

Application of Neem Coated Urea: Impact on Sugarcane and Tur Farmers in Maharashtra

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In May 2015, Government of India made it mandatory for indigenous producers of urea to produce 100 per cent of their total production of subsidized urea as neem coated urea (NCU) as well as to neem coat the imported urea. The policy was expected to increase use efficiency of urea and reduce volume of fertiliser subsidies. The paper studies usage of NCU and its impact on yields of sugarcane and tur, and the feasibility of NCU usage in Maharashtra. It also studies perception of the farmers about quality of NCU and the problems encountered during its usage. The analysis revealed that the application of NCU had positive impact on returns of the farmers and they were satisfied with its quality. The policy implications include creating awareness about NCU and ensuring its timely availability. Training camps need to be organized so that the farmers given suggestions for judicious fertiliser usage.

I Introduction

Fertilisers as an important input providing nutrients essential for balanced growth of crops has played an important role in supplementing the soil with macronutrients as well as micronutrients. It is well known that the Indian soils are deficient in nutrients and therefore timely and adequate application of fertilisers is essential for increasing agricultural production. Increased usage of fertilisers was instrumental in increasing crop yield and production, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s. With increasing production of food grain and non-food grain crops, fertiliser consumption in India also started increasing. The total fertiliser consumption [(nitrogen (N), potash (K), and phosphorous (P)] has increased from 65.6 thousand metric tonnes (MT) in 1951-1952 to 25.6 million MT in 2014-2015. Per hectare consumption of fertilisers (NPK) also increased from less than 0.5 kg per hectare to 131.6 kg per hectare during this period (FAI, 2015).

Nitrogen is the most popular fertiliser used by the Indian farmers. Among the straight N fertilisers, urea has highest, i.e., 46 per cent nitrogen content. In fact, in 2015-2016, urea had highest installed capacity of 207.5 lakh MT per annum which was 59 per cent of the total capacity and had constituted around 61

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