

## Use of Nano Fertilizers in Agriculture

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*Available online at*  
[www.sunshineagriculture.vitalbiotech.org](http://www.sunshineagriculture.vitalbiotech.org)

### Article History

Received: 1. 09.2025

Revised: 5. 09.2025

Accepted: 10. 09.2025

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### INTRODUCTION

Nanotechnology enhances agricultural farming by improving nutrient delivery through Nano-fertilizers and enhancing crop protection with Nano pesticides, which offer targeted release and reduce waste. It enables precision farming through Nano sensors that monitor crop health, soil quality, and water usage, allowing for early disease detection and precise management. Additionally, nanomaterial's in food processing and packaging can extend shelf life and improve safety, contributing to sustainable agriculture and food security Nano-fertilizers are used in agriculture to increase crop yields, improve nutrient use efficiency, reduce environmental pollution by minimizing nutrient loss, and enhance food quality and safety. These microscopic fertilizers deliver nutrients to plants more effectively, ensure precise timing of nutrient delivery, and can be formulated for controlled release, which is more environmentally sustainable than conventional methods. The use of Nanotechnology in agriculture enables efficient disease detection and management, precision farming through nano-sensors, enhanced productivity through nano-fertilizers and pesticides, and improved food quality and safety through innovative packaging materials.

### Key Reasons for Using Nano-Fertilizers:

#### ➤ **Enhanced Nutrient Efficiency:**

Nano-fertilizers improve the absorption of nutrients by plants, ensuring that crops receive the precise amount of nutrients they need when they need them, reducing waste from leaching and evaporation.

#### ➤ **Higher Crop Yields:**

By providing nutrients more efficiently and ensuring better uptake, nano-fertilizers promote optimal plant growth, leading to more abundant and higher-quality harvests.

- **Environmental Sustainability:**  
They minimize nutrient runoff and leaching into soil and water, thereby reducing soil deterioration and water pollution.
- **Controlled Nutrient Release:**  
Nutrients are often bound to nano-adsorbents, which release them slowly over time, providing sustained nourishment to plants and preventing toxicity from high concentrations of conventional fertilizers.
- **Improved Food Quality and Safety:**  
Efficient nutrient delivery can enhance the nutritional content of crops, and by reducing the need for excess chemical fertilizers, they contribute to safer and more nutritious food.
- **Resource Optimization:**  
Nano-fertilizers help optimize the use of agricultural resources by increasing nutrient-use efficiency, which is crucial for addressing food security challenges, especially with a growing global population.

### Nano Fertilizers:

Nano fertilizers are a type of fertilizer that uses nanotechnology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of nutrients in agricultural production. The basic concept behind nano fertilizers is the use of nano-sized particles (typically 1 to 100 nanometers in size) to deliver nutrients to plants more effectively. These particles are small enough to penetrate plant cells, allowing for better absorption and more targeted delivery of essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

### How Do Nano Fertilizers Work?

The key to the effectiveness of nano fertilizers lies in their size and composition. Traditional fertilizers often require a large amount of nutrients to be absorbed by the soil, and much of these nutrients can end up being washed away by rain or irrigation. Nano fertilizers, however, use nano-particles that are easier for plants to absorb, reducing the need for large quantities of nutrients. The small size also ensures that nutrients are available to the plant roots over a longer period, eliminating the risk of nutrient wastage.

Furthermore, nano fertilizers can be engineered to release nutrients in a controlled manner, allowing for slow-release fertilization. This slow-release feature ensures that the nutrients are available to plants throughout their growing season, reducing the need for frequent applications.

### Types of Nano Fertilizers:

There are various types of nano fertilizers available; each designed to suit different crops and farming needs. Here are a few popular nano fertilizer examples:

**Nano Nitrogen Fertilizers:** These fertilizers contain nano-sized nitrogen particles, which help improve nitrogen absorption in plants. Since nitrogen is essential for plant growth, especially in the vegetative phase, nano-nitrogen fertilizers can boost plant growth, increase

Yield and reduce nitrogen wastage.

**Nano Phosphorus Fertilizers:** Phosphorus is critical for root development and flowering. Nano phosphorus fertilizers are designed to improve phosphorus uptake, especially in soils where phosphorus is locked and unavailable to plants. These fertilizers enhance root growth and flowering, improving overall crop productivity.

**Nano Micronutrient Fertilizers:** Micronutrients such as zinc, iron, copper, and boron play a vital role in plant health. Nano-micronutrient fertilizers are developed to enhance the absorption of these trace elements, which are often deficient in soils but crucial for crop development. By delivering these micronutrients in nano form, the absorption rate is significantly higher, leading to healthier crops and better yields.

**Nano Organic Fertilizers:** These are a blend of organic fertilizers and nanotechnology, where organic nutrients are combined with nano-sized particles for improved delivery. These fertilizers are more eco-friendly and contribute to soil health, making them a sustainable choice for organic farming.

Nano fertilizers work by delivering nutrients in ultra-fine nanoparticles (1-100 nm), which allows for enhanced absorption through plant leaves and roots, targeted delivery, and gradual, controlled release of essential elements like nitrogen and phosphorus. Their high surface area to volume ratio makes them more efficient than conventional fertilizers, increasing bioavailability, improving physiological growth, and boosting crop yields while reducing nutrient loss, environmental pollution, and the need for frequent application.

### How it works:

#### 1. Small Size:

The key feature of nano fertilizers is the incredibly small size of their nutrient particles, typically between 1 and 100 nanometers.

## 2. Enhanced Penetration:

These nano-sized particles are small enough to penetrate plant cells, including entering through stomatal pores on leaves or directly through root surfaces.

## 3. Targeted and Gradual Release:

Once inside the plant, the nutrients are released in a slow, controlled manner, ensuring that the plant receives the right amount of nutrition exactly when it needs it.

## 4. Efficient Transport:

Nano-particles are transported to other parts of the plant, such as grain and fruits, via phloem cells and other transport mechanisms, ensuring the nutrients reach the desired areas.

## 5. High Surface Area:

The large surface area to volume ratio of the nanoparticles increases their solubility, making nutrients more accessible and bioavailable for the plant.

### Key Benefits:

- **Increased Nutrient Use Efficiency:**  
Plants absorb and utilize nutrients more effectively, reducing the amount of fertilizer needed.
- **Improved Crop Growth and Yield:**  
Enhanced nutrition leads to better physiological growth, increased chlorophyll production, and higher crop yields.

- **Reduced Environmental Impact:**

By minimizing nutrient loss and the need for overuse, nano fertilizers contribute to reduced environmental pollution.

- **Cost-Effectiveness:**

More efficient nutrient delivery and reduced application rates can lead to cost savings for farmers.

- **Enhanced Crop Quality:**

The targeted delivery of nutrients can improve the quality of produce, such as better quality fruits and grain.

Nanofertilizers enter plants through various pathways, depending on the method of application. Foliar-applied nanoparticles penetrate the leaf epidermis or stomata and translocate via apoplastic or symplastic pathways.

Nano fertilizers offer advantages like increased nutrient use efficiency, higher crop yields, and reduced environmental impact by delivering nutrients precisely and efficiently. However, disadvantages include potential human health and environmental risks, the high cost and complex production of nanomaterials, and the need for more research to understand their long-term effects and develop effective regulatory frameworks before widespread commercialization.

### Advantages:



[File Photo Image](#)

- **Improved Nutrient Use Efficiency:**  
Nano fertilizers are designed to release nutrients slowly and in a controlled manner, ensuring plants absorb them more effectively.
- **Enhanced Crop Yields:**  
By providing precise and timely nutrient delivery, nano fertilizers can significantly

increase crop production and improve plant growth.

- **Reduced Environmental Impact:**

The targeted delivery and controlled release minimize nutrient loss through leaching and runoff, leading to less contamination of soil and water bodies.

- **Lower Fertilizer Requirements:**

Because they are more efficient, farmers may need to use less traditional chemical fertilizers, reducing costs and potential harm.

- **Improved Soil and Plant Health:**

By enhancing nutrient uptake and reducing losses, nano fertilizers can contribute to better soil health and increased plant resistance to stress.

- **Precision Agriculture:**

They are well-suited for precision agriculture, allowing for better nutrient management and the addressing of specific nutrient deficiencies.

**Disadvantages :**

- **Health and Environmental Risks:**

There are concerns that the extensive release of nanomaterials into the environment and the food chain could pose risks to human and ecological health.

- **Cost of Production:**

The large-scale production of nano fertilizers is complex and expensive, as it involves intricate manufacturing processes.

- **Lack of Comprehensive Data:**

More research is needed to fully understand the long-term effects and environmental fate of nanomaterial used in fertilizers.

- **Regulatory Hurdles:**

Effective regulatory frameworks are still needed to govern the development, commercialization, and use of nano fertilizers to ensure safety and sustainability.

- **Potential for Toxicity:**

The potential toxicity of specific nanoparticles needs to be thoroughly assessed before widespread application.

### **Nano Fertilizers vs Traditional Fertilizers**

Nano fertilizers vs traditional fertilizers differ in several aspects, including their composition, mode of action, and potential benefits. Here's a comparison between nano fertilizers vs traditional fertilizers:

**Composition:**

Traditional fertilizers are typically composed of macroscopic nutrients, such as nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K), in the form of granules, powders, or liquid solutions. Nano fertilizers, on the other hand, incorporate nanoscale materials, which can be organic or inorganic, depending on the formulation. They may include nanoparticles, nanocarriers, or nanoscale structures designed to enhance nutrient delivery and uptake.

**Nutrient Uptake Efficiency:**

Nano fertilizers are designed to improve nutrient uptake efficiency by enhancing the contact and interaction between nutrients and plant roots. The nanoscale size and increased surface area of nano fertilizers allow for better nutrient absorption. Traditional fertilizers, while effective, may have limitations in terms of nutrient solubility and uptake efficiency, leading to potential nutrient losses.

**Nutrient Release:**

Traditional fertilizers typically provide an immediate nutrient release, which can result in nutrient leaching or volatilization if not absorbed by plants promptly. Nano fertilizers can be engineered to have controlled release properties, releasing nutrients gradually over time. This controlled release mechanism ensures a more sustained nutrient supply to plants and reduces the frequency of fertilizer applications.

**Environmental Impact:**

Traditional fertilizers, when overused or mismanaged, can contribute to environmental pollution. Excess nutrients can leach into groundwater or runoff into water bodies, leading to eutrophication and damage to aquatic ecosystems. Nano fertilizers, with their improved nutrient use efficiency and controlled release properties, aim to reduce nutrient losses and minimize environmental impact.

**Customization and Targeting:**

Nano fertilizers offer the advantage of customization and targeting. One can tailor them according to specific crop requirements, soil conditions, and nutrient deficiencies. By encapsulating nutrients or modifying the surface properties of nanoparticles, one can design nano fertilizers to deliver nutrients precisely to the desired plant tissues or address specific nutrient deficiencies.

**Cost and Accessibility:**

Traditional fertilizers are widely available and generally more affordable compared to nano fertilizers. The production processes and specialized materials involved in nanotechnology can contribute to higher production costs, making nano fertilizers relatively more expensive. This cost factor may limit the accessibility of nano fertilizers, particularly in regions with limited resources.

**Knowledge and Adoption:**

Traditional fertilizers have a long history of use and established application practices. Farmers and agronomists are familiar with their usage and



application methods. Nano fertilizers, being a newer technology, may require additional education and awareness efforts to promote their proper adoption and ensure their effective use.

It is important to note that both nano fertilizers and traditional fertilizers have their respective advantages and limitations. Ongoing research and development aim to optimize the benefits of nano fertilizers while addressing any potential risks or concerns associated with their use. The choice between the two types of fertilizers depends on specific crop needs, soil conditions, environmental considerations, and economic factors.

Nano urea and Nano DAP are liquid nano-fertilizers that deliver nitrogen and phosphorus to plants more efficiently than traditional granular fertilizers, reducing waste and environmental impact. Nano urea supplies nitrogen for leafy growth, while Nano DAP offers a dual-nutrient solution for phosphorus and nitrogen, crucial for root development, flowering, and fruiting. These nanotechnology-based formulations are designed for foliar application and seed treatment, promoting better crop yields and plant health.

#### Nano Urea

- **Function:** Primarily provides nitrogen to plants, promoting healthy foliage, shoot growth, and increased chlorophyll production.
  - **Benefit:** A single bottle of Nano Urea is considered equivalent to a full bag of conventional urea, offering a more concentrated and efficient nitrogen source.
  - **Application:** Applied as a foliar spray to standing crops.
  - Nano DAP
  - **Function:** A dual-nutrient liquid fertilizer containing both nitrogen and phosphorus.
  - **Benefit:** Supports robust root development, enhanced flowering and fruiting, and improved plant resilience.
  - **Application:** Can be used for seed treatment and as a foliar spray, with field trials showing improved crop growth.
- Key Advantages of Both

- **Enhanced Nutrient Availability:** Nanotechnology increases nutrient absorption by the plant, ensuring more nutrients reach the target.
  - **Reduced Environmental Impact:** By improving nutrient efficiency, nano fertilizers minimize nutrient leaching and volatilization, protecting soil, air, and water quality.
  - **Improved Crop Yield and Quality:** Farmers can achieve better yields with improved crop quality, which contributes to increased income.
  - **Convenient Application:** The liquid format allows for precise and convenient application, reducing wastage and labor.
- Government Promotion
- The Indian government promotes the use of nano fertilizers by notifying their specifications and encouraging production by both government-owned and private companies.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, nano fertilizers represent a new generation of fertilizers that leverage nanotechnology to enhance nutrient availability, uptake efficiency, and controlled release in plants.

The choice between nano fertilizers and traditional fertilizers depends on specific crop and soil requirements, environmental considerations, accessibility, and cost factors. While nano fertilizers show great promise in revolutionizing agricultural practices and promoting sustainable farming, further research and development are essential to fully understand their long-term effects and ensure their safety and efficacy.

Overall, nano fertilizers have the potential to contribute to more efficient and sustainable agriculture by improving nutrient management, reducing environmental impacts, and increasing crop yields. Continued innovation, scientific inquiry, and responsible adoption can help unlock their full potential and address any challenges associated with their use.