

**Fertilizer Industry Update:
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Production, Imports and Sales during 2020-21

Table 1: Production, Imports and Sales of Key Fertilizers (unit: Lakh Metric Tonnes- LMT)

	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21
Overall Fertilizers Production	98.4	101.1	-1.1%	2.8%
Overall Fertilizers Imports	29.5	30.5	-19.4%	3.5%
Overall Fertilizers Sales	128.2	173.0	6.6%	35.0%
Urea Production	55.7	60.4	-8.1%	8.4%
Urea Imports	6.9	11.4	-48.9%	64.9%
Urea Sales	65.0	75.0	4.0%	15.4%
DAP Production	11.7	9.4	45.0%	-19.7%
DAP Imports	12.5	6.6	25.0%	-47.5%
DAP Sales	11.2	15.3	26.5%	36.1%
MOP Imports	7.8	4.5	-15.9%	-41.7%
MOP Sales	5.8	6.4	-21.3%	10.7%
SSP Production	10.9	12.3	7.8%	12.7%

Source: Department of Fertilizers, CMIE, Office of the Economic Adviser

Note: Imports data and DAP sales is April-May, rest is April-June

Fertilizer sales are considered as a proxy for demand.

- **Overall fertilizers** production has increased by 2.8% during Q1-FY21 after registering a negative growth of 1.1% in the previous quarter. The country witnessed an on-time arrival of Southwest monsoon, followed by a quick spread across the region which has resulted in higher sowing thus augmenting the increase in production. Imports have increased by 3.5% supported by the sharp increase in urea imports.

- Production of **urea** increased by 8.4% during Q1-FY21. Production increased as manufacturers were quick enough to resume operations once the government announced relaxations came into effect 15th April 2020 onwards. Imports have risen sharply by 64.9% (April-May 2020) to supplement the increase in demand.

- **DAP** production fell by 19.7% during Q1-FY21. Reason attributable to the decline in production is shortage in raw material availability and labour constraints owing to the shutdown. Imports too have fallen sharply by 47.5% during April-May 2020.

- MOP imports have fallen by 41.7% during April-May 2020. India meets its Potassium chloride (commonly referred to as Muriate of Potash or MOP) requirements completely through imports from Canada, Russia, CIS+ Belarus, Israel, Jordan and Lithuania.

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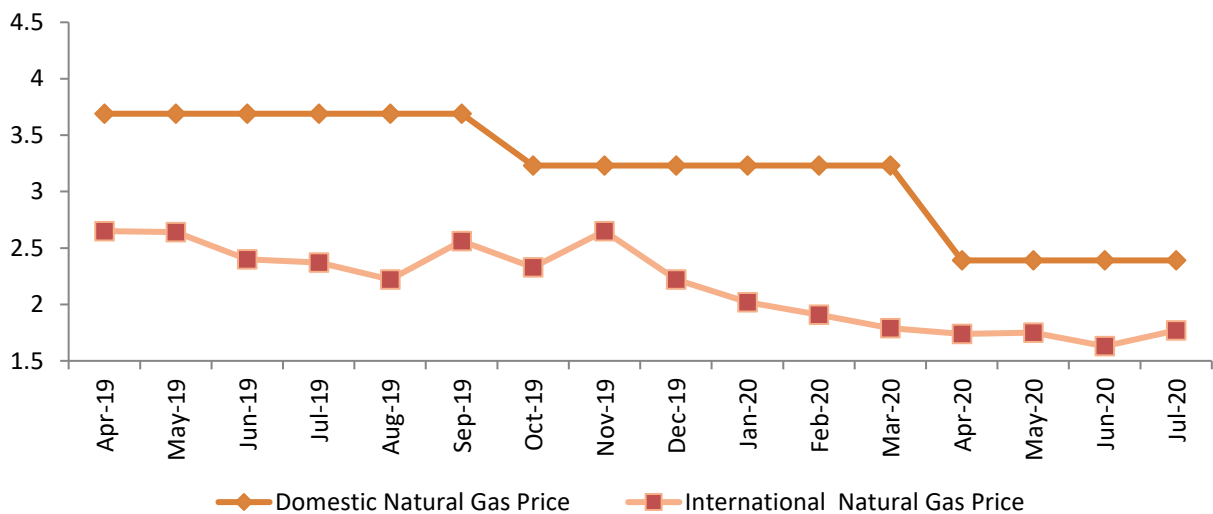
- The production of **SSP** which is an indigenous phosphatic multi-nutrient fertilizer increased by 12.7%. SSP is a cheaper alternative to DAP.
- Overall sales of fertilizers have increased sharply by 35% during Q1-FY21. Sales of urea, DAP and MOP have increased by 15.4%, 36.1% and 10.7%. Panic buying by farmers and dealers coupled by the low prices of the commodity have led to increased sales of fertilisers. Farmers are currently stocking up fertilizers for the on-going Kharif season and are building up stocks in order to avoid any later logistical issues which might be faced due to the coronavirus pandemic. A favourable monsoon forecast ahead of the main kharif application season and proactive steps taken by the government in procuring the bumper Rabi harvest has led to positive sentiments in the farming community, resulting in early demand of agricultural inputs.

Trend in prices of key input raw materials

India imports the raw materials needed for manufacturing fertilizers. Natural gas is used as feedstock for the manufacturing of urea and accounts for 50%-80% of the raw material cost. The fertilizer industry is the leading consumer of domestic natural gas. Additional requirement of natural gas is supplied through imports in the form of RLNG. Out of 31 urea plants in India, 28 are gas based and 3 are naphtha based. Natural gas is preferred as:

1. It is intrinsically hydrogen rich and therefore contributes more hydrogen compared to other feedstock on a unit weight basis.
2. The heavier feedstock like coal and oil are more complex to process and therefore the capital costs are higher compared to natural gas.

Chart 1: Trend in Domestic and International Natural Gas Prices (unit: USD/mmBtu)



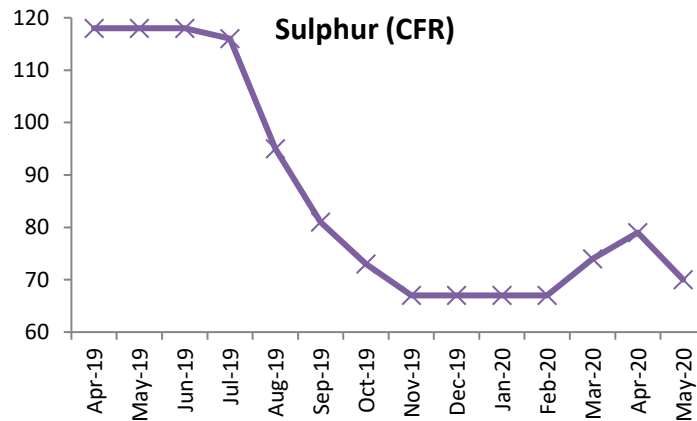
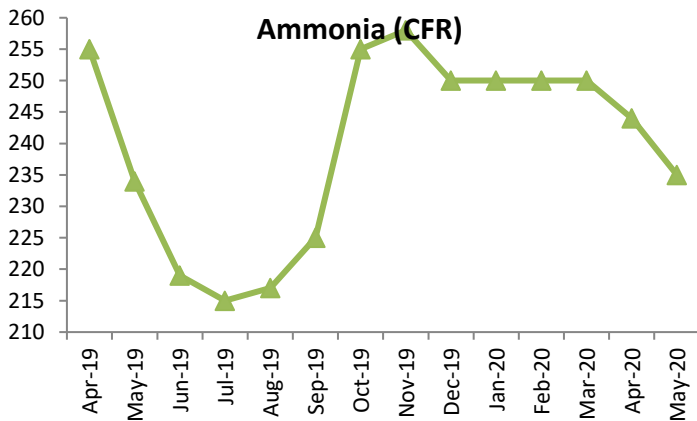
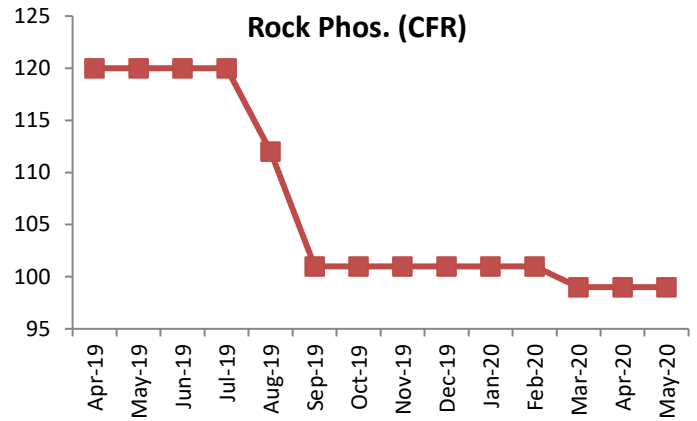
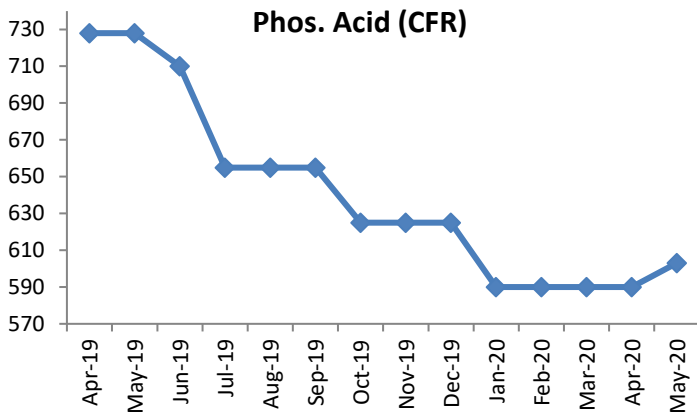
Source: PPAC and EIA

As per the New Domestic Gas Policy, the government revises the domestic natural gas price every six months i.e. April-September and October-March. Currently (H1-FY21) the price for gas produced from local fields has been revised to USD 2.39/mmBtu which is the lowest price ever set as the New Domestic Gas Policy.

As per our estimates, a 26% fall in natural gas prices could potentially lead to a 12.5% decrease in cost of production of urea, thus decreasing the working capital intensity of the fertilizer manufacturers and it will also act as a relief for the fiscal spending of the government while disbursing the urea subsidy, which is already constrained at the moment.

Prices of R-LNG are usually governed by market dynamics based on contracts and are linked with the global crude oil prices. However, soon fertilizer plants could be taking delivery on India’s first gas exchange (prices are based on market demand-supply) — the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) which has just been launched but currently it is only dealing with delivery of imported natural gas (LNG) not of domestic natural gas price which is formula driven.

Chart 2: Prices of other key Raw Materials used for Fertilizer Production (unit: USD/MT)



Source: Department of Fertilizer

Prices of phosphoric acid, rock phosphates, ammonia and sulphur have fallen by 19.0%, 17.5%, 4.3% and 33.1% on a y-o-y during April-May 2020. Manufacturers have passed on the benefit of soft raw material prices by lowering the MRP of decontrolled fertilizers.

Status on the Progress of the Revival of 5 fertilizer plants

The government is reviving 5 closed fertilizer plants - 4 of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCIL) in Talcher, Ramagundam, Gorakhpur and Sindri and 1 of Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFCL) in Barauni. This is being done by setting up new ammonia-urea plants with a capacity of 12.7 LMT (Lakh Metric Tonne) per annum. The Government expects that with the commissioning/ start of the above plants, it can increase indigenous urea production significantly leading to a substantial reduction in imports and make India self-sufficient in the years to come.

- Ramagundam Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited (RFCL) has already achieved 99.5% of physical progress but there has been some delay (due to COVID-19) in completion of a small component of physical work. It is expected that urea production will commence by the end of H1-FY21.
- Gorakhpur, Sindri, Barauni fertilizer plants have achieved 87%, 70% and 69% of physical progress respectively. It is expected that Gorakhpur, Barauni and Sindri plants will be completed before May 2021.
- Pre-project activities are in progress for the Talcher Fertilizer Plants in Odisha.

Post the commissioning of all the above plants the domestic indigenous urea production is slated to rise by atleast 63.5 LMT/year which will bring down the imports of urea by 70% (assuming FY20 level of imports).

Subsidies offered towards the Fertilizer Sector

The fertilizer industry is highly regulated and monitored by the government. The difference between the cost of production which is higher than the price at which the fertilizer is sold to the beneficiary, is reimbursed by the Government in the form of subsidies. Whenever there is shortage of funds, the Government liquidates the pending subsidy by arranging loans under a Special Banking Agreement (SBA).

While the MRP of urea is fixed and controlled by the Central Government that is not the case with decontrolled fertilizers where in the manufacturers have the liberty to price the product freely and according to the prevailing market conditions.

Table 2: Allocation of the Subsidy within the Fertilizer Sector (figures in Rs/crore)

	2018-2019 (A)	2019-2020 (P)	2020-2021 (BE)	Change y-o-y (+/-)	
				2019-2020 (P)	2020-2021 (BE)
Urea Subsidy	46,514	54,755	47,805	17.7%	-12.7%
Nutrient based Subsidy	24,090	26,369	23,504	9.5%	-10.9%
Total	70,605	81,124	71,309	14.9%	-12.1%

Source: Budget.nic, Controller General of Accounts

Note 2019-20 figures have been sourced from CGA and are Provisional; A-Actuals; BE Budget Estimates

The fertilizer subsidy to be disbursed during FY21 has been reduced by 12.1% to Rs 71,309 crore which could be insufficient for the fertiliser industry which has time and again faced issues regarding inadequate subsidy provisioning. This could lead to a subsidy backlog, thereby impacting the liquidity position of the industry. Additionally, the Ramagundam unit is also expected to start production during FY21 supplicating the increase in the urea subsidy requirement during the year.

If prices of raw materials (particularly of natural gas) are to rise during the year, this could prove to be problematic and challenging for the government.

Within the subsidy Rs 47,805 crores has been earmarked as the urea subsidy and the remaining Rs 23,504 crores has been earmarked for the nutrient based subsidy.

Under NBS, the subsidy given to the companies is fixed annually on the basis of its nutrients content (i.e. Nitrogen, Phosphate, Potash and Sulphur) on per kg basis which is converted into subsidy per tonne depending upon the nutrient content in each grade of the fertilizers. These rates are determined taking into account the international and domestic prices of P&K fertilizers, exchange rate, inventory level in the country.

Table 3: Rates of Nutrients under NBS (Unit: Rs/kg)

Nutrient Type	2019-20	2020-21	Change y-o-y (+/-)	
			2019-20	2020-21
Nitrogen (N)	18.9	18.8	0.0%	-0.6%
Phosphorus (P)	15.2	14.9	0.0%	-2.2%
Potash (K)	11.1	10.1	0.0%	-9.1%
Sulphur (S)	3.6	2.4	31.9%	-33.4%

Source: PIB

For FY21, there has been a downward revision for the nutrients covered the NBS. It is estimated that the subsidy on phosphatic and potassic fertilisers during the current financial year would cost Rs 22,187 crore and the government also approved the inclusion of a complex fertilizer namely Ammonium Phosphate (NP 14:28:0:0) under the NBS Scheme.

Table 4: Fertilizer Subsidies paid by the end of April 2020 (figures in Rs/crore)

	2020-21 (BE)	Actuals up to June 2020	% of Actuals to Budget	Estimates
Urea Subsidy	47,805	17,715		37%
Nutrient Based Fertilizers Subsidy	23,504	7,799		33%
Total	71,309	25,514		36%

Source: Controller General of Accounts

In the new financial year, FY21 the government has already paid 36% of the budgeted subsidy amount upto June 2020. Subsidy distribution started off on a good note in April however for the remaining of the quarter as the government prioritized the disbursement to the urea companies which had a larger backlog, P&K companies received an incremental subsidy of only Rs. 4 crore during May and June 2020 (Rs. 7,795 crore was disbursed as NBS in April 2020).

Conclusion/ Outlook for FY21

The underlying macros for the Indian fertilizer industry look promising despite the coronavirus pandemic and macroeconomic uncertainty. With surplus reservoirs levels, forecasts for a good kharif crop and plentiful rainfall this June-September monsoon season, demand for the procurement of fertilizers seems promising. Sales have increased sharply by 35% during Q1-FY21 and going forward with the recent proposals under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' package pertinent towards the agrarian economy which are focused on boosting the agriculture and allied sector (by strengthening its infrastructure and logistics) and revival of the rural economy, demand for fertilizers for the rest of FY21 seems sanguine for the industry.

- Higher MSP procurement, timely PM-KISAN disbursement, high offtake of seeds and the prioritization of agriculture and businesses involved in the food chain by the Indian government will support the demand/sales of fertilizers going forward.
- The area under cultivation has risen due to the timely arrival and progress of the monsoons.
- Decontrolled fertilizer production and usage is also to increase on the back low prices of DAP and SSP and the government's thrust on improving balanced nutrition.

The overall fertilizer production is to grow by 3-4% by the end of FY21. Overall fertilizer production had increased by 0.3% and 2.7% during FY19 and FY20.

- We expect production to increase in the coming months on the back of restocking activities undertaken by fertilizer manufacturers. Softening of raw material prices too will aid in spurring production.
 - o Commissioning of the Ramagundam plant during FY21 will also add onto the overall fertilizer production.
- Currently the liquidity situation of manufacturers seems to have improved. Fall in input costs has abetted the working capital situation of manufactures.
 - o Urea manufactures are to immensely benefit with the current low gas prices. Another positive for urea makers is the clarity the government has finally provided in March with regards to the reimbursement of additional fixed cost.
 - o DAP prices are also low which will have an impact on working capital of decontrolled fertilizer manufacturers as well.

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