

No agricultural expansion, but crop yields up in state

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Pic: Sanjay Hadkar/Graphic: Bhagavan Das



CROPPING UP

MAHARASHTRA'S FARMERS' GAIN (In millions)

Cultivators



Agricultural labourers



GAINERS & LOSERS

AREA	CULTIVATORS*		AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS*		AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AS % OF TOTAL WORKERS	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
India	127.3	118.7	106.8	144.3	58.2	54.6
Maharashtra	11.8	12.6	10.8	13.5	55	52.7
Punjab	2.1	1.9	1.5	1.6	38.9	35.6
Uttar Pradesh	22.2	19.1	13.4	19.9	65.9	59.3
Madhya Pradesh	11.0	9.8	7.4	12.2	71.5	69.8
Andhra Pradesh	7.9	6.5	13.8	17.0	62.2	59.5
Haryana	3	2.5	1.3	1.5	51.3	45
Bihar	8.2	7.2	13.4	18.3	77.3	73.6

Source: Census of India, 2011

* In millions

PLATEAUED NUMBERS

Stagnant Agricultural Sector

Area under principal crops**



40,085



39,238

Production of principal crops*



80,063



1.34L

Net area sown**



17,844



17,406

Gross cropped area**



21,619



23,175

2000-01

2010-11

** In thousand hectares

* In thousand tonnes

Source: Economic Survey of Maharashtra, 2012-13

Economist Abhay Pethe says it is possible that many villagers are calling themselves farmers because they have no non-farm employment. He also feels much of the increase reported in the number of cultivators as well as farm hands could be in vineyards or fruit orchards rather than in traditional cereals and millet crops such as wheat, paddy, jowar or ragi.

His views are corroborated by Ulka Mahajan of the Anna Adhikar Abhiyan who works closely with farming communities in Raigad district. "Many industrial estates and smaller units in the state have shut down in the last decade forcing villagers back to their villages. While agricultural land holding might not have increased over the years, the dependence on agriculture has definitely increased."

The Census defines cultivators as those who are directly engaged in the cultivation and supervision of land, and labourers as those who work on land owned by others for wages. The state's agricultural data reflects this gloom in many ways, even as it hints at an increase in crop yields. There has been no agricultural expansion in the last 10 years. The area under cultivation for principal crops has shrunk from around 400 lakh hectares in 2000-01 to 392 lakh hectares a decade later. Crop yields have, however, correspondingly increased from 800 lakh tonnes to 1,340 lakh tonnes.