

A groundnut variety that does not need much water

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It is natural for farmers to invariably go in either for a change in their cropping pattern, or in some cases, even stop farming when their crops fail. But it is only a few determined ones who try to find the root cause of the problem and overcome it. Mr. Dhirajlal Virjibhai Thummar, a groundnut farmer from Gujarat, is credited with developing a new groundnut variety named “Dhiraj 101,” which is resistant to stem rot.

Maturity period

The crop matures in 95-105 days and bears 35-40 pods per plant. About 90-100 kg of seeds are required for sowing in an hectare. “Groundnut cultivation is a major source of income for many farmers like me in this region. With five wells and a borewell, our fields are well irrigated. “I also grow cotton (BT varieties), sorghum, wheat and vegetables. Sorghum is grown primarily for the cattle, and vegetables for our own consumption,” says the farmer. In the year 2004 he sowed GG-20 groundnut variety and the whole crop got infested resulting in wilting and almost complete failure of the crop. Any other farmer would have become depressed but not Mr. Dhirajlal. He identified a few plants, which did not get affected by this disease. Believing that these may contain some inherent property that makes them stem rot-resistant, he harvested and kept the seeds of these plants separately. The farmer sowed the seeds separately in the next season and continued the screening and selection for three consecutive years. Finally he obtained plants, that were free from stem rot and wilt. At 3,200-3,500 kg per hectare, the yield is higher than locally cultivated varieties in the region.

Oil content

The oil content is also higher — 42-45 per cent — according to him. This variety performs well when the monsoon is average as well as in less irrigated conditions. To promote good crop growth, Mr. Dhirajlal used only herbal pesticide such as neem, kidamari (Dutchman's Pipe), tulsi (Holy Basil) and akda (swallow-wort) for controlling insect pests and diseases. He also distributed seeds to farmers in Amreli, Rajkot and Bhavnagar districts of Saurashtra regions. He received encouraging feedback about the variety's ability to grow well, remain free from wilt and rust diseases, and also yield well. Usually before harvest farmers irrigate the fields and then pull out the plants. During pulling, the pods get broken from the roots and remain under the ground. The problem is not encountered with this variety as it bears pods that are stronger and grow at lesser depth under the soil.

Soil conservation

“Soil conservation and crops that require less water are urgent needs for farmers to keep agriculture sustainable in changing climatic conditions,” says Mr. Dhirajlal. Professor Anil Gupta, vice-chairperson,

National Innovation Foundation says, "Many technical innovations have been centred on groundnut crop in our country. There is an urgent need to invent and popularise crop varieties, which require less water and have more productivity and at the same time are affordable to farmers."

Helping hand

NIF facilitated the field trial of 'Dhiraj101' at the Oil Seed Research Station, Junagarh. The report mentions that it is resistant to stem rot as well and its production is 1.5 times more than a local variety 'GG-20'. It performs well even in when monsoon is average and requires less irrigation. This variety matures eight to ten days earlier and also has more average oil content.

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