

## Challenges for cost-effectiveness

Possibilities to make struvite production a more cost-effective technology:

- Turn the **effluent** into a source of revenue: a maximum of the remaining nutrients (nitrogen, potassium and others) have to be recovered and made available as a complete fertilizer product with supplementary technologies. Thereby, the costs to treat the effluent, i.e. to eliminate the nutrients, can be reduced.
- Increase the **sourcing efficiency of urine**: The urine volume required per shift of the 4 x 400 L reactor set-up equals the amount produced by 8000 adults per day. In order to minimize the cost of urine sourcing, an efficient urine collection system needs to be established and supported by the authorities.
- Compensate for the **external benefits** generated by struvite production: If urine is released into water bodies, the high nutrient contents cause eutrophication. Hence, nutrient recovery, such as struvite production, reduces water pollution. Authorities could offset this external benefit via effective subsidies. To embed the struvite production in adequate subsidy mechanisms, the external benefits of struvite production will have to be quantified.

## Further readings

Visit the STUN website to download the following documents:

- **How to produce fertilizer from urine brochure**  
Overview on the chemistry and technology of the struvite production process.
- **Struvite reactor construction manual**  
Detailed explanations on how to build a struvite reactor including technical drawings and quantities.
- **Struvite reactor operation manual**  
Describes the handling of a struvite production unit and its everyday operation procedures.
- **Struvite calculation sheet**  
Template to calculate the costs and revenue of struvite according to various settings.

[www.eawag.ch/stun](http://www.eawag.ch/stun)

## Contact information

[struvite.nepal@eawag.ch](mailto:struvite.nepal@eawag.ch)

## Eawag

Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science & Technology  
Water & Sanitation in Developing Countries  
Überlandstrasse 133  
8600 Dübendorf  
Switzerland  
Phone +41 44 823 55 11  
Fax +41 44 823 50 28  
[www.eawag.ch](http://www.eawag.ch)

## UN-Habitat Nepal

The United Nations Human Settlement Programme  
Water for Asian Cities Programme Nepal  
Pulchowk  
Kathmandu  
Nepal  
Phone +977 1 55 42 816  
Fax +977 1 55 39 877  
[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)  
[www.unwac.org](http://www.unwac.org)  
[wac.nepal@unhabitat.org.np](mailto:wac.nepal@unhabitat.org.np)

# Economics of struvite production in Nepal



This brochure presents the key findings of the **economic analysis**, conducted for **decentralized struvite production** from urine in Kathmandu, Nepal.

**Urine** contains valuable nutrients; it is an excellent fertilizer if applied to crops.

**Struvite** is a powder fertilizer produced from urine.

## Basics of Struvite Production

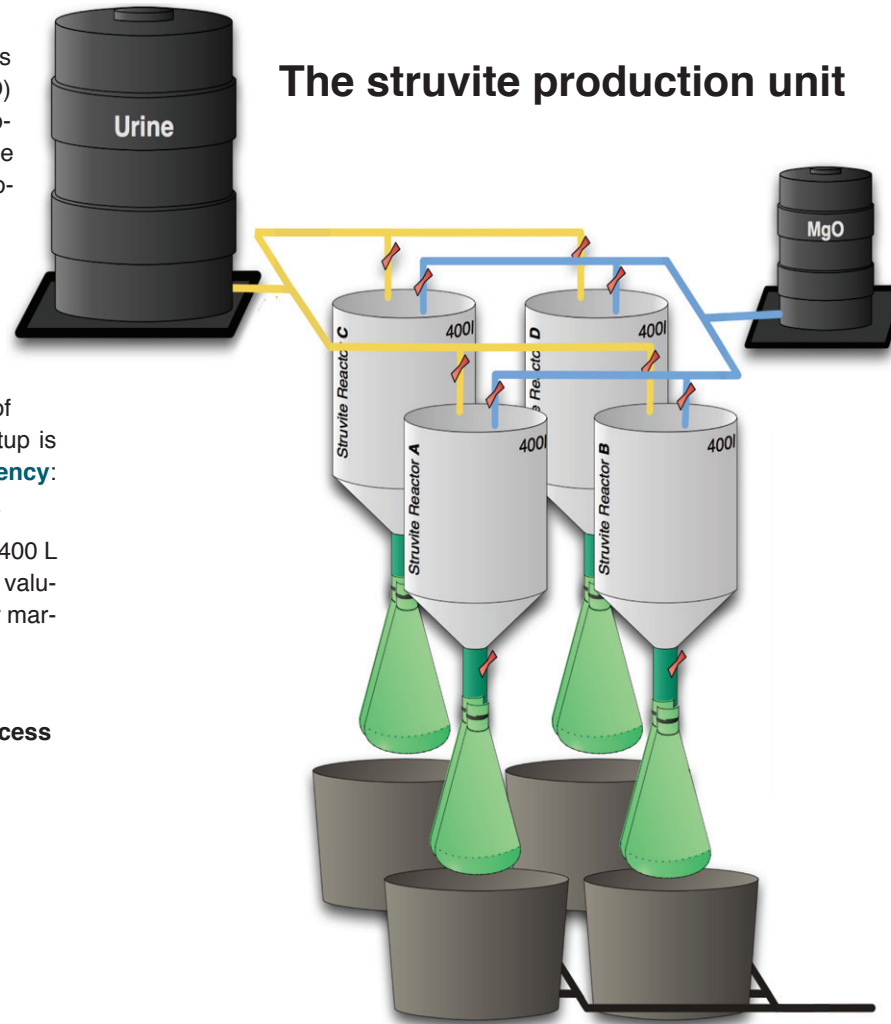
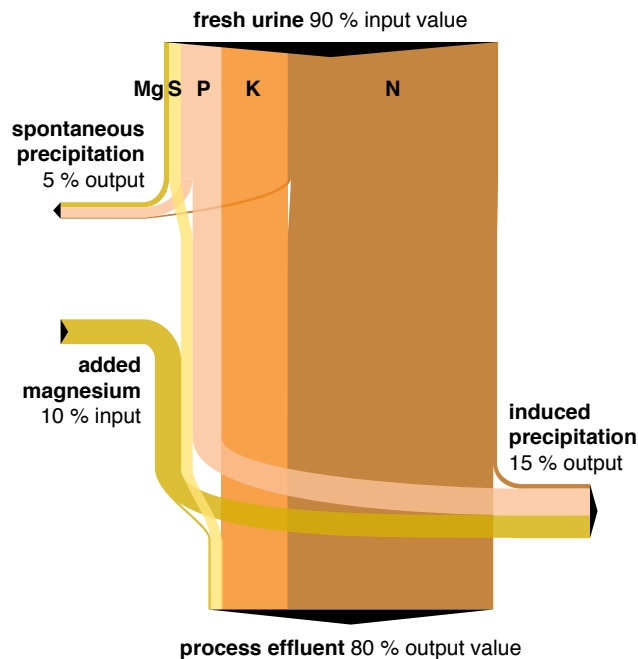
If **magnesium** is added to **urine**, a white odourless powder, called struvite ( $\text{MAP}$ ;  $\text{MgNH}_4\text{PO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) precipitates. Through the struvite precipitation process, most of the **phosphate** ( $\text{PO}_4^{3-}$ ) and part of the **ammonium** ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ) contained in urine can be recovered as a fertilizer product.

Based on the technology piloted by the Struvite from Urine in Nepal (STUN) project, the most efficient struvite production unit was identified as a setup of **four reactors**, with **400 L volume** each.

While a struvite production facility could consist of any number of production units, the 4 x 400 L setup is considered most efficient in terms of **labour efficiency**: one operator can run up to four reactors in parallel.

Production costs were estimated based on 50 and 400 L pilot plants operated in Kathmandu. The monetary values of nutrients were calculated based on a fertilizer market survey conducted around Kathmandu.

## Monetary values of nutrients in the struvite process



### Key figures of a 4 x 400 L production unit:

Inputs & outputs of a one-day shift (8 working hours)

- Inputs:**
- 11 m<sup>3</sup> urine
  - 9 kg magnesium oxide (MgO)

- Outputs:**
- 23 kg struvite
  - 11 m<sup>3</sup> effluent

## Viability

The charts below illustrate that the theoretical revenue from struvite sales (including possible subsidies) will just cover the production costs except the urine sourcing. The challenge concerning the revenue is to recover the value of the nutrients remaining in the effluent.

### Cost

- Only **production costs** were considered in the present analysis; the costs for the treatment of the effluent were not considered.
- The costs for **urine sourcing** are the largest element (90% of total cost) and impossible to cover with the struvite sales revenue.

### Revenue

- The **nutrient value** of struvite is based on regression estimates from a market survey.
- The **unique selling proposition** (USP) is the theoretical value above the current market price that would be paid for a „sustainable“ product.
- The current **subsidy** of fertilizer in Nepal (2010).

## Estimated cost and revenue of struvite in Nepal

