

BALANCED FERTILISATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR INDIA?



This first issue of *BETTER CROPS-INDIA* demonstrates how balanced fertilisation benefits crop production, farmers' profits, and the sustainability of the country's farming systems. The International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) is continuing a long and proud history of working in the field of balanced fertilisation in crop management systems in India and around the world.

In Indian agriculture, as in many parts of the world, we continually see the negative impacts of unbalanced nutrient use on crop production, soil fertility, and soil degradation. Degradation of soils through the inappropriate use of nutrient inputs is a real and pressing problem which all nations must address. Growing future food supplies with additional nitrogen is not a reality on most of these degraded soils. Properly balancing the nitrogen with other macronutrients, secondary nutrients, and micronutrients holds the keys to success.

It is our opinion that, like most issues facing society, changes will be required to ensure that Indian farmers can access the various nutrients they need to achieve crop production and economic goals in the near future. These farmers are well aware of the benefits they obtain from the organic nutrients on their farms, but also realise that their survival depends on the addition of mineral fertiliser nutrients to optimize production and profits.

In 2007, I had the opportunity to meet a sugarcane grower in Meerut District of Uttar Pradesh while on tour in India. Not only did he proudly show us how balanced fertilisation was improving his cane production, but he also introduced us to his son – the first person in his family to attend University. While there was little doubt that our visit to his farm was a proud moment for him, I was truly moved by the power which our cooperative efforts had brought to this farm family and wondered how many other farmers have experienced such benefits.

Developing and presenting new technology can often be a frustrating experience for those who work in research and development. Often we feel that our efforts are being limited by factors outside of our control – policies, transportation, and product access, just to mention a few. However, the fact remains that we have the knowledge and experience to bring increased production, and improved sustainability, to many Indian farmers, while at the same time increasing their income.

Balanced fertilisation is an achievement we continue to take pride in, and will continue to share with all who are interested in the future development of Indian agriculture.

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