we are struggling to get fertilisers like urea, potash and suphala. Even when available, the prices are beyond our reach," he says.

Naik points out that a 50-kg bag of urea, which cost Rs 250 earlier, now sells for Rs 330-350, with some desperate farmers paying up to Rs 400. Potash has gone up from Rs 1,400-1,500 per bag to over Rs 1,700, while suphala now costs Rs 1,650, up from Rs 1,450. This has burdened him more with an increase in cost of production per acre from Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000. He says many farmers apply larger quantities of fertiliser during the harvesting phase, and the current shortage during this critical window has rattled them.

"Production cost has gone up sharply, but we're unsure if market prices for our crops will rise accordingly. This is especially hard for small farmers," he says. Alleging that an artificial shortage is being created, he urged the state government to ensure timely and fair supply. "We should not be forced into black market purchases just to save our crops," he said. Naik now fears that without timely fertiliser access, his yield, and income, may drop drastically, despite a favourable monsoon.

Crisis upends rural social rhythm

RAGHU KOPPAR @ Gadag

THE scarcity of fertiliser has begun to upset rural social rhythm. In Timmapur, many farmer families had to skip Nagar Panchami festival for the first time in their lives as they were stranded in queues in expectation of grabbing a bag of urea.

Yallappa Babari was standing in one such queue during the festival. His wife, Nirmala, spent time watching the fields. The Babari family grows maize, wheat and green gram in their eight-acre field. Now is the time to apply urea to get a good quality crop. Yallappa could so far get only two bags of urea. Yallappa says: "Rich farmers can buy urea in black market but we cannot afford to do so. Last year, we earned 1.5 lakh and this time we may lose all crops or get very less profit due to the urea crunch."

Can nano urea be the alternative?

TUSHAR A MAJUKAR @ Belagavi

BASAVARAJ Muddannavar is at his wit's end. The farmer from Kadoli can't get his bag of urea. Out of his total 9-acre holding, Muddannavar has planted paddy in three acres, while the remaining land is under sweet potato and maize cultivation. Now, where are the nutrients to come from?

Local fertiliser dealers are urging farmers to switch to nano urea, a liquid alternative that must be sprayed onto crops using pump equipment. Additionally, ammonium sulphate is being sold as another substitute, though it comes at a higher cost of Rs 950 per bag. "We are unsure how effective nano urea really is, and spraying requires extra equipment and effort," says Muddannavar. Farmers are appealing to the state government for immediate intervention and restocking of urea, warning that continued delay could severely affect crop yield at this critical growth stage.

SHIFT IN CROP PATTERN, RE-SOWING RESULT IN UREA SCARCITY

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

WHAT has caused the shortage of urea? While the blame-game goes on between the State and Central governments over shortage of fertilisers, there are a host of factors at play. To begin with, there is excessive use of fertilisers due to sudden shift in crop pattern, and re-sowing necessitated by heavy rains. Then there is the increase in horticulture crop, in turn spiking the demand for urea and other fertilisers. Experts say there is a need to spread awareness about excessive use of fertilisers. Karnataka needs 4lakh tonnes of DAP for the ongoing kharif season, and over 2lakh tonnes for rabi. The Centre supplies DAP to states based on their average use for the last three years. The DAP quantity to be supplied for the kharif season is allocated in January, and for rabi in July.

By March 2025, there was 3.6 lakh MT of urea in stock in Karnataka. The State government had requested for 6.4 lakh MT of urea, of which the Centre had allotted 5.1 lakh. With earlier stock and this, there was 8.7 lakh MT of urea available in the state. The Centre is yet to supply 1.3 lakh MT.

According to sources in the agriculture department, technically, both the State and Central governments are correct in terms of demand and supply. The shortage of urea has various reasons – to begin with, there was more demand for urea. As cotton prices dropped, farmers shifted to maize. While cotton growing comes with many disadvantages, including labour cost, pesticides and the 145-day crop, maize comes with lesser cost and can be grown in 120 days.

With farmers from the maize belt, including Haveri, Davanagere, Koppal, Vijayanagar, Chitradurga, Dharwad and Shivamogga shifting to maize, sowing of maize increased by an additional 2 lakh hectares.

Crops like green gram, black gram, chickpea and other pulses have the nature of fixing nitrogen in the atmosphere and this requires less urea, whereas cotton, maize, sunflower, sugarcane requires more. People should also understand that more usage of urea is not good for the health of soil or humans. When urea is used, it leaches out and not just goes to the crop, it also joins streams and other water bodies, causing humans to consume nitrate.

Apart from this, due to heavy rains, a lot of sowing was washed out and farmers had to re-sow 13,000 hectares of land, with urea being used again after fresh sowing.

According to a farming expert, for every 100kg of urea used, 20kg evaporates due to high temperature, another 40kg of urea seeps into water due to heavy rains. Only 40kg of urea remains. This is during a normal rainfall season. But this year, with more rain in many places, urea leached out in water, and as leaves turn green to yellow, farmers start doubling the use of urea. This helps to some extent but is not the solution.

One sector that goes under the radar is horticulture, though cultivation area is increasing. It was 21lakh hectares during 2019-20, and this year has gone up to 27lakh hectares. Farmers are going for cash crops and there is a huge demand for not just urea, but also all fertilisers.

Excessive use of urea is not advisable. This impacts soil health. The soil organic carbon content (carbon found within the organic matter of soil derived from decomposed plant and animal residues) which was 0.5 per cent some 15 years back, is now reduced to 0.32 per cent. Experts, therefore, suggest the use of organic manure once in a while that will help increase soil health.