FAO seeks time-sensitive support to protect Afghanistan's 2027 wheat harvest ahead of critical planting window

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Rising fertilizer prices are putting essential inputs beyond the reach of many Afghan farmers, threatening the countryâ??s 2027 wheat harvest

Rising fertilizer prices are threatening Afghanistan's 2027 wheat harvest just as farmers prepare for what could be one of the country's most promising wheat-growing seasons in years. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is appealing for $38.3 million to enable up to 600,000 farming households to access fertilizer and certified wheat seed ahead of Afghanistan's winter wheat planting season.

The sharp increase in fertilizer prices follows disruptions to global markets linked to the 2026 Middle East crisis. For Afghanistan's farmers, the consequences could be severe. With naturally low soil fertility, wheat production depends on adequate applications of diammonium phosphate (DAP) and urea.

Winter wheat is Afghanistan’s principal staple crop and accounts for over two-thirds of annual fertilizer demand. Rising prices mean many farmers may be forced to reduce fertilizer use or cultivate smaller areas, resulting in lower production, reduced household food availability and increased debt.

The impact is expected to be most severe for households already facing economic pressures, including women-headed households, returnee families and food-insecure rural communities with limited capacity to absorb additional costs and shocks.

“Afghanistan’s farmers have an opportunity to benefit from a stronger agricultural season after a harsh drought year, but rising fertilizer prices threaten to put that opportunity out of reach for many of the families who need it most,” said Richard Trenchard, FAO Representative in Afghanistan. “This is not a supply crisis; it is an affordability crisis at one of the most important moments in the agricultural calendar. Fertilizer is available, yet too many farmers cannot afford to buy it.”

The effects of rising fertilizer prices are already being felt across the country. In Nimroz province, farmer Din Mohammad says the informal arrangements that once helped farmers obtain fertilizer are no longer available.

“In the past, shopkeepers that we knew used to lend us fertilizers. Now, nobody lends us anything,” he said. “If I don’t use fertilizers, I will not get any benefit from my land.”

For others, the choice is between agricultural inputs and immediate household needs. “I don’t know whether to take care of my family or spend money on seed and fertilizer,” said Wakil, a farmer in the same province.

“Years of investment by FAO and its partners have helped strengthen Afghanistan’s seed system and expand farmers’ access to quality seed. But seed and fertilizer go hand in hand,” said Trenchard. “Without fertilizer, many farmers will be unable to achieve the yields needed to support their communities. The window for action is narrow. Farmers are making decisions now about how much land they can cultivate and whether they can afford the inputs needed for a successful harvest. Timely support is far more cost-effective than responding to the consequences of lower food production and increased humanitarian needs next year.”