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Fighting Salinity

Agriculture is the backbone of the rural economy. Over years our farmers have struggled with unproductive farming methods and small land holdings. ACF's efforts are integrated and multi-impact oriented. Technology, research, knowledge and access to the best-in-category advice have created a tangible ripple effect in our focus areas. This newsletter brings to you stories of Mohanbhai in Gujarat who adopted a new variety of wheat and promotion of pomegranate production in Darlaghat, Himachal Pradesh.

Charniya Mohanbhai Sardulbhai, is a 37 year old farmer living in Kajardi village situated in the costal belt of Una taluka in Kodinar Gujarat. He lives in a joint family and being the eldest he is responsible for his 24 member family. He is an arts graduate but chose to continue working as a farmer as his forefathers. Mohan would grow cotton and wheat in the monsoons and switch to rabi crops later. One of the major problems which he and his family faced was that of salinity. Being a coastal region, the high salinity of soil would invariably result in low

productivity of the wheat crop. It was only recently that Mohanbhai joined the Kharas Vistarothan Yojana (KVV). The KVV is a special project introduced by ACF in the coastal region of Gujarat to strengthen the livelihoods of people in communities affected by salinity. Under this project, a special variety of wheat was introduced and scientifically this variety is highly resistant in saline areas. But farmers not being aware, avoided its use. Mohanbhai however decided to try this product in a small track of land.





Nisha at her farm



After a few months when he saw the difference in his crops, he could not believe his eyes. His neighbours were also surprised by the abundant crop which had sprung up. He now started taking active interest in various training programmes organized by ACF. In one farmer training session he learnt that sugar beet could be used as fodder in saline areas. This experiment also worked for him. He soon adopted micro irrigation practices and increased the area of land under cultivation. Mohanbhai today is the role model in his village who uses scientific methodology in his farms.

An Alternate Livelihood

Pomegranate (anardana) is a plant of medicinal value, grown in the villages of Darlaghat, Himachal Pradesh. Earlier, its cultivation was a major livelihood option for the people; but with new occupations

available and decreasing profit from anardana production, this activity was reduced. ACF undertook the challenge of reviving its production as an alternative crop. Large scale anardana plantation was taken up during the 'Van Mahotsav' festival, and discussions were held on the benefits of cultivating this crop.

Community groups were formed in the village to revive this livelihood option. It was decided to plant this product individually and market it collectively. The collective marketing of anardana fetched better profit. Till date 21 families are undertaking this project and have been able to earn considerable profits.

Misa Devi from Vadog village, Darlaghat, says *"I am very thankful to ACF for guiding our community in anardana production. Earlier we would sell our produce to the middlemen who would give us a rate of Rs 200 to 250 per kg of anardana. But now that we sell our produce collectively, we fetch around Rs 300 to 350 per kg."*
