

# ANIMAL RAHAT: Sugarcane Industry Mechanization Project



## Overview

Since 2011, Animal Rahat's mechanisation project in Maharashtra has spared nearly 117,000 bulls from hauling heavy sugarcane carts by replacing them with tractors. The project spares bulls this grueling work and enables them to recover and retire, either with families or at an Animal Rahat sanctuary. About 10% of the state's sugarcane factories have participated, but 200,000 bulls still endure this strenuous work in Maharashtra, causing hardship for the animals and the laborers who use them.

## Background

An average sugarcane factory uses the draught power of about 1,200 bulls. Despite laws that set load limits, bulls often haul double the legal weight under harsh conditions.

Bull-owning communities migrate from various parts of Maharashtra to factory sites during the sugarcane harvest season and live in makeshift tents. Because the families using bull carts earn a poverty wage and have trouble providing food and primary care for themselves, they also struggle to care for the bulls suitably.

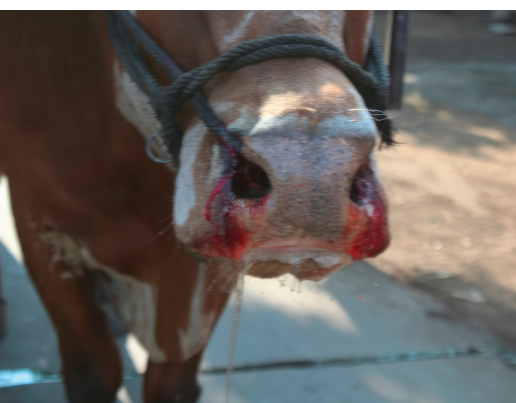
The animals are commonly denied veterinary care, adequate food and water, sufficient rest, or shade from the blazing hot sun. They also face poor hoof care, weapon use, and abusive handling.

But now, thanks to Animal Rahat's Sugarcane Industry Mechanization Project, bulls are being relieved, and these families are starting to see a positive change, bringing hope for a better future.



## Bulls' Working Conditions

- **Extreme weather:** Bulls work 8-10 hours a day in extreme heat without adequate water or food.
- **Poor hoof care:** Bulls' feet are tied, and shoes are nailed on by untrained workers, causing injuries and infections.
- **Injuries and disease:** The bulls suffer from abscesses, yoke gall, lameness, and weakened immune systems.
- **Abuse and inhumane handling:** Bulls are controlled by nose ropes and beaten or whipped, often with a strip of leather. Painful tools to control them include sharp nails and cylindrical spikes.



## Project Objectives

Establishing tractors as effective alternatives to animal draught power is a win-win situation. Tractors are faster, carry heavier loads, and provide better earning prospects year-round. Bull owners avoid losing their livelihood due to sick or injured bulls, and the animals are spared the immense physical toll of hauling heavy loads.

## Project Method

Most sugar factories in Maharashtra are cooperatives. Key stakeholders, the *mukadams* or agents who organize bullock carts, bull owners, and managers of sugar factories, are informed about the project's financial and welfare benefits.

Animal Rahat initially subsidized tractor costs by up to 40%, but the laborers' transition to mechanical means was later wholly supported by soft loans from factories and lenders. Animal Rahat also convinced tractor manufacturers to reduce costs.

Animal Rahat keeps government officials abreast of the project's progress, which led to an announced Rs 128 crore subsidy for 900 harvesters that will replace bull carts.

## Impact

By April 2026, the project introduced 13,802 mini tractors and 6,457 large tractors, and 298 harvesters, sparing 1,17,144 bulls from hauling sugarcane. A bull cart carries up to 4 tons of sugarcane, while mini tractors transport 8.5 tons and large tractors over 18 tons. Switching to tractors saves bull cart owners 20% of their time, improving their health and providing better year-round earning opportunities.



## About Animal Rahat

Animal Rahat is a non-profit organization focused on providing relief to animals used for work. It has project areas and sanctuaries for rescued animals in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and West Bengal. The group also provides emergency services for community animals in need.

