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| **MEDIA RELEASE**15th August 2025Auroville, Tamil Nadu, India  | **Press Relations:** press@auroville.services**National press:** +91 95857 10457 **Website:** [www.auroville.media](http://www.auroville.media/)  |

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| **Unsustainable Sustainability: Auroville's Most Productive Organic Farm Threatened with Destruction for IIT "Sustainability" Campus** |

*Auroville, Tamil Nadu - In a darkly ironic twist, Annapurna Farm, Auroville's largest and most productive organic farm, faces imminent destruction as the Auroville Foundation's Governing Board plans to hand over 100 acres of this vital agricultural land to IIT Madras for a "sustainability campus." Claiming that the current farm can ‘relocate’ to 35 acres in the Western portion of the land demonstrates a complete lack of understanding about how an organic farm develops over many years, even decades.*

The stewards of Annapurna Farm received notification of this land seizure through a blunt email on August 13, 2025, with no prior consultation with farm managers or the Auroville community. The news appeared in newspapers before the farm's own managers were informed.

### **Key points:**

* **Mother's Vision Violated:** The first lands were purchased during the Mother's lifetime in 1965, with the intention that these lands would be used to produce food for Auroville.
* **Food Security:** Annapurna produces 30% of the food supply from Auroville’s farms, which includes high quality organic grains, and functions as the community's central granary and processing over 90% of grains from a number of Auroville's farms.
* **40 Years of Work marked for destruction:** Although some farming activities were carried out in the 1970’s, the current incarnation of Annapurna Farm was established in the early 1980s and has become a model of regenerative agriculture on its 135 acres, with IMO Control (IMO IN) organic certification since 2005.
* **False Claims:** The Office of the Secretary, Auroville Foundation (AVFO), claims Annapurna uses only 35 acres, ignoring the complex ecosystem that is necessary for organic farming, which includes 20 acres of paddy, 25 acres of fodder/biomass plantations, 30 acres of animal grazing, 38 acres of forest buffers, extensive rain water harvesting ponds, and essential infrastructure, as well as 6 acres that hold 2 cow houses, cow corral, storage and drying areas, machine workshop, poultry house, duck house, compost areas, community kitchen, the residential area, and dairy and fruit processing.
* **Contradictory "Sustainability":** The IIT campus will include an EV truck testing track, destroying productive farmland to test heavy vehicles.
* **Employment Impact:** The farm provides livelihoods for 17-20 regular employees as well as up to 20 seasonal workers from surrounding villages.

Auroville’s Residents' Assembly was not consulted about this land transfer, violating the letter and spirit of the Auroville Foundation Act. While the chairperson of the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation, R.N. Ravi, has repeatedly criticized Auroville for not having achieved food self-sufficiency, his administration has taken a decision that will destroy the community's most productive agricultural asset. As this follows a highly questionable land exchange deal of a substantial portion of AuroOrchard Farm and with another productive organic farm of Auroville under threat for a ‘VIP road’, Auroville’s food production is in danger of being severely diminished.

**This represents the complete decimation of the ideal of a self-sustaining city, and it leads to Auroville becoming another urban space that extracts resources irresponsibly from surrounding areas.**

### **Lack of Transparency and Consultation**

Residents of Annapurna Farm and neighboring communities have not been informed or consulted about the proposed project.

The text of the MoU has never been shared with the Auroville Community despite several requests, including through RTIs.

Auroville's own environmental and alternative energy experts, many of whom have collaborated with IITs and other institutions for years, have not been consulted and have also been kept in the dark

No study has been conducted on the environmental impact of a test track for electric trucks on the farm itself to predict and reduce the negative impact of potential deforestation, erosion, water diversion, dust generation, and chemical contamination on the area.

### **Violation of Auroville's Founding Principles**

All Auroville lands have been purchased through private donations specifically intended to promote Auroville's development as an international township based on Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision. This proposed project alienates land that was donated for this fundamental purpose, and represents a diversion and complete disregard for the principle that Auroville residents should be integral participants in major decisions affecting their community.

We support research into sustainable technologies and we welcome any potential collaboration with Institutions of excellence like the IIT-M. However, the destruction of a thriving organic farm to build a test track for heavy vehicles, EV or otherwise, represents exactly the kind of short-sighted planning that Auroville was created to transcend.

The Working Committee notes that this latest development follows a pattern of unilateral decision-making by the current Auroville administration that has consistently sidelined community voices and expertise since July 2021.

### **Call for action**

* The Working Committee urges IIT Madras to reconsider this location and work with the community to find alternatives that don't sacrifice, in the name of sustainability, decades of careful ecological restoration and compromise existing successful sustainable projects.
* We call upon all concerned authorities, including the Governing Board, to immediately reverse this destructive decision and engage in genuine consultation with residents about preserving their agricultural heritage and continuing to work towards establishing food self-sufficiency.

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*Key points and examples are available on page 4. Pictures can be provided on request.*

*For more information on Auroville and the ongoing crisis, visit:* [*www.auroville.media/crisis*](http://www.auroville.media/crisis)

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## **APPENDIX: Annapurna Farm Key Data**

**Farm Overview:**

* **Total Area:** 135 acres (Auroville's largest farm)
* **Established:** First lands purchased in 1965 during the Mother's lifetime, with some farming activities carried out in the 1970’s; current incarnation established in the early 1980’s
* **Location:** 10 kilometers from Auroville center near Sedarapet village
* **Certification:** Organic certification from IMO Control (IMO IN) (Institute for Marketecology) since 2005

**Agricultural Production:**

* **Rice Cultivation:** 20 acres of dedicated paddy fields
* **Dairy Operations:** ~30 animal herd with 16 milking cows; cheese production facilities
* **Water Management:** 3 catchments with ~50,000 cubic meters total capacity
* **Employment:** 17-20 regular staff, up to 40 during peak seasons

**Land Utilization Breakdown:**

* Paddy fields: 20 acres
* Fodder/biomass plantation: 25 acres
* Forest buffers: 38 acres
* Fruit trees and orchards: 6.75 acres
* Water ponds and farm infrastructure such as roads, irrigation, go down, storage facilities, and homes: 14.5 acres
* Grazing and other uses: 30.75 acres

**Community Impact:**

* Supplies 30% of Auroville's total food production
* Processes over 90% of grains from all Auroville farms
* Supplies high quality organic grains to Auroville and the local area
* Serves as central granary for 3,000+ residents
* Provides employment for bioregional population
* Is a model for organic agriculture

**Products:**

* Multiple rice varieties including farm-developed Annapurna variety
* Organic dairy products including specialty aged cheeses
* Fresh fruits and processed foods such as fruit compotes, as well as gomasio, and dried & grated coconut
* Grain storage and processing services for all Auroville farms as well as some regional farms

**More data can be provided on request.**