



Gujarat records 696 pc growth in cotton and 575 pc in groundnut, sets roadmap for 2047

Gandhinagar, March 12 (IANS) Gujarat has achieved unprecedented growth in agriculture over the past two decades, with cotton production rising by 696 per cent and groundnut by 575 per cent, Agriculture Minister Jitu Vaghani said in the state Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

Describing the state's agricultural and cooperative model, Vaghani said: "Farmers are not just providers of food, they are the living arteries keeping the economy beating." Vaghani highlighted Gujarat's transformation into a national hub for agriculture, with more than 40 major crops cultivated across the state. Comparing data over the last 20 years, he said cotton production had increased from 11.6 lakh bales to 92.48 lakh bales, while productivity rose from 122 kilograms per hectare to 586 kilograms per hectare. Groundnut production rose from 6.88 lakh metric tonnes to 46.46 lakh metric tonnes, with productivity improving from 398 kilograms per hectare to 2,740 kilograms per hectare. Sugarcane output increased by 150 per cent and productivity by 58 per cent, pulses production by 733 per cent, oilseeds by 347 per cent, and food grains production by 270 per cent, with productivity increasing by 181 per cent.

He noted that several regional crops had gained global recognition, including Gir's 'Kesar Mango', Bhal's 'Bhalia Wheat', Kutch's 'Kharak' and Valsad's 'Chikoo', all of which have received G.I. tags. Vaghani also outlined the impact of national policies on farmers, stating that the Prime Minister had implemented "a historic policy ensuring farmers receive one-and-a-half times the cost of production." "Between 2013-14 and 2025-26, minimum support prices for food grains rose by 81 to 147 per cent, for pulses by 81 to 95 per cent, for oilseeds by 82 to 119 per cent, and for cash crops such as cotton and sugarcane by 70 to 103 per cent," he said.

The Minister said that in the last five years, Gujarat had procured over 59.87 lakh metric tonnes of crops valued at Rs 39,155 crore at minimum support prices. "Even during natural disasters, the state has stood as a shield for farmers," he added. This year alone, the government has provided more than Rs 9,759 crore in aid to over 33.21 lakh affected farmers, while over the past five years, more than 53 lakh farmers have received a total of Rs 12,900 crore during calamities. Vaghani highlighted the state's adoption of technology in agriculture, noting that over 18 lakh farmers are registered under i-Khedut 2.0. Artificial intelligence tools and mobile applications, including the 'Krushi Pragati' app, have addressed 3.54 lakh issues and identified crop diseases in 60,000 cases.

Digital crop surveys have geo-tagged over 80 lakh plots and provided 59 lakh farmers with a 'Farmer ID'. "Tractor registrations have increased by 445 per cent compared with 1995, while the irrigated area has expanded from 29 lakh hectares to 109 lakh hectares. More than 45 crore SMS advisories have been issued to farmers on agricultural matters," he said. On horticulture and natural farming, the Minister said Gujarat ranks first in the cultivation of chikoo, papaya, ridge gourd, cumin and watermelon, and second in pomegranate, coriander, banana and onion. Cold storage facilities with a capacity of 27.4 lakh metric tonnes have been established through 548 units to preserve horticultural produce. "The state has 97 operational natural farming FPOs, the highest in India, and plans to develop 500 villages as 'ideal natural villages'. The country's first Natural Agriculture Science University has been established at Halol, offering courses from Balvatika to PhD," he said.

The Minister also detailed cooperative sector achievements, noting that milk collection has increased by 500 per cent to reach three crore litres per day, with daily payments of Rs 200 crore to livestock owners. He said: "Financial support for farmers includes Rs 1,539 crore in interest-free loans, 32 lakh new accounts opened, and deposits rising by Rs 16,210 crore. The state is also implementing cooperative-led 'Bharat Taxi' services and bio-CNG plants at an investment of Rs 60 crore." Vaghani said the government plans to increase food grain productivity from 2.7 to three metric tonnes per hectare, establish an Agri Business and Innovation Hub in Ahmedabad for Rs 22.5 crore, set up a new food park in Vav-Tharad, and develop logistic facilities in North Gujarat. "Through agricultural business and export policies, we aim to enhance the income of 50 lakh farmers and attract Rs one lakh crore in investment," he said.