

# Business Standard

## Natural fertiliser will slash India's fertiliser import, subsidy bills: Dhirendra Kumar

Q&A with MD & Chief Scientific Officer, Camson Biotechnologies

Dilip Kumar Jha | Mumbai August 26, 2015 Last Updated at 13:52 IST



Stepping ahead to make India self-sufficient on food productions, the government increased fertiliser subsidy bill to Rs 72,968.56 crore for the financial year 2015-16 as against Rs 70,967.31 crore last year on rising fertiliser import.

But, the fertiliser subsidy bill can be reduced by using natural fertiliser developed by Camson Biotechnologies which is sufficient to meet incremental demand of fertiliser, says **Dhirendra Kumar**, Managing Director & Chief Scientific Officer, in an exclusive interview with *Dilip Kumar Jha*. Edited excerpts :

*Dhirendra Kumar*

### Why natural fertilisers?

It is the need of the hour. The environment is rapidly degrading with the rampant over use of chemicals for the sheer lack of an alternative. The years of hard work invested by Camson in research in the microbial space have paid off.

Camson has discovered the technology to produce the three macro nutrients required by plants - nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potash (K) - using microbial extracts combined with advanced fermenter based technology. The natural fertilisers are available in various combinations of NPK and are positioned as organic water soluble fertilisers (WSF).

The process enables Camson to produce any amount of NPK. The path breaking products / processes has catapulted Camson to become the 'first in the world' to launch natural fertilisers. Our patent application for the same was recently accepted.

### How cost effective is the natural fertiliser compared to chemical fertiliser?

The manufacturing process is an environment friendly method that produces these elements in a cost effective manner with a fraction of the energy required to manufacture chemical based water soluble fertilisers. An in-depth market survey indicated that farmers are willing to pay upto 70% premium for an

organic alternative to chemical water soluble fertilisers (WSF).

However, we intend to launch its range of natural fertilisers at a significant discount since manufacturing costs are nearly half compared to chemical WSF. We intend to pass on a significant portion of the benefit to farmers.

In spite of being priced very economically, there is sufficient margin for us to invest in building the brand and sales channel. The usage of natural fertilisers can help boost profits for farmers by upto 70% in the near term and reverse years of ecological damage done to their farms.

### **What is the potential in terms of use?**

The market size of WSF in India is about 1.5 lakh tonnes and is expected to double to 3 lakh tonnes by 2018 worth over Rs 2,000 crore. It's one of the fastest growing segments in the agri-input industry.

### **Are you in talks with fertiliser companies for its distribution?**

Many companies have expressed interest to partner with Camson to distribute our natural fertilisers in their brand. While Camson will own the technology we are exploring various options on manufacturing and distribution.

This will be a win-win arrangement which will broaden the market, increase penetration and ensure that the more farmers have access to this unique product range. The boost in yields achieved by using natural fertilisers will bring down the prices of zero residue produce ensuring that the common man has to access to safe food at affordable prices.

### **Will it bring down the fertiliser import bill?**

India imports its entire requirement of WSF. We are well poised to make a sizeable dent by offering a natural replacement in this segment. We are also in the process of ramping up capacity over the next 18-24 months to cater to incremental demand.

All of this will help bring down the import bill and save precious foreign exchange over a period of time. Also, India imports a large portion of its fertiliser requirement to sell it at a huge subsidy.

The amount budgeted as subsidy this year itself is Rs 72,969 crore (through the NBS scheme). In the long term, we aim to provide a home-grown natural solution in this segment as well. We are looking forward to partner the government on it's Make in India campaign.