National Fertilizer Ltd — FY 2024 Annual Report Analysis

Annual Report Analysis (Consolidated)

Investor Snapshot

#	Analytical point	Sentiment
1	**NFL maintains a dominant market position with record sales volumes of 69.74 LMT and high capacity utilization of 114%, though volume growth remains capped by regulatory constraints.**	—
2	***Revenue contracted 20.38% to 23,556 Cr, driven by subsidy normalization and a high base effect, despite the strategic shift toward a 42% non-urea revenue mix.***	—
3	***EBITDA margins compressed to 3.45% due to a 35% energy penalty at the Vijaipur-I unit and a regulatory squeeze on energy norms.***	—
4	***PAT plummeted 69% YoY to 150 Cr, with profitability further pressured by a collapse in ROCE from 16% to 7%, well below the cost of capital.***	—
5	***The debt profile is highly aggressive with 100% of the 4,091 Cr total debt being short-term, creating significant refinancing risk and interest rate sensitivity.***	—
6	**Cash Flow from Operations (CFO) turned positive at □668 Cr, a significant recovery from negative □333 Cr, primarily fueled by a □1,316 Cr liquidation of inventory.**	—
7	**Capex is currently self-funded through improved CFO, with the new Bathinda Agrochemicals plant and Navratna status providing a roadmap for higher-margin autonomy.**	—
8	***Earnings quality is poor, characterized by a departure from Ind AS 2 inventory valuation (inflating PAT by 90.23 Cr) and 486 Cr in "assurance-based" revenue accruals.***	—
9	Governance remains technically compliant (10/10 matrix) with Navratna status, though aggressive accounting treatments and high RPT-to-CFO ratios warrant caution.	—
10	***The balance sheet remains vulnerable to GoI subsidy delays, with 89% of receivables (3,022 Cr) tied to government payments and interest coverage weakened to 1.63x.***	—
11	**The outlook hinges on the RFCL JV turnaround (□85 Cr profit contribution) and the potential for margin expansion through the upcoming Agrochemicals plant in FY25.**	—
12	Investment View: Watch; stance remains neutral pending debt restructuring into long-term instruments and the lifting of energy penalties at Vijaipur-I.	—

1. Business overview (In Bullet Points)

- **Business Segments:** National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) is transitioning from a traditional urea manufacturer to a diversified "Agri-Input" conglomerate. Key segments include Manufactured Urea, Non-Urea/Traded Fertilizers (DAP, MoP, NPK), Industrial Chemicals (Nitric Acid, Ammonium Nitrate), and Agrochemicals.
- **Revenue Drivers:** Growth is currently volume-led; total fertilizer sales reached a record **69.74 LMT** (up 5% YoY). The primary "alpha" is shifting toward the Traded Segment and Industrial Products like Ammonium Nitrate (up 56% YoY).
- **Cost Drivers:** The business is highly sensitive to energy efficiency and natural gas prices (□**4,343.47 Cr**). Costs are heavily impacted by Target Energy Norms (TEN) under the New Urea Policy (NUP-2015).
- **Industry Position:** NFL is the second-largest urea producer in India with an approx. 12% market share. Its "Kisan" brand maintains a strong competitive moat in Northern India (Punjab, Haryana, MP).

- **Expansion Plans:** A new Agrochemicals plant at Bathinda is expected to commission in FY 2024-25. The company is also doubling Bio-Fertilizer capacity at the Vijaipur plant.
- **Capacity Additions:** NFL operates at **114.2% capacity utilization**, indicating limited room for volume growth without debottlenecking. Pilot plants for Urea Gold (5,000 MTPA) and lab trials for Nano DAP are underway.
- **Acquisitions & JVs:** NFL holds a 26% stake in **RFCL (Ramagundam)**, which contributed 11.09 LMT to sales, allowing marketing footprint expansion without full greenfield debt.
- **Geographical Presence:** Stronghold in Northern India; expanding service reach through "Drone-as-a-Service" with 300+ drones deployed under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.
- **Navratna Status:** Achievement of **Navratna status** in April 2024 grants the board higher financial autonomy for capex and joint ventures.

2. Management commentary & outlook

- Management has explicitly pivoted strategy: **Urea is for food security; Non-Urea is for the Balance Sheet.** Increasing sales of non-urea fertilizers is viewed as the key to sustaining profitability.
- The company aims to align with the GoI goal to end urea imports by 2025-26, which necessitates maintaining 100%+ capacity utilization.
- Management acknowledges volatility in **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)** rates; they rely on "No Profit No Loss" assurance letters from the Department of Fertilizers (DoF) to mitigate downside risks on P&K procurements.
- A significant execution risk exists at the **Vijaipur-I unit**, which is currently under a 35% penalty for failing to meet Target Energy Norms; technical upgrades are underway to resolve this by Dec 2024.
- Digital transformation via **Project sangam (SAP S4/HANA)** is being implemented to tighten internal financial controls and reduce leakages.
- The long-term vision involves shifting from a "Government Manufacturer" to a "Market-Linked Agri-Retailer," focusing on high-margin niche products like Ammonium Nitrate and Agrochemicals.
- Management Tone: **Pragmatically Optimistic with a focus on "De-risking."** Management is celebrating the Navratna status but remains acutely aware of the structural "viability gap" created by government energy mandates. The tone is aggressive regarding diversification into Agrochemicals and Drones but defensive regarding the core urea manufacturing business.

3. Financial analysis

3.1 Financial statements

P&L statement (□Cr)

Line item	Mar 2024	Mar 2023
Sales	23,556	29,587
Sales Growth %	-20.38	86.58
Expenses	22,939	28,509
Material Cost %	67	66
Raw material cost	14,360	20,395
Change in inventory	1,379	-826
Manufacturing Cost %	22	23
Employee Cost %	3	2
Other Cost %	6	5
Operating Profit	617	1,077
OPM %	3	4
Other Income	196	195
Exceptional items	9	0
Other income normal	186	195
Interest	277	308
Depreciation	362	353
Profit before tax	174	612
Tax %	14	25
Net Profit	150	458
Exceptional items AT	8	0
Profit excl Excep	142	458
Profit for PE	142	458
Profit for EPS	150	458
Profit Growth %	-69	571
EPS (□)	3.06	9.34
Dividend Payout %	9	30

Balance sheet (□Cr)

Line item	Mar 2024	Mar 2023
Equity Capital	491	491
Reserves	2,055	2,051
Borrowings	4,091	3,993
Long term Borrowings	0	535
Short term Borrowings	4,088	3,457
Lease Liabilities	2	1
Other Borrowings	0	0
Other Liabilities	4,563	6,002
Trade Payables	1,348	1,756
Advance from Customers	48	34
Other liability items	3,167	4,211
Total Liabilities	11,199	12,536
Fixed Assets	3,831	3,969
Land	18.54	18.54
Building	207.81	201.32
Plant Machinery	6,222.13	6,030.61
Equipments	13.93	13.52
Computers	71.39	59.67
Furniture n fittings	33.73	29.86
Railway sidings	8.81	7.42
Vehicles	11.53	14.99
Intangible Assets	26.23	26.23
Other fixed assets	46.75	43.14
Gross Block	6,660.85	6,445.30
Accumulated Depreciation	2,829.93	2,476.62
CWIP	242	178
Investments	336	259
Other Assets	6,791	8,131
Inventories	1,752	3,072
Trade receivables	4,037	4,119
Cash Equivalents	38	16
Loans n Advances	168	223
Other asset items	796	700
Total Assets	11,199	12,536

Cash flow statement (□Cr)

Line item	Mar 2024	Mar 2023
Cash from Operating Activity	668	-333
Profit from operations	610	1,129
Receivables	6	-1,427
Inventory	1,316	-819
Payables	-1,262	922
Other WC items	0	0
Working capital changes	60	-1,324
Direct taxes	-2	-138
Cash from Investing Activity	-334	-206
Fixed assets purchased	-292	-208
Fixed assets sold	10	1
Investments purchased	0	0
Investments sold	0	0
Interest received	33	4
Investment in group cos	-85	-2
Redemp n Canc of Shares	0	0
Cash from Financing Activity	-318	526
Proceeds from borrowings	736	917
Repayment of borrowings	-639	-95
Interest paid fin	-276	-294
Dividends paid	-137	0
Financial liabilities	-1	-2
Net Cash Flow	16	-13
Free Cash Flow	386	-540
CFO/OP	109	-18

Key ratios

Line item	Mar 2024	Mar 2023
Debtor Days	63	51
Inventory Days	41	57
Days Payable	31	33
Cash Conversion Cycle	72	75
Working Capital Days	-3	7
ROCE %	7	16

3.2 Financial analysis summary

- **Revenue** declined by 20.38% to ₹23,556 Cr, primarily due to a sharp drop in Manufactured Fertilizer subsidy (₹11,481.17 Cr vs ₹17,023.48 Cr) and the absence of a ₹928.37 Cr one-time gain from energy norms extension recognized in the previous year.
- **EBITDA** compressed to ₹617 Cr with EBITDA Margin falling to 3.45% from 4.30%; profitability was supported by recognizing ₹486.53 Cr in Revenue based on a "no profit no loss" assurance letter rather than finalized notifications.
- **Other Income** of ₹196 Cr was bolstered by a one-time ₹77.01 Cr insurance claim for a damaged gas turbine at the Bathinda unit and ₹20.13 Cr in provision write-backs.
- **Cash from Operating Activity (CFO)** saw a significant turnaround to ₹668 Cr from negative ₹333 Cr, driven largely by a ₹1,316 Cr release from Inventory liquidation as traded goods stocks were halved.
- **Working Capital** efficiency remains poor as Trade Receivables of ₹4,037 Cr consist of 88.97% subsidy receivables; Debtor Days deteriorated from 51 to 63 days, signaling slower realization from the GoI.
- **Total Debt** remained elevated at ₹4,091 Cr, but the composition shifted entirely to Short term Borrowings (₹4,088 Cr) following the full prepayment of the SBI Rupee Term Loan; this creates a liquidity "cliff" risk as Interest Coverage weakened to 1.63x.
- **Asset Quality** was artificially supported by valuing imported P&K fertilizer Inventory at cost despite a ₹90.23 Cr lower Net Realisable Value, a departure from Ind AS 2 that effectively inflated PAT and Net Worth.
- **Capital Allocation** involved Capex of ₹292 Cr directed toward energy-saving schemes and the Bathinda Agrochemicals plant, while Investments rose to ₹336 Cr due to the turnaround of the RFCL joint venture, which contributed a profit share of ₹85.36 Cr.
- **Other Assets** include a ₹163.04 Cr "Gas Pool Account" recoverable and ₹401.16 Cr in GST Input Credit, both of which represent significant regulatory assets that impact liquidity based on GoI settlement speed.
- **Other Expenses** were impacted by a reduction in Exchange Rate Variation to ₹3.92 Cr (from ₹129.64 Cr), while Repairs and Maintenance increased by 38.10% to ₹88.44 Cr, reflecting aging infrastructure.
- **Returns** significantly deteriorated with ROCE falling to 7% from 16% and ROE dropping to 5.89%, as the decline in PAT to ₹150 Cr outpaced the slight reduction in Total Assets.
- The dominant financial theme of the year was a **liquidity-driven recovery in CFO through aggressive inventory liquidation, masked by deteriorating margins and a risky shift to 100% short-term debt financing.**

3.3 Contingent liabilities & commitments

- **Arbitration and Civil Cases:** ₹111.06 Cr (FY24) vs ₹127.37 Cr (FY23).
- **Income Tax Demands:** Spiked to ₹44.36 Cr from ₹3.19 Cr due to new adverse assessments.
- **Excise, Customs, GST & Service Tax:** ₹20.00 Cr.
- **Sales Tax & VAT:** ₹6.95 Cr.
- **Capital Commitments:** ₹232.04 Cr (Net of advances) relating to energy saving and plant modernization.
- **Unquantified Risks:** Claims for labor and other matters are noted as "not ascertainable."

3.9 Earnings quality & forensic checks

#	Check	Impact	Status	Notes detail
1	PAT vs CFO trend	Profit ↑ — earnings overstate cash; ₹150 Cr PAT vs ₹668 Cr CFO driven by inventory liquidation.	—	CFO improved significantly due to ₹1,316 Cr inventory reduction despite lower operating profits.
2	Receivables & channel-stuffing signal	Revenue ↑↓ — subsidy concentration risk; receivables + inventory (₹5,789 Cr) represent 24.5% of sales.	—	Note 13: Subsidy receivables are 88.97% of total; Note 37(i): ₹3,022.74 Cr recognized but not yet "due".
3	Revenue timing	Revenue ↑ — aggressive accrual; ₹486.53 Cr recognized on letter of assurance without formal notification.	—	Note 37(ii): Revenue recognized based on DoF assurance letter to protect against price volatility.
4	Revenue from related parties %	Profit ↑ — JV turnaround; marketing RFCL urea contributed significant share of profit.	—	Note 54(G): Material transactions with RFCL; NFL acts as marketer for JV production.
5	Inventory vs revenue growth	Profit ↑ — inventory liquidation; 43% inventory drop vs 20% sales decline aids cash flow.	—	Note 12: Traded goods inventory fell from ₹2,506.54 Cr to ₹1,082.83 Cr.
6	Inventory valuation method change	Profit ↑ — non-impairment; ignoring ₹90.23 Cr NRV drop inflates current year PAT.	—	Note 37(ii): Departure from Ind AS 2 justified by GoI assurance to protect against losses.
7	Exceptional items in operating profit	Profit ↑ — one-time gains; ₹77.01 Cr insurance claim and provision write-backs boost EBIT.	—	Note 37(C): Insurance claim for Bathinda unit Gas Turbine recognized on surveyor report.
8	Depreciation rate vs useful life policy	Profit ↑ — expense smoothing; 15-20 year life for specific machinery exceeds standard 8 years.	—	Note 1.2.10: Reformer Package/Heat Exchangers depreciated over longer lives than standard plant.
9	Provision reversals boosting PAT	Profit ↑ — non-cash boost; ₹20.13 Cr write-back of provisions supports thin margins.	—	Note 37(C): Included in other operating revenue/income components.
10	Tax rate consistency	Profit ↑ — low effective tax; 14% tax rate vs 25% statutory due to adjustments.	—	P&L shows ₹24 Cr tax on ₹174 Cr PBT; Cash flow shows only ₹2 Cr direct taxes paid.
11	CWIP age and stalling projects	Neutral — ongoing modernization; ₹242 Cr CWIP relates to active energy-saving schemes.	—	Note 51: Capital commitments of ₹232.04 Cr for energy saving and plant modernization.
12	Deferred tax asset recognition adequacy	Neutral — grant offsetting; AFCP project depreciation is exactly offset by deferred income.	—	Note 1.2.8: Capital grants credited to P&L over asset life, making AFCP project P&L neutral.
13	RPT quantum and trend	Neutral — marketing synergy; net payable to RFCL increased to ₹231.32 Cr.	—	Note 54(G): Increased payable suggests NFL holding more cash for JV or delayed settlement.
14	Dividend paid vs FCF adequacy	Profit ↓ — low payout; ₹137 Cr dividend paid despite negative FCF in prior year.	—	Dividend paid in FY24 (₹137 Cr) was supported by the recovery in Free Cash Flow.
15	Auditor Emphasis of Matter	Profit ↑ — Ind AS 2 Departure; Valuation of P&K fertilizers at cost despite lower NRV.	—	Auditor highlights departure from Ind AS 2 based on GoI "no profit no loss" assurance.
16	Subsidy Recognition Timing	Revenue ↑ — Accrual risk; ₹3,022.74 Cr recognized but not "due" until farmer POS sale.	—	Significant timing gap between revenue recognition and cash realization.

#	Check	Impact	Status	Notes detail
17	Regulatory Penalty Impact	Profit ↓ — Operational inefficiency; 35% penalty on energy norms for Vijaipur-I.	—	Direct hit to manufactured urea margins due to failure to meet TEN.

4. Management & governance

A. Auditor Report & Key Audit Matters - **Audit opinion type:** Unqualified. - **Key Audit Matters (KAMs):** Significant accounting judgments regarding subsidy income and energy norms. - ***Emphasis of Matter:*** **Note 37(ii):** Departure from Ind AS 2 (Valuation of Inventories). Imported P&K fertilizers were valued at cost despite NRV being lower by □**90.23 Cr**. Management justified this based on a "no profit no loss" assurance letter from the DoF, effectively inflating profits. - **Other Matter:** Financials are subject to supplementary audit by the C&AG of India. - **Internal Controls:** Adequate internal financial controls system maintained.

B. Related Party Transactions

Party	Relationship	Nature	Amount (□Cr)	Concern
RFCL	Joint Venture	Purchase of Goods	616.49 Cr	***High Payable Balance***
RFCL	Joint Venture	Service Charges Received	23.41 Cr	Normal Course
RFCL	Joint Venture	Marketing Expense Share	24.73 Cr	Normal Course
RFCL	Joint Venture	Amount Payable to RFCL	231.32 Cr	***Liquidity Strain***

- **Concern:** Net payable to RFCL increased from □140.51 Cr to □**231.32 Cr**, indicating NFL is effectively financing the JV's working capital.
- **% of CFO: 99.49%** (High Risk): A material portion of operating cash flow is tied up in related party dealings.

C. Shareholding - **Promoter (Govt. of India):** 74.71% (No change YoY). - **Pledged Shares:** 0.00%. - **DIIs:** 12.34% | **Public:** 12.14% | **FIIs:** 0.81%.

D. Board Composition + KMP Compensation - **Total Directors:** 10 | **Independent %:** 50% | **Women Directors:** 2. - **KMP Compensation:** Aggregate Employee Benefit Expense decreased by 3.61% to □**635.29 Cr**. As a Government Company, NFL is exempt from disclosing individual KMP-to-median employee ratios. No KMPs share family relations.

F. Capital Allocation & Capex

Action	FY current (□Cr)	FY prior (□Cr)	% of CFO	Signal
Dividends	137.00 Cr	0.00 Cr	20.51%	—
Capex	292.00 Cr	208.00 Cr	43.71%	**Text**
Net Debt Change	98.00 Cr	822.00 Cr	14.67%	—
Interest Payments	276.00 Cr	294.00 Cr	41.32%	—
Investment in Group Cos	85.00 Cr	2.00 Cr	12.72%	—

- **CAPEX Analytical Notes:** CFO/Capex ratio is **2.28x**, showing CFO is now sufficient to self-fund maintenance. Capex is focused on regulatory compliance (Energy Norms) and diversification (Agrochemicals plant at Bathinda). Revenue fell 20.38% despite capex, primarily due to subsidy normalization.

H. Risks - ***Subsidy Timing:*** □**3,022.74 Cr** recognized but not due until POS sale; causes significant cash flow mismatch (High). - ***Energy Norms:*** Vijaipur-I unit failed TEN; **35% penalty** until Dec 2024 (High). - ***Inventory Valuation:*** □**90.23 Cr** potential overstatement of assets due to Ind AS 2 departure (Medium). - ***Debt Structure:***

100% of debt (₹4,088.33 Cr) is short-term; high sensitivity to interest rates (High). - ***Concentration Risk:*** **88.97%** of receivables are from GoI; total dependency on Union Budget (High).

5. Scorecard & verdict

Part a: scorecard

Dimension	Rating (1–5)	Delta	Key evidence	One-line rationale
Business quality	3	→	114% Utilization; 42% Non-Urea mix	Stable demand but limited volume growth and high regulatory squeeze.
Financial health	2	↓	D/E 1.61x; 100% Short-term debt	High leverage with a risky short-term debt profile and weak coverage.
Earnings quality	2	↓	₹486Cr assurance accrual; Ind AS 2 departure	Profits are supported by aggressive accruals and non-impairment of inventory.
Management & governance	3	→	Navratna status; 50% Independent Board	Generally compliant but high RPT-to-CFO and aggressive accounting.
Capital allocation & visibility	3	↑	CFO > Capex; RFCL turnaround	Capex is self-funded now, but returns (ROCE 7%) remain below cost of capital.

Business positives (for this company this year) * **Record Sales Volume:** Achieved highest-ever total fertilizer sales of **69.74 LMT**. * **Strategic Diversification:** Non-own-urea sales increased to **42.34%** of revenue, reducing regulatory risk. * **CFO Recovery:** Operating cash flow turned positive to **₹668 Cr** from negative ₹333 Cr. * **JV Turnaround:** RFCL joint venture contributed a profit share of **₹85.36 Cr** vs a loss last year. * **Navratna Status:** Granted in April 2024, providing higher financial autonomy for future growth.

Business negatives / concerns (for this company this year) * **Margin Compression:** EBITDA margin fell to **3.45%**; PAT dropped 69% YoY to ₹150 Cr. * **Debt Profile Risk: 100%** of the ₹4,091 Cr debt is now short-term, creating significant refinancing risk. * **Accounting Red Flags:** Departure from Ind AS 2 for inventory valuation inflated profits by **₹90.23 Cr**. * **Operational Penalty:** Vijaipur-I unit hit with a **35% penalty** for failing energy norms. * **Subsidy Dependency: 88.97%** of receivables are tied to GoI subsidies, with ₹3,022 Cr recognized but not yet due.

Overall scorecard summary NFL is in a state of structural transition, successfully diversifying its revenue mix but at the cost of deteriorating financial health and earnings quality. While the recovery in CFO is a positive sign of inventory management, the reliance on aggressive accounting treatments and a risky 100% short-term debt structure are major concerns. The business remains a stable utility-like play with a strong brand, but its trajectory is currently "Stable to Weakening" due to the squeeze from energy norms and high interest sensitivity.

Part b: governance check matrix

#	Check	Status
1	Audit opinion clean?	—
2	Promoter pledge = 0?	—
3	KMP pay < 5% of PAT?	—
4	RPT quantum < 5% of revenue?	—
5	Board > 50% independent?	—
6	At least 1 woman director?	—
7	No statutory dues outstanding?	—
8	No fraud reported?	—
9	Audit trail enabled?	—
10	Frequent Auditor change	—

Final line: "Total: 10/10 — Governance Rating: 4" (Note: Rating adjusted to 4 due to aggressive accounting despite matrix score).

Part c: investor verdict

Thesis: NFL is a high-volume, low-margin PSU play transitioning to a diversified agri-retailer, currently hampered by regulatory energy penalties and a risky debt structure.

Overall stance: Watch

Rationale: While Navratna status and diversification are long-term positives, the current earnings quality is poor and the 100% short-term debt profile is a liquidity risk. Re-evaluate when: Interest Coverage Ratio > 3.0x and Vijaipur-I penalty is lifted. BULL CASE: Successful commissioning of the Agrochemicals plant and resolution of energy norms could re-rate OPM to >5%. BEAR CASE: A sharp rise in interest rates or further delays in subsidy payments could trigger a liquidity crisis given the short-term debt load. Key monitorable: Short-term Borrowings: ₹4,088 Cr → Watch for any conversion to long-term debt.