

UN: Afghan opium production up by 61%

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A recent UN report says insecurity and rising opium prices have driven Afghan farmers to increase cultivation of the illicit drug despite the presence of nearly 150,000 foreign troops in the country.

The UN said in its report on Tuesday that cultivation of the poppy crop reached 131,000 hectares in 2011, seven percent higher than in 2010 "due to insecurity and high prices", AFP reported.

The report added that overall opium production in Afghanistan would potentially rise by 61 percent in 2011 as the crop yield per hectare rose markedly from last year.

The price of dry opium also rose 43 percent this year compared to 2010, and total farm-gate income is set to increase by 133 percent to reach \$1.4 billion in 2011, or nine percent of Afghanistan's GDP.

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