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India Adopts Nutrient-Based Subsidization Scheme and Includes National Zinc Subsidy

With a population of 1.1 billion people and growing, food security has rapidly emerged as a critical issue in India.

India already has one of the largest agricultural subsidy programs in the world. Until recently, these subsidies were focused on nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium - and not secondary nutrients and micronutrients.



To ensure food security, the Government of India Union Cabinet approved a "Nutrient Based Subsidization Scheme" (NBSS), which came into effect on April 1, 2010. The

NBSS policy is intended to correct the imbalance of fertilizer use by removing inconsistencies in price between different nutrients and decreasing the incentive to buy the cheapest fertilizers rather than the fertilizer the soil requires. This new policy also recognizes the importance of secondary and micronutrients for optimal agricultural production. The NBSS policy includes the first ever national government zinc subsidy where approved fertilizers fortified with zinc will now qualify for a per-metric tonne subsidy of 500 rupees.

Including zinc in NBSS demonstrates India's recognition of the essentiality of zinc to crop productivity and should also send a strong message to other nations about the impact zinc can have on crop productivity and, ultimately, national food security.

Zinc Initiatives Highlighted in United Nations Speech

On June 15 in New York, Ajay Shriram, President of the **International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)** and Chairman/Senior Managing Director of **DCM Shriram Consolidated Ltd.**, India, addressed the United Nations General Assembly on the importance of investing in agriculture and smallholder farmers to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Mr. Shriram's central theme was the importance of returning crops and the farmer to the centre of policy decisions for achieving the MDGs and to sustainable development. The presentation highlighted a number of zinc initiatives including IZA's Zinc Saves Kids and Zinc Nutrient Initiatives.

As the food crisis of 2008 showed, governments, businesses, scientists and civil society groups all need to focus on the sources of our food and nutrition security. All these groups must work together to enable the millions of farm families, especially smallholders and women farmers, to

increase crop production sustainably through the maintenance of effective markets, more collaborative research and committed knowledge sharing.

A copy of the speech can be downloaded at [IFA's website](#).

IZA Hires New Directors for Zinc Nutrient Initiative

India Program



Dr. Soumitra Das has joined IZA as the Director, India Program – Zinc Nutrient Initiative. Dr. Das will oversee IZA's efforts in India to increase the use of zinc as a fertilizer to improve crop productivity and human health.

Prior to joining IZA, Dr. Das worked as National Head - Farm Services, Agrotechnology and NOC in the WSD department based at National Headquarters at New Delhi, India. Before this, he worked with the [Fertiliser Association of India \(FAI\)](#) based at New Delhi, India for over 11 years. Dr. Das holds a Ph.D. in Soil Sciences and Agricultural Chemistry from the [Indian Agricultural Research Institute \(IARI\)](#), New Delhi, India. He has also done Marketing Management from the [Indira Gandhi Open University](#), New Delhi, India. He has more than 16 years experience in the field of agricultural growth and development, particularly in general fertilizer/plant nutrient use. He is the recipient of First Award in the paper under agricultural marketing discipline awarded by FAI, New Delhi. He has been published in over 30 scientific and popular articles in various national and international publications.

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China Program



Dr. Ming Fan has joined IZA as the Director, China Program – Zinc Nutrient Initiative. Dr. Fan will oversee IZA's efforts in China to increase the use of zinc as a fertilizer to improve crop productivity and human health.

This appointment came about from a direct collaboration between IZA and [The Sulphur Institute \(TSI\)](#) with Dr. Ming. Prior to this, Dr. Fan worked as Supervisor of Agricultural Market Development Programs for TSI, managing agricultural and fertilizer technology research, extension and other marketing development related projects for 13 years. Dr. Fan has coordinated extensive research, education and extension projects worldwide, especially in Asian countries, on sulphur deficiencies, sulphur fertilizer technologies and promotion of sulphur fertilizer use in agriculture. He earned his Ph.D. in Soil and Fertilizer Sciences from McGill University, Canada in 1993. Prior to joining The Sulphur Institute in 1997, he worked as a Professor and Research Scientist in both China and Canada, conducting research activities on soil fertility and fertilizer technologies for over 10 years.

Dr. Fan is a member of the [Canadian Society of Soil Sciences](#), [American Society of Agronomy](#) and [Soil Science Society of America](#), and he has close relationships and cooperation with both Chinese and Indian governmental organizations, fertilizer industries and research institutes. He has more than 100 publications in various highly referred international journals and conference proceedings.

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Zinc Nutrient Initiative Update

The Zinc Nutrient Initiative was officially launched in January of 2009. Much has been achieved by IZA in the first 18 months of the initiative. Following is a list of some of the key accomplishments to date:

- A comprehensive strategy was developed for the initiative. Core to this strategy is a strong initial focus on advancing the initiative in India and China, two countries where zinc deficiency is a significant issue in both soils and people and also where the market potential for zinc fertilizers is greatest.
- A complete package of supportive communication materials has been created, including: fact sheets, newsletters, case studies, technical reference materials and a website.



- Numerous workshops and symposia were organized and attended. These events have proved to be very effective at assembling leading experts in zinc fertilization and have continued building momentum behind the initiative.
- Crop trials were conducted in China, India, Thailand, Laos, Brazil and South Africa. Results from these crop trials are being communicated to local communities and will be published in future Zinc Nutrient Initiative newsletters.
- New affiliate members continue to join IZA in support of the initiative.
- New in-country Program Directors for India and China have been hired. These Program Directors will lead the Zinc Nutrient Initiative activities in their respective countries.

In the coming months, IZA will be working with our members and other stakeholders to continue promoting the use of zinc fertilizers to address zinc deficiency in people and crops. Fol-

lowing is a list of key activities planned:

- A comprehensive zinc training program is under development which will be offered free-of-charge to key stakeholders. This eight-hour training program will provide a complete overview of zinc deficiency and zinc fertilizers with a focus on providing practical knowledge on the use of zinc fertilizers. This program will provide an excellent foundation of knowledge to support our members' zinc fertilizer marketing efforts.
- Regional zinc fertilizer conferences will be held quarterly throughout India and China.
- **Zinc Crops 2011** will be held in Hyderabad, India in October 2011. This international conference is expected to attract the world's leading authorities on zinc deficiency and zinc fertilizers.
- In collaboration with key in-country academic and industrial partners, comprehensive reports will be developed for India and China which will summarize the current status of zinc deficiency, the impact of zinc deficiency on food security and human health and the benefits of broad-based adoption of zinc fertilizer use in each of those countries. These authoritative documents will serve to support IZA's efforts to change government policy to address zinc deficiency in both soils and people.



Country-Specific Strategies and Tactics

The goal of the Zinc Nutrient Initiative is to promote the use of zinc fertilizers to address zinc deficiency in crops and people. Although this goal is the same for every country in which IZA is active, the strategy and tactics employed will vary. Each country has unique challenges and barriers that have inhibited increased use of zinc fertilizers in the past, despite clear science showing the impact zinc deficiency has on crop productivity and human health. In order to be successful,

IZA needs to clearly understand these differing challenges and barriers.

Earlier this year, **Andrew Green** and **Greg Brouwer** spent two weeks in India and China identifying the challenges and barriers that exist in these two countries. This was achieved through numerous meetings with a broad cross section of stakeholders, including: government officials, fertilizer associations, fertilizer companies, micronutrient suppliers, farmers and academics.



During these trips, the barriers and challenges in both countries became clear. Although there were some similarities (e.g. in the need for IZA to support agricultural extension in both countries), as expected, some of the specifics were quite different, like an issue identified in China with standards and labeling and an issue in India with permissions to manufacture zinc sulphate. With this new information in hand, IZA subsequently developed China-specific and India-specific strategic and tactical plans that now form the basis for all activities underway in those two countries. A similar country-specific strategic and tactical planning process will soon take place in Brazil, the next target country for the Zinc Nutrient Initiative.



FAI-IZA Symposium: "Zinc in Crops and Human Health", New Delhi, India

The Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) and IZA hosted a Symposium on Zinc in Crops and Human Health on April 26, 2010 in New Delhi, India. The event assembled 100 delegates with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, the Planning Commission, State Departments of Agriculture, the **India Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR)**, State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), **ICRISAT** and other stakeholders from the Indian fertilizer industry. The objectives of the symposium were to increase awareness of the essentiality of zinc and to promote the use of zinc fertilizers to improve both agricultural productivity and human health.



In his welcome address, Director General of FAI Satish Chander commented on the opportunity the Symposium presented to collectively formulate strategies and to consider the constraints to increasing zinc use in agriculture. The benefits provided by consultation with stakeholders towards formulating policies beneficial to both the production and marketing of zinc was crucial. The day's program focused on: the essential role of zinc and health, zinc deficiency in crops and people, fertilizer strategy incorporating zinc biofortification, the role of micronutrients in the new NBSS and zinc's positive impacts on food security.

Upcoming Events

- August 26-27, 2010: **IZASA** in conjunction with the **Fertilizer Society of South Africa** will be hosting the “Fertilizers, Food Production and Human Health” International Symposium at the CSIR International Convention Centre, Pretoria, South Africa. Please visit <http://www.zinc-crops.org/events.html> for registration information.
- October 10-13, 2011: IZA, FAI, IFA and HarvestPlus will be hosting the 3rd International Zinc Symposium: “Improving Crop Production and Human Health” in Hyderabad, India. Please visit [http://www.zinc-crops2011.org](http://www.zinc-crops.org/events.html) for more information.



New Zinc Nutrient Initiative Memberships

IZA is pleased to announce the new memberships of the following companies to the Zinc Nutrient Initiative:

- **Beijing Xinhefeng Agrochemical Company Limited**
- **Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Company Limited**



- **International Raw Materials**
- **OMEX Agriculture Limited**
- **Tetra Micronutrients**



The addition of these new members brings the current member count to six. For more information about these companies, please visit their respective websites, as linked above.

New Design Overhaul of Zinc Crops Website

IZA's website for zinc and crops (www.zinc-crops.org) has been updated. The redesign of the site provides for a more attractive and user-friendly interface and contains a comprehensive library of publications and an ever-growing list of member companies, plus news about zinc and crops and information about upcoming events.



The Zinc Nutrient Initiative, a program of the International Zinc Association (IZA), seeks to address zinc deficiency in 2010, crops and humans through increased use of zinc in fertilizers.



International Zinc Association

The International Zinc Association is a non-profit organization with offices/representatives in:

Belgium - Peru - P.R. China - South Africa - U.S.A.

Zinc in Fertilizers is a newsletter published by IZA covering issues pertaining to zinc in fertilizers. To learn more about zinc's benefits for crop nutrition, please visit www.zinc-crops.org.

Contributions

We invite your submissions of articles, letters and images.

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For more information on IZA, please visit <http://www.zinc.org>.

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