

# Pandemic Effect on livelihood in Gujarat

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## Introduction

Confirmed number of COVID-19 cases in India has crossed 2511 (by 2<sup>nd</sup> April) with a death toll of 70, and cured persons being 181. In Gujarat, there are 87 confirmed cases and 7 deaths with a highest mortality ratio of 8% in the country. Globally, there are 9, 80, 503 confirmed cases and 50,239 deaths so far.

The only possible solution to control the communal spread is lockdown. Shutting down all Public and Commercial Transportation, maintaining Law and Order to restrict Public social gatherings in order *to break the transmission chain*. Providing necessary goods and emergency services, guiding the citizens through Public Health Experts and Information Broadcasting, quarantining migrants as well as people exhibiting symptoms and tracking COVID-19 positive cases and providing effective treatment is the methodology the countries have adopted combating COVID-19.

The 21 days' lockdown across India to fight the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the nation very acutely and it has cast a long shadow over Indian economy. This may present itself as the biggest recession post-lockdown. The government has announced recently that it has cut its GDP growth forecast for fiscal 2021 to 5.2% from 5.7%.

## Agriculture

Due to lockdown the agriculture sector affected very acutely in Gujarat. Reduced consumptions, lack of transportation facilities, shops and markets operating in specified times, lead the harvested produce of the small and marginal farmers decay and rotten in front of their own eyes.

In Gujarat, this is Rabi crop harvest season. The major Rabi crops are wheat, jeera and coriander. For the year 2019-2020, Gujarat has produced 4.03 million tons of wheat. This year, due to lockdown the wheat prices started declining. As on 18<sup>th</sup> February, in Rajkot market, one quintal of wheat quoted Rs. 2200. Currently, it has come down to Rs. 1742 per quintal (20% drop in one month) and the price is likely to go still down further. The government is helpless reporting lack of demand and consumption by individuals and commercial buyers and supply disruption as the causes for the declining prices.

## Dairy products

Gujarat is the third largest milk producers in the country. Annually Gujarat produces 10.3 million of milk, creating a livelihood for three million people. Lack of transportation facilities resulted in less consumption and almost zero procurement. This lead to financial instabilities for three million people.

## Daily Wage Laborers

According to the most recent labour statistics, 25% of rural households and 12% of urban households rely on casual labour works as their primary source of income. Casual labour is defined as not engaged in a fixed job, but in a casual manner in another person's enterprise, in return getting paid on daily basis. All these people lost their job due to lockdown. These workers include both domestic state workers as well as migrant workers. In the first week of lockdown, migrants are struggling at transport staying in groups, in hundreds waiting to board the buses to their respective states. Most of the migrant workers are in Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara. Gujarat government has declared that no migrant will be allowed to travel back to their states during the lockdown period. This resulted in more than 3000 migrant workers walking on-foot from their workplace but were stopped at Maharashtra-Gujarat Border. This one incident showcases the administrative failure in ensuring the facilities to the vulnerable sections of the country.

## Industries

COVID-19 outbreak has created new roadblock for the Indian economy, causing severe disruption on both demand and supply chains, which has the potential threat to breakdown the growth. Gujarat is known for its family

enterprises and the lockdown has hit all these enterprises very massively. The MSME and Gujarat textile industries are slowing down due to poor or zero demand. Majority of the textile industry workforce are migrant workers. Hence, disruption of workforce, lack of working capital, European buyers putting a ban on exports resulted in the textile industry facing its worst ever crisis. The MSME is fearing unable to repay the due loans to bank, wherein the Financial Institutions distressing their portfolio as NPA.

## Tourism

Tourism industry is having a great contribution to employment and GDP, especially in Gujarat. Gujarat is famous for Asiatic Lions, the White Desert of Rann of Kutch, Historical and Religious Structure, Textile and Colorful Handicrafts, Festivals, Food and Culture. Due to lockdown, all these places are deserted.

## Conclusion

Strategic planning, effective administration and governance, along with the people cooperation can only rebuild the Indian economy post-pandemic to a certain degree.