

A Study of effect of delayed monsoon on village life

Preliminary information about the village

1. Name of the village: Pokharbhosi, Loha, District: Nanded
2. Population: 2500
3. No of families: 300
4. Agricultural land: 1500 acres approx
5. Distance from town: 9 kms
6. Distance from district: 50 kms
7. Date on which info obtained: 23/09/08
8. Name of the person obtaining information: Niloba Trimbakrao Jadhav,
Loha, District: Nanded
Cal no: 94228 779847

Sowing:

The dry spell during the sowing season in 2008 brought a drought like situation to Marathwada. Because the monsoon months of June and July were dry sowing couldn't be started in many villages. The monsoons were also delayed which in turn also delayed sowing further. The circumstances in Marathwada were also repeated in Pokharbhosi. Though there was rain around the 9th July, it was not enough for sowing farming produced other than Moong, Saraki and Udeed. Also because of the scarcity of rain only 5% of the village's sowing capacity was utilized. The reduced rainfall and the delays showers meant whatever was sown in the villages did not grow well and wilted away. With great difficulty, the farmers sowed crops a second time. Bhagwan Pandurang Tate, a farmer was had to sown his crops a second time, even after using 31-32 bags of fertilizers the first time. None of the government agencies came to assist the farmers. Farmers in would turned to money loans for their crops, out of which 75% of farmers become caught in a vicious cycle of money lending.

Drinking water:

In conjunction with the difficulty of the crops the farmers and their cattle also faced the problematic issue of water shortages. Water need to be supplied to the village from tanker because of the delayed rainfall. One tanker however was not enough to satisfy the needs of the entire village, and the cattle remained without water. Because of the insufficient supply of water from the tanker, the villagers took to search for an alternative sources of water supply. One of the farmers in the village decided to bore a well, and was paid by the 250 families Rs. 2000/- as a deposit for a pipeline. Those who did not pay such an amount remained without access to water. Only after a private pipeline was constructed by the villagers that water reached the village.

Finance:

Within the village, there were moneylenders, but because trade was affected by the drought farmers and landless laborers has not ability to borrow funds. They also had nothing to settle to get funds. Selling their cattle was also provide little funds as a bull which normally worth Rs. 25, 000 were sold for Rs. 7-8000/-. Also, because money lenders would provide funds at a rate of 10% above the normal rate of 3-5 %. Hence money lending came to a standstill in the village, and villagers had no choice but to take mortgage their gold and personal possession to obtain money.

Health:

During the period of drought the farmers had a great shortage of food, money, and of course water. As goods that used to be part of their daily diet they became worried about future shortages of goods and materials. Vegetables, rice, wheat, and milk supply decreased, and people's health deteriorated. As cattle were undernourished, they gave less milk. Children and teenagers became sick, had bouts of fever and anemia, and 25% of babies suffered a reduce in platelets numbers.

Women had to also work twice as hard because of the delayed rains, and the stress of the drought and their family's deteriorating health resulted in them falling ill as well.

Crops at present:

Because of the delayed monsoon, crops couldn't be sown, and turmeric, a regular crop in the region disappeared in areas entirely, particularly in Udeed and Moong. This disappearance of turmeric brought large losses to the farmers, as turmeric would bring cashed to the farmers for 2 ½ to 3 months. The cash crop soybean, grown extensively in Pokhari had also been affected. Though it rained once and a good yield resulted, the soybean was attacked by pests, which brought devastation to the farmers. Though the farmers had been using pesticide, it had been no use. Now 60% of crop seems to be lost, with the 3-4 quintals less than half that of past years, which would yield 4-8 quintals. Many farmers fear that B. T Cotton, which is pest resistant, will also be affected this year. With the delay of rain in the region, farmers have suffered greatly, losing their only source of income. The crops they have sown are yet to grown, and as the harvesting season draws to an end, the farmers are placed in a very tight spot from all sides.

Cattle/fodder:

Like the people in the villages, the cattle also had to face the shortage of water and food. As the village had around 1,000 cows, most cattle remained on half empty stomachs throughout June and July. Many farmers battled hard to keep their animals healthy by purchasing sugarcane from a village called Bacht, across the Manyad River. Though it cost Rs. 1, 400 a tone, the farmer's still got 4 truckfulls and spend Rs. 60-70 thousand for their cattle. Some cows and buffalo had however by this time stopped giving milk and lost a large amount of weight, and the farmers were unable to sell the cattle because there were no buyers.

Thefts:

When the monsoon was delayed by 1 ½ months, the entire region of Marathwada was devastated. During the period the village gained an atmosphere of fear, and many farmers worried about burglaries. The delayed rains created an atmosphere of insecurity in the community, as no produce was given by the crops and the villagers were already having difficulty managing the home and family for the year. As the daily earning was from the crops, most farmers did not earn much during the year. Furthermore, as the government did not provide any wage earning or employment opportunities in the villagers, 600-700 people were still waiting to get some work. Only when the September rains came that the village was given some relief.