

Peanut Blog

An ounce of information



High input costs hit Karnataka farmers ahead of sowing season

The Kharif season in Karnataka usually covers around 70 lakh hectares and includes crops such as paddy, ragi, jowar, bajra, tur and groundnut. Farmers say the cost of cultivation has risen sharply compared to last year, making it difficult to begin sowing operations.

A sharp increase in the costs of essential agricultural inputs ranging from tractor rentals to fertilizers has significantly pushed up the initial investment required for cultivation this year, leaving farmers in deep distress. The Kharif season sees cultivation across nearly 70 lakh hectares in Karnataka, with farmers heavily dependent on crops like ragi, paddy, jowar, bajra, tur, and groundnut. However, external economic shocks, including the West Asia crisis, have disrupted supply chains, leading to a direct surge in fuel and fertilizer prices.

Traditional tilling with oxen has drastically reduced across the state, making farmers almost entirely reliant on mechanised farming. However, the rise in diesel prices has made tractor rentals expensive. Last year, renting a tractor cost between Rs 900 and 1,000 per hour. This year, owners are charging anywhere between Rs 1,200 and 1,300 per hour. Tractor owners defend the hike, citing the high cost of fuel, driver wages, and general maintenance.

Compounding the problem is a severe shortage of chemical fertilisers. Agriculture Minister N Cheluvaryaswamy recently confirmed that the state is currently facing a deficit of nearly 38,000 metric tonnes of chemical fertilizers. Taking advantage of this shortage, retail prices for most chemical fertiliser bags have gone up by Rs 100–200. Even organic options like farmyard manure have seen a spike, with a single tractor load costing up to Rs 2,000 more than it did last year. Combined with a spike in labour wages, the total cost of sowing has hit a steep Rs 5,000 per acre.

As the cost of living and farming both skyrocket, farmer unions are calling on the state government to step in before the sowing window closes. The farming community in the state is in a very vulnerable position. Skyrocketing input costs have made agriculture unsustainable this season. The government must immediately announce a special package providing direct subsidies for inputs, interest-free loans, and special price support to protect farmers from these losses," said Yashavantha T, State General Secretary of the Prantha Raitha Sangha.

Source: <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/high-input-costs-hit-farmers-ahead-of-sowing-season-4014042>