**AWARENESS AND USAGE PATTERN OF WATER-SOLUBLE FERTILIZER IN HIMMATNAGAR TALUKA**

**ABSTRACT**

Water-soluble fertilizers have become vital in modern agriculture due to their quick absorption and adaptability to crop needs. These fertilizers are especially significant in fruit and vegetable farming, offering enhanced nutrient delivery and improved crop growth. In India, the fertilizer industry has evolved substantially and is now largely self-reliant. The study conducted with 200 samples using purposive sampling techniques in the himmatnagar taluka of Gujarat to explore farmers’ awareness and usage of water-soluble fertilizers. The study revealed that farmers are generally knowledgeable and view these fertilizers as effective and beneficial. Dealers and farmers alike highlighted the need for better pricing, quality packaging, and regular demonstrations. Brand preferences varied based on performance and availability, with some brands gaining popularity for their strong market presence. The findings also pointed to experienced and educated farmers being open to adopting new technologies. Overall, the study emphasized the growing role and potential of water-soluble fertilizers in Indian agriculture.

**Keywords:** Water-soluble fertilizers, Nutrient delivery, Brand preferences, Crop growth

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Understanding soil chemical properties is crucial as they influence nutrient availability for plants. These properties can often be improved using lime or fertilizers. For healthy growth and life cycle completion, plants require 18 essential nutrients. Soil amendments, which either supply these nutrients or modify soil chemistry to enhance their availability, have been developed to support plant nutrition. These amendments include lime and fertilizer materials. The advancement of modern lime and fertilizer products, along with improved equipment for their application, has made modifying soil chemical properties a cost-effective and easily achievable process, often yielding significant benefits. Essential plant nutrients, which form the mineral components of plants, are supplied through air, water, and soil. A “fertilizer material” refers to a commercial fertilizer that contains one or more recognized plant nutrients and is primarily used to provide essential nutrients to plants. Fertilizers come from a range of natural and synthetic sources and available in solid, liquid, and gaseous forms, such as anhydrous ammonia. These materials are specifically formulated to enhance plant growth and improve the availability of nutrients in the soil. Water-soluble fertilizers are preferred over conventional chemical fertilizers in agriculture due to their high solubility in water, which facilitates easy absorption by crops and reduces nutrient loss through seepage into surface and groundwater. As a result, these fertilizers are more efficiently absorbed and utilized by plants. They can also be applied through irrigation, making them a highly effective option in modern farming. Additionally, their low seepage rate minimizes groundwater contamination, further contributing to their widespread use among farmers. (Fertilizer association of India, 2025).

Water-soluble fertilizers contribute to both water conservation and reduced fertilizer application. Additionally, government regulations promoting eco-friendly fertilizers and the growing demand for fertigation as a means to optimize water use and enhance economic returns are expected to drive the global water-soluble fertilizers market in the coming years. These fertilizers are suitable for use in aromatic, medicinal, and plantation crops. Furthermore, the rise in crop diseases and declining soil fertility have increased the demand for highly efficient fertilizers worldwide. Water-soluble fertilizers not only improve the quality and yield of agricultural crops but also minimize environmental pollution.

The chemicals used in manufacturing soluble fertilizers for fertigation are essentially salts, meaning they dissolve readily in water, breaking down into charged ions. For instance, potassium nitrate (KNO₃) dissociates into two essential nutrient ions: potassium (K⁺) and nitrate nitrogen (NO₃⁻). One key advantage of fertigation is that all nutrients are already in an ionic form when applied to crops, making them immediately available for plant uptake. In contrast, granular or controlled-release fertilizers must first dissolve in groundwater before plants can absorb the nutrients. The water-soluble fertilizers market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.4% over the forecast period. Many multinational companies are focusing on developing new and improved water-soluble fertilizers. Additionally, the beneficial properties of these fertilizers are being increasingly utilized in horticulture and farming. Continuous discoveries of new applications for water-soluble fertilizers are anticipated to fuel market growth at a rapid pace. (FAO, 2025).

The study was conducted with the broad objectives to study awareness of water-soluble fertilizer among the farmers, to study usage pattern and benefits of water-soluble fertilizers among the farmers, to study expectations of farmers and dealers from the company

1. **METHODOLOGY**

**2.1 Research Methodology**

The study on awareness and usage pattern of water-soluble fertilizer was carried out by using the multi stage sampling. Total 200 farmers were selected for the study. The sampling method for selection of the farmers was non-probability sampling under which the purposive sampling technique was used. Primary and secondary data were collected to fulfil the objectives of the study.

**2.2 Analytical Tools**

Descriptive statistical tools and techniques like frequency distribution, Percentage and graphical representation were used to meet the stipulated objectives.

**Weighted Average Mean**

Weighted average is a type of average where some values in a dataset are given more importance than others. This importance is reflected by assigning weights to each value, and these weights determine how much each value contributes to the overall average.

Weighted average mean was calculated using the following formula:

Weighted Average Mean (X)= (𝐹1𝑋1+ 𝐹2𝑋2+ 𝐹3𝑋3+ 𝐹4𝑋4+ 𝐹5𝑋5)

 Xt

Where, F = Weight given to each response

 X = Number of responses

 Xt =Total number of responses

**Garrett’s Ranking Technique**

Garrett’s ranking technique was used to rank the preferences indicated by the respondents on different factors. As per this method, respondents have been asked to assign the rank for all factors and the outcomes of such ranking have been converted into score value with the help of the following formula:

Percentage position = (100 (Rij-0.5)) / Nj

Where Rij = Rank given for the ith variable by jth respondents

 Nj = Number of variables ranked by jth respondents

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section gives clear outline the main findings of the research. It presents the analysis of data in relation to the research objectives, emphasizing observed patterns, and trends. The results are examined in the context of the study’s aims, offering valuable insights into the outcomes.

**3.1 Socio-economic profile**

This section represents the farmers' social and economic characteristics, including important factors such as age, education level, gender, and others. These aspects serve as essential resources and significantly influence the direction of the study. Table 1 below presents the socio-economic profile of the farmers.

**Table 1: Socio-economic profile of farmers**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sr. No. | Particular | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
| 1 | **Age** |
| 21 to 30 year | 13 | 6.50 |
| 31 to 40 year | 57 | 28.50 |
| 41 to 50 year | 110 | 55.00 |
| Above 50 year | 20 | 10.00 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100.00** |
| 2 | **Education**  |
| Illiterate | 17 | 8.50 |
| Up to SSC | 28 | 14.00 |
| Up to HSC | 110 | 55.00 |
| Graduate & above | 45 | 22.50 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100.00** |
| 3 | **Land-holding** |
| < 1 ha | 14 | 7.00 |
| 1 to 2 ha | 58 | 29.00 |
| 2 to 4 ha | 105 | 52.50 |
| 4 to 10 ha | 17 | 8.50 |
| > 10 ha | 6 | 3.00 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100.00** |
| 4 | **Annual Income**  |
| < 1 lakh | 4 | 2.00 |
| 1 to 2 lakh | 13 | 6.50 |
| 3 to 5 lakh | 61 | 30.50 |
| 5 to 10 lakh | 103 | 51.50 |
| > 10 lakh | 19 | 9.50 |
| **Total**  | **200** | **100.00** |
| 5 | **Farming Experience** |
| < 6 year | 17 | 8.50 |
| 6 to 10 year | 19 | 9.50 |
| 11 to 20 year | 67 | 33.50 |
| > 20 year | 97 | 48.50 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100.00** |

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 1 shows socio-economic profile data of 200 farmers which indicates majority farmers (83.50%) were aged between 31 to 50 years old. The majority of farmers with 55.00% had completed their higher secondary education followed by graduate & above with 22.50%. Small group of farmers were illiterate that suggests a diverse educational background among farmers, with a significant portion having higher secondary or graduate level education. As per annual income 51.50% earn between 5 to 10 lakhs followed by 30.50% were earn between 3 to 5 lakhs annually which reflecting a lower-middle-income group. Farming experience of more than 20 years with 48.50% followed by 33.50% had farming experience between 11 to 20 years which shows that majority of the farmers have significant amount of farming experience.

**3.2 Awareness of water-soluble fertilizer**

The awareness level regarding water-soluble fertilizer among respondents varies significantly, reflecting differing degrees of knowledge and exposure. While some individuals are well-informed about the proper usage, benefits, application, price, doses of water-soluble fertilizers such as improved nutrient absorption and efficient application. The findings suggest a need for increased awareness initiatives to promote the effective and sustainable use of water-soluble fertilizers in agricultural practices. Table 2 represent the awareness about water-soluble fertilizer.

**Table 2: Awareness of water-soluble fertilizer**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sr. No. | Particular | No. of Aware Farmers (n=200) | Percentage |
| 1 | **Awareness Regarding Biostimulants** |
| Do you know about water-soluble fertilizer? | 200 | 100.00 |
| Do you know that in which crop water-soluble fertilizer is used? | 188 | 94.00 |
| Do you know the method of application of water-soluble fertilizer? | 180 | 90.00 |
| Do you know about nutrient content of water-soluble fertilizer? | 164 | 82.00 |
| Do you know the most suitable time for application of water-soluble fertilizer for the best result? | 151 | 75.50 |
| Do you know about the price of water-soluble fertilizer? | 163 | 81.50 |
| Do you know about size of packing available of water-soluble fertilizer? | 133 | 66.50 |
| Do you know doses of different water-soluble fertilizers in major crops you grown? | 149 | 74.50 |
| 2 | **Source of Awareness** |  |  |
| Advertisement  | 31 | 15.50 |
| Exhibitions  | 34 | 17.00 |
| Through dealer | 93 | 46.50 |
| Through friends | 42 | 21.00 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100.00** |

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Awareness refers to the farmer's level of understanding and knowledge about water-soluble fertilizers, which plays a crucial role in their adoption and effective use. Table 2 presents an overview of farmers' awareness based on various criteria.

Out of the surveyed farmers, 94.00% knowledgeable about the correct use of WSFs for specific crops, while 90.00% were familiar with the various methods of application. Approximately 82.00% of farmers understand the nutrient composition of WSFs, particularly essential elements such as nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and calcium. Moreover, 75.50% of farmers were aware of the appropriate timing for applying WSFs at different stages of crop growth to maximize productivity. In terms of market awareness, 81.50% farmers were aware about prices of WSFs, and 66.50% farmers were familiar with the available packaging sizes, including 1 kg, 5 kg, 10 kg, and 25 kg. Additionally, 74.50% of the farmers understand the recommended dosages for their respective crops and were aware about proper stages for application, contributing to improved yields.

Regarding sources of awareness, the majority (67.50%) of farmers gain information from friends and dealers, indicating a strong reliance on personal networks and trusted sources. Around 17.00% of farmers become aware through exhibitions organized at different places, while 15.50% of farmers receive information via advertisements through different media. This suggests that farmers primarily trust dealers and peers, valuing their practical experience and product knowledge.

**3.3 Usage pattern of water-soluble fertilizers**

The usage pattern of WSFs among farmers reveals a growing preference for these inputs due to their efficiency and effectiveness. The adoption of WSFs reflects a shift toward more sustainable and scientifically informed farming practices.

**Table 3: Usage of water-soluble fertilizers**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sr. No. | Particular | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
| 1 | **Types of Crops** |
| Field crops | 31 | 15.50 |
| Vegetables  | 57 | 28.50 |
| Both | 112 | 56.00 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100.00** |
| 2 | **Different Grades** |
| NPK (19:19:19) | 194 | 97.00 |
| Mono-Ammonium Phosphate (12:61:00) | 179 | 89.50 |
| Potassium Nitrate (13:00:45) | 167 | 83.50 |
| Mono-Potassium Phosphate (00:52:34) | 158 | 79.00 |
| Potassium Sulphate (00:00:50) | 191 | 95.50 |
| Calcium Nitrate (15.5:00:00:18.8) | 160 | 80.00 |
| Others | 153 | 76.50 |

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 3 highlights the use of WSFs across various crops in Himmatnagar taluka of Sabarkantha district. The data shows that a majority of farmers—112 (56.00%) use WSFs for cultivating both vegetable and field crops. Another 57 (28.50%) farmers use them exclusively on vegetable crops, while the remaining 31 (15.50%) farmers apply WSFs to field crops alone.

Among the different types/grades of WSFs used, NPK (19:19:19) is the most commonly preferred due to its adaptability for application at any crop growth stage. Potassium sulphate (00:00:50) is also widely used, with 191 (95.50%) of farmers favoring it. Mono ammonium phosphate (12:61:00) is another frequently chosen fertilizer, especially during the early growth and flowering stages of crops. Additionally, Mono potassium phosphate (00:52:34), potassium nitrate (13:00:45) and Calcium nitrate (15.5:00:18.8) are commonly used as basal applications, with mono potassium phosphate also being applied during the flowering phase.

**3.4 Expectations of farmers and dealers from the company**

Understanding the expectations of both farmers and dealers from the company is crucial for building strong relationships, improving product adoption, and enhancing customer satisfaction. Table 4 represent the expectation of farmers and dealers from the company.

**Table 4: Farmers and dealers expectations from the company**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sr. No. | Particular | Mean Score | Rank |
| 1 | **Farmers Expectation**  |
| Less Price  | 64.92 | 1 |
| Spot Demonstration and farmers Meetings | 57.75 | 2 |
| Good Quality and Good Packaging  | 52.33 | 3 |
| Timely Availability | 38.58 | 4 |
| New Product | 36.42 | 5 |
| 2 | **Dealers Expectation** |  |  |
| Less Price and Increasing Margin  | 69.33 | 1 |
| Promotional Activity  | 52.25 | 2 |
| Spot Demonstration and Farmers Meeting  | 46.58 | 3 |
| Good Quality and Good Packaging | 43.75 | 4 |
| Timely Availability | 38.08 | 5 |

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

The table presents the expectations of both farmers and dealers from the company, along with their respective mean scores and ranks. Among farmers, the most important expectation is the availability of water-soluble fertilizers at a lower price, which received the highest mean score and top rank. This is followed by the demand for spot demonstrations and farmer meetings, which farmers view as essential for understanding product application. The third most important expectation is the assurance of good quality and proper packaging, while timely availability of fertilizers is ranked fourth. The introduction of new products is considered the least important expectation among the listed factors.

For dealers, the highest priority is also a lower product price along with increased profit margins, receiving the top mean score and rank. Promotional activities were the second most important expectation, reflecting the dealers' interest in marketing support to boost sales. The third rank is given to spot demonstrations and farmer meetings, highlighting their role in creating product awareness. Good quality and appealing packaging follow in fourth place. Timely availability of the fertilizers, although important, is ranked lowest among the expectations of dealers.

**4. CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that the majority of farmers 55.00% were aged between 41 to 50 years, and notably, all 200 respondents were male, indicating a complete lack of female representation in the sample. More than half of the farmers 55.00% had attained higher secondary education, and nearly half 48.50% had over two decades of farming experience, suggesting a knowledgeable and experienced group. Regarding landholding and income, 52.50% of the respondents managed farms ranging from 2 to 4 ha, while 51.50% reported annual earnings between ₹5 and ₹10 lakhs, pointing to moderate to high income levels. All participants were aware of WSFs, with the majority 67.50% obtaining information from friends and dealers. Farmers showed a strong understanding of WSFs, including their application techniques, nutrient content, and recommended dosages. WSFs were used on both vegetable and field crops by 56.00% of the respondents. Among the various WSFs grades, NPK (19:19:19) and Potassium Sulphate (00:00:50) were the most popular, valued for their versatility and effectiveness. In terms of expectations, farmers highlighted the need for more affordable pricing, regular demonstrations and meetings, and improved packaging. Dealers shared similar views, placing the greatest importance on reduced prices, better profit margins, and enhanced promotional efforts.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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