

# Ratoon Pigeon Pea

## An alternate source of income for rainfed farmers

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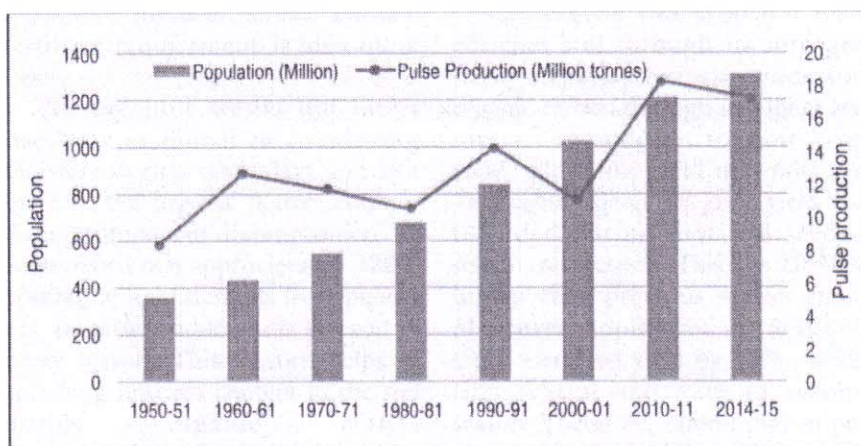
WORLDWIDE, 11.5% (1.5 billion ha) of cropland area is rainfed. These regions cover about 40% of the world's land area and host nearly 40% of the world's population. Further, about 70% of the world's staple food continues and will continue to be harvested from rainfed areas, since the scope for further expansion of irrigation is limited due to growing competition for water and the high investment cost. The rainfed agriculture may play a major role in India's food security and sustainable economic growth as 55% of net sown area of India comes under rainfed lands spread over 218 districts in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Rainfed crops account for 48% area under food crops and 68% of the area under non-food crops.

Rainfed areas suffer from various biophysical and socio-economic constraints affecting the productivity of crops and livestock. In this context a number of economically viable rainfed technologies have been discussed. These include soil and rainwater conservation measures, efficient crops and cropping systems matching to the growing season,

suitable implements for timely sowing and saving of labour, integrated nutrient and pest management. In rainfed region, crop diversification is one of the viable option to achieve poverty alleviation through food security by overcoming the problems of land degradation and climatic aberrations. Diversification of agriculture has shown several important benefits besides ecological advantages. Benefits of crop diversification are likely to be (i) availability of wide range of crops / products; (ii) enhanced profitability through alternative crops; (iii) reduced pest problems through diversified rotations (iv) even distribution of labour throughout the

year (v) reduced risks from weather aberrations by different planting and harvesting times (vi) renewable resources of high value products by introducing new crops.

Under rainfed condition, pulses are one of the major grown crops in marginal to sub-marginal lands. Pulses are source of supplementary protein and often regarded as poor's man meat. They provide energy, essential minerals, vitamins and several compounds considered good for human health. India is the largest producer and consumer of pulses. Despite being the world's largest pulse producer, there is still a huge shortage of pulses. Pulse production was marginally increased from 8.41



India's pulse production and population growth since independence (drawn from IIPR, 2016).

*Nearly 50% of the total rural workforce and 60% of livestock in the country are concentrated in the dry districts. But uncertainty in production due to fluctuations in total rainfall and changes in its distribution, decrease in relative productivity in rainfed lands etc. affect the livelihoods of many poor and marginalised farmers. Therefore, upgrading rainfed agriculture promises large social, economic and environmental paybacks, particularly in poverty reduction and economic development.*