CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Indian economy. Over 54.00 per cent of the rural households depend on agriculture as their principal means of livelihood. Agriculture, along with fisheries and forestry, accounts for one-third of the nation's GDP and is its single largest contributor. The total share of agriculture and allied sectors (including agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishery sub sectors) in terms of percentage of GDP is 17.40 percent during 2015-16 (Anon. 2015-16). Though its contribution to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country has fallen from about 30 percent in 1990-91, a trend that is expected in the development process of any economy, agriculture yet forms the backbone of development. The experience from BRICS countries indicates that a one percentage growth in agriculture is at least two to three times more effective in reducing poverty than the same growth emanating from non-agriculture sectors. India still being home to the largest number of poor and malnourished people in the world, a higher priority to agriculture will achieve the goals of reducing poverty and malnutrition as well as of inclusive growth.

The attempt made by World Trade Organization to restructure Indian agricultural policies is happening at a time when Indian agriculture itself is faced with a terrible agrarian crisis. What began to be called as second generation environmental impacts resulting from the intensively-farmed green revolution have now blown into a full grown crisis in agriculture sustainability. With soil fertility devastated, underground water table plummeting as a result of relentless water mining, environmental contamination from excessive use and abuse of chemical pesticides, the entire farming equation has gone wrong. In a mission to shift from green revolution to the second green revolution, India is on fast track to bring agriculture under corporate control. Amending the existing laws on land acquisition, water resources, seed, fertilizer, pesticides and food processing, the government is in an overdrive to user in contract farming and encourage organized retail. Although the exact estimates are not available, rural areas are on a boil as a result of the protests over land acquisitions. Industrial corridors, real estate projects, express highways, special economic zones are
being aggressively pushed without ascertaining how much of farm land must be kept under cultivation for meeting the country's food security needs.

The tragedy for that reason is two-fold, as the rural areas are being vacated, moving the population into the urban areas is leading to the collapse of the cities. It is projected that probably after two decades; roughly half of India's population will be urban based. Secondly, the population shift from rural areas along with prime farmland being diverted for non-agriculture purposes will create a food shortage thereby leading to an unexpected disaster on the food security front. With agriculture becoming unrewarding over the years, and with the farm incomes steadily declining, a majority of the farmers want to quit farming if given as an alternative. It is crystal clear that if proper care is not taken by Government of India, India will soon return to the days of 'ship-to-mouth' existence when food came directly from the ships into the hungry mouths.

The green revolution strategy which brought a phenomenal growth in the agricultural sector and improved the economic conditions of the farming community during the 1970s and 1980s, seems to be growing dim with the passage of time. The Indian peasantry, the largest body of surviving small farmers in the world today faces a crisis of extinction. Two thirds of India makes its living from the land. The earth is the most generous employer in this country of a billion that has farmed this land for more than 5000 years. However, as farming is delinked from the earth, the soil, the biodiversity, the climate and linked to global corporations and global markets, and the generosity of the earth is replaced by the greed of corporations, the viability of small farmers and small farms is destroyed. Indian agriculture is characterized by small farm holdings. The average size of operational land holding has declined to 1.16 ha in 2010-11 as compared to 1.23 in 2005-06. The average land holding of small and marginal farmers in India is too low (less than 1 ha) that they cannot generate adequate employment and income for their livelihood and are forced to live below poverty line (Anon. 2012). The situation is likely to worsen because of the growing pressure of population on land and the limited scope of increasing additional production through traditional farming. One of the main consequences of this agrarian distress has been that the marginal and small farmers, who find it increasingly hard to sustain on farming and are getting pushed out from agricultural sector. The trends for farming shows that 14.00 per cent women and 3.20 per cent of cultivators since 2001 have abandoned
Introduction

farming which extrapolates to over 8.60 million people. Hundreds of tenant farmers are reported to have committed suicide in the last few years. (Anon. 2011). There are nearly 15 million farmers (main cultivators) less than there were in 1991. On an average, that's about 2,035 farmers losing ‘main cultivator’ status every single day for the last 20 years. And in a time of jobless growth, they've had few places to go beyond the lowest, menial ends of the service sector (Anon. 2013). The process of shifting of farmers from agricultural to non-agricultural sector for an alternate source of livelihood is known as depeasantization.

Recent trends suggest that India might very well be at the "tipping point" of the transition in its agriculture dependent population. A large proportion of youth in the countryside is on their way out of agriculture. Rising disenchantment with the profession pushes them out of agriculture while, opportunities in other sectors of the booming economy pull them out of agriculture. Hence, it is suggested by this study which helps to identify the drivers of this process of withdrawal and assess the odds of an average farmers’ move out of agriculture.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Few years ago, agriculture was preferred as the best occupational choice, business as second choice and service or job as the lowest choice by rural people as livelihood occupation. Now a days the situation is totally reversed and rural people have started preferring service or job as the best livelihood choice, business as second and farming as the lowest choice.

Agriculture is the mainstay of Indian economy where in a tone of grave respect refers to the farmer as the annadata - the provider of grain. This is because in India, agriculture has been the life and the means of sustenance for the majority of the people. Even today, more than half of the country's population is directly and indirectly, depends on agriculture. Through the centuries, the farmers have been the backbone of the country and yet today, in spite of being in the majority, the farmers in India are in dire straits. What's more, their living options and conditions are getting from bad to worse. Today they are at the very bottom of the socio economic ladder and are largely looked down upon. They no longer get the respect that the term annadata should command. Denied adequate support, encouragement and respect, it is no surprise that, given the option, nearly 62.00 per cent farmers would like to quit
farming (Anon. 2014). Since 1995, over 150 lakh farmers have left agriculture (Negi, 2014). The Indian peasantry, the largest body of surviving farmers in the world, today faces a crisis of extinction. This brings in lieu, depeasantization as jeopardize to Indian agriculture.

It is high time to stop urban migration of rural farmers and understand reasons or issues for avoiding farming as livelihood occupation by them. Such understanding will be helpful to make changes in the image of farming to attract more young rural people as a career.

Keeping this view, the present study entitled “Avoidance of agriculture as a profession by the farmer of North Saurashtra Agro Climatic Zone” was carried out with following specific objectives.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this study is to assess the avoidance of agriculture as a profession by the farmer of North Saurashtra Agro Climatic Zone. The specific objectives of the study are;

1. To study the profile of respondent farmers
2. To study the attitude of respondents towards avoidance of agriculture as a profession
3. To study relationship between attributes of respondents and their attitude towards avoidance of agriculture as a profession
4. To find out factors related for avoidance of agriculture as a profession
5. To study the sustainability of agriculture as a profession
6. To seek the suggestions from the respondents to attract new generation toward agriculture as an occupation

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The rapid growth and diversification of development activities have resulted in much needed expansion of employment opportunities, but at the same time have triggered rural to urban migration. This trend has inadvertently resulted in shift of farm human resource to non-farm sectors. To sustain food security, it is imperative to encourage farmers to continue with agriculture. Currently, there is a challenge of
retaining rural agricultural land holder people in farming due to various socio-economic factors including profitability in agricultural pursuits. It has become imminent to reorient agricultural practices to make them intellectually satisfying and economically rewarding for the rural youth farmers.

Nevertheless, the urban spaces have not necessarily aided the quality of life enjoyed by Indian people. A telling sign: one-fifth of the Indian urban population lives on less than a dollar a day. Additionally, the report finds that while income levels in cities may appear to be higher, the cost of living is also constantly increasing, resulting in shrinking savings, inadequate access to health care and lack of quality education. It means that living and migrating from rural to urban area also does not help rural farmers to live happy and healthy life.

Urban migration are stopped through proper understanding of the rural farmer problem considering the changing and complex present situations of farming, it is necessary to create a pleasant atmosphere in the agriculture field. To tackle this issue, we need more initiatives from both private as well as Government systems to take care of farmers through every possible means. Considering all these facts, the present investigation is planned to undertake and understand various personal, social, economic, situational, psychological, market related, labour related, land related, irrigation, input related, second generation related and family system related issues that are responsible to restrict rural land holder farmers to accept farming as family occupation.

1.4 PRACTICAL UTILITY OF THE STUDY

India is mainly an agricultural country. Agriculture is the most important occupation for 60.00 per cent of the population either directly or indirectly. The findings of the study will certainly be helpful to planners and extension personnels from government and private agencies to plan out a suitable programme for the rural land holders and issues experienced by them so that they will be in a position to have a greater share with greater self confidence and responsibility in the development of agriculture.

The study will also guide them to revise suitable strategies and modify the extension education approaches using more appropriate personal, group and mass media in order to communicate with useful latest agricultural technologies through
Introduction

different trainings. The results of the research can also be helpful for the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Agriculture Universities and NGOs to prepare the training programmes and to chalk out the programmes for the rural land holders to develop better, remunerative, sustainable, productive farming and ensuring them from avoidance of agriculture as a profession.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to limited time and resources available to the researcher study was taken up with following limitations:

1. The area of the study was limited to North Saurashtra Agro Climatic Zone of Gujarat state.

2. The diagnostic study was confined to only 10 respondents from different villages.

3. Only few characteristics of the respondents hence studied.

4. The study was carried out by adopting *ex-post facto* design.

5. The findings were based on verbal expressions and response of the respondents.