

The GUJARAT Model

On the surface it looks like a paradox. When agricultural production in most other states is plummeting, Gujarat, with large semi-arid tracts that were alien to good crops, offers a turnaround story. Last year, it posted an agricultural growth of 9.6 per cent against a national average of 2.9 per cent. The state's annual agro output (including production from animal husbandry) now revolves around Rs 49,000 crore, from just Rs 18,000 crore in 2000-01.

The figures are impressive even after factoring in a reasonably steady monsoon ever since Chief Minister Narendra Modi took over in 2001-end. As leading agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan puts it, "Gujarat owes it to a scientific and integrated approach to agriculture during Narendra Modi's tenure which is backed by a sharp vision."

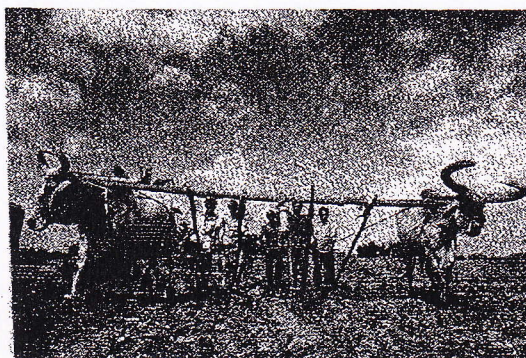
What impressed Swaminathan most was the Modi Government's decision to give soil health cards to farmers so that they could assess the quality of land. Steps were also taken to improve the quality of seeds, raise the groundwater table by building almost a lakh check dams within a decade in

Kutch, Saurashtra and north Gujarat besides extensive use of technology by bringing scientists and farmers on one platform.

Judicious use of water for farming got a major fillip in 2003 when the state Government floated the Gujarat Green Revolution Company to encourage drip irrigation. From 105 lakh hectares in 2000-2001, the state's cultivable area now stands at 120 lakh hectares. Plus, agro financing was done with a purpose. Gujarat Agricultural University was also split into four universities, each dedicated to a particular crop.

As Modi says, "We worked with a strategy and vision, and are reaping the fruits now." Japan recently placed a huge import order of organic til grown in Gujarat. Kutch, that never knew what Kesar mango was, now produces and exports it. Similarly, the region is now cultivating Arabian dates. The state increased its cotton yield sixfold in nine years from 175 kg per hectare to 798 kg, more than the world average of 787 kg. Gujarat's farmland is a field of glory now, giving reason for other states to take a leaf out of its success story.

by Uday Mahurkar



GUJARAT HAS ITS SECOND GREEN REVOLUTION

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