

## **Bacteria can help farmers use less potash**

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Potash is one of the major nutrients required by all crops. There is no such source in India and the entire requirement of potassic fertilizer is met by imports and distributed to farmers at subsidised price eroding both the foreign exchange reserve and revenue.

### **Import**

During the year 2011-12 India imported about 38 lakh tonnes of potassic fertilizers for supplying to farmers. One can imagine the spending by the Government apart from the expenditure to the farmers. Usually about 50-60 kg of potassium is recommended for a hectare of rice. Crops like sugarcane, banana, potato and tapioca require more potassium. As much as 200 kg of potassium is recommended per hectare of sugarcane. To supply this quantity of potassium, farmers have to apply 330 kg of Muriate of Potash which costs Rs. 5,450. But to our advantage Indian soils are naturally rich in potassium and there is a potash mobilizing bacterium to mobilize this native potassium for plant absorption. Potassium in soil exists in different forms but the crop can absorb what is present in soil solution only. The readily available potassium in soil solution is just 2 per cent out of the total and the remaining 98 per cent of soil potassium is locked up in soil minerals and hence not readily available for plant absorption. The remaining gets fixed in the clay minerals and this could be mobilized by the use of potash mobilizing bacterium. Recently a bacterium mobilizing soil potassium (KMB) has been identified from the banana rhizosphere soil and advocated for use among the farmers based on field testing on paddy, groundnut and vegetable crops.

### **Save money**

According to Dr. C. Vaithilingam Managing Director, Rom Vijay Biootech, Puducherry who is an agricultural expert and an entrepreneur in the production and popularisation of Potash Mobilizing Bacterial (KMB) biofertilizer and biopesticides among the farming community, by using this farmers can mobilize the potassium present in their own field soil and save up to 50 per cent of their potassium fertilizer requirement.

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