

Agri Business

A bio-fertiliser that can help tap potassium in soil

M. J. Prabu Chennai | Updated on October 11, 2013 | Published on October 11, 2013



A bacterium mobilising soil potassium has been identified from the soil in the vicinity of plants roots or rhizosphere.

The bio-fertiliser, which is claimed to cut potassium fertilisers requirement by 50 per cent, is currently being recommended for paddy, groundnut and horticulture crops.

According to Dr. C. Vaithilingam of Cuddalore-based Rom Vijay Biotech, the bio-fertiliser can help mobilise potassium present in the soil.

Potash, a major nutrient, plays a vital role in photosynthesis, protein synthesis, water economy, pest and disease resistance of crops.

India imports about 40 lakh tonnes of potassic fertilisers. About 50-60 kg of potassium is used on a hectare of rice, while sugarcane needs 200 kg of the chemical.

To get the required potassium for the crop, farmers apply muritate of potash that costs upwards of Rs 5,000 a hectare.

According to Vaithilingam, the country's soils are naturally rich in potassium and a potash mobilising bacterium help the plant in absorbing the native potassium.

Though potassium exists in different forms in the soil, crops can absorb only the chemical that is present in soil solution.

The total potassium content in soil is up to 3 per cent depending upon the soil type and its content in plough layer may range anywhere from 3 to 100 tonnes per hectare. However, this is not entirely available for the crops. 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.

Only 40 per cent of potash fertiliser applied to a plant is absorbed and the rest gets fixed in clay minerals.

The bio-fertiliser or the potash mobilising bacterium could help in tapping this fully.

Vaithilingam said that at the current price of Rs 16,000 a tonne for muriate of potash, a 50 per cent saving can help farmers save about Rs 1,000.

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