



Fortnightly column

Village Dynamics Insights

Flexibility for profit in Gujarat

While farmers in Gujarat are opting to grow high-value spices such as cumin and coriander, tribal farmers are taking up seasonal off-farm work to increase their income.

These trends were observed across 160 households in Karmadichingatiya and Makhiyala villages in Junagadh district, and Babrol and Chatha villages in tribal Panchmahal district.

Gujarat has a population of 60 million, with more than half living in rural areas, and 3.4 million from the tribal groups. With much of the state falling in the arid or semi-arid region, irrigation has expanded from 3.3 m ha to 5.3 m ha between 2009 and 2013, with an additional 0.2 m ha under micro-irrigation. Agricultural production grew 11.1% annually from 2001 to 2011-12, led by cotton, wheat, fruit crops and dairy.

VDSA insights

In the two villages of Junagadh, the average farm size is 1.58 ha. In 2013-14, half the farmers grew coriander and cumin in the post-rainy season rather than cotton and other

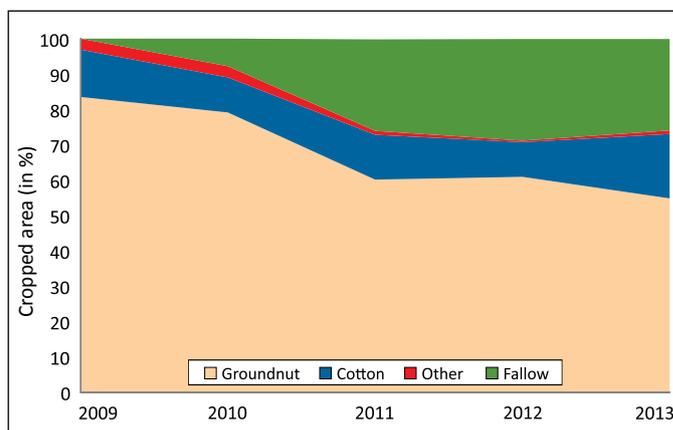


Figure 1. Cropping pattern in Junagadh villages.

crops, making a profit of ₹100,000-125,000 per ha (US\$ 1,666-2,083 per ha) from cumin. They have reduced the area under groundnut, coarse grains and pulses (Figure 1). Land is increasingly left fallow due to scarce labor, water-logging or scanty rainfall.

In the two Panchmahal villages, where 80% of sample households are tribals, the average farm size is 1 ha. The cropping pattern is more stable and staple crops such as maize and paddy dominate. Crop productivity in these two villages was 30% lower than in Junagadh district in 2012-13, with a greater emphasis on livestock production in the tribal villages.

Farmers in both districts are switching from animal power to machine power for ploughing. In 2013 about 83% of farmers in the tribal areas used tractors to prepare land in the *rabi* (post-rainy) season, up from about 58% in 2009. Only 10% of farmers used bullocks for ploughing in 2013, down from 40% in 2009.

Income trends

In Panchmahal district, between 2009 and 2013, households with medium-large farms doubled their off-farm income as men took up seasonal work, such as in construction, and women did more farm work (Figure 2). Income from livestock was down in 2013.

In Junagadh district, families with medium-large farms rely more heavily on cropping income, earning only about 20% of their income from off-farm activities in 2013. Unlike other areas, average wages are similar for men and women, although they are higher in Junagadh (₹160-180 per day) compared to Panchmahal (₹110 per day). ■



Photo: D Rajesh, ICRISAT

Famer inspects his cotton crop in Makhiyala village of Junagadh district.

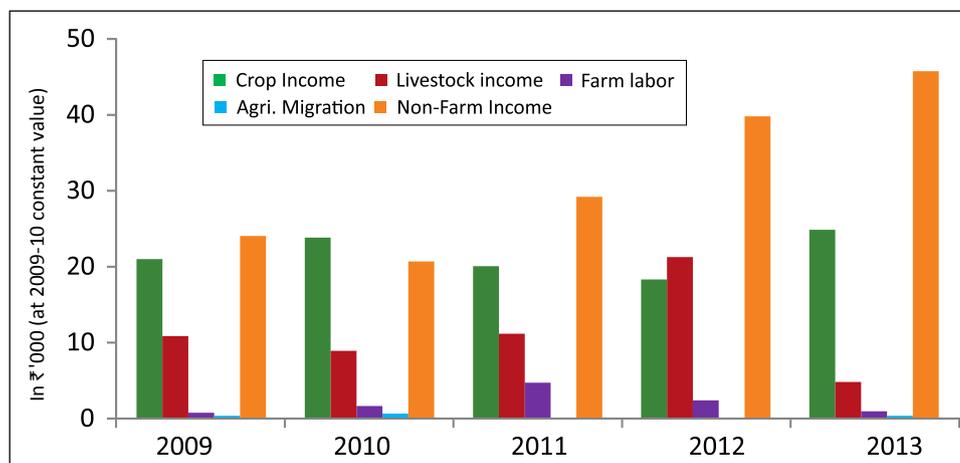


Figure 2. Household income of large and medium farmers in Panchmahal villages.