

## **The Situation in Kuraittha Village (Katihar, Bihar)**

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Kuraittha village is located in one of the worst flood-affected zones in Bihar. The village is situated near Kamla river that later connects with Koshi, the river which annually devastates the northern part of the state with the flood. The village is almost 15 km from the district headquarter office in Katihar. There are approximately 900 households in the village, consisting of a significant proportion of scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST). The census of India 2011, reports that the 86 per cent population of the village is directly dependent on agriculture, either as cultivators or agricultural workers. Nearly all farmers in the village are small and marginal landholders. The agricultural plots are generally small in size and land is uneven. The essay presents the situation in the village after the implementation of lockdown, based on the telephonic conversation with three marginal farmers, three tenants/agricultural-workers and two migrant workers between 30 March and 10 April.

Most of the recent years, this village has witnessed flood that damages Kharif crops in the area at a massive scale. Hence, the rabi crops become the lifeline for the agricultural dependent households of the village. Currently, maize and wheat are in the field. On a smaller portion of land, a few farmers have shown Garma Dhan (summer paddy). The lower land in the village is used for Makhana (fox-nut) cultivation, a water crop. One of the respondents reported that fruits have come out in the maize plants and will be ready for harvest by May. The maize crop will require almost two rounds of water and urea before the harvest. Because of lockdown, farmers are facing difficulty in buying fertilisers like urea. The fertiliser shops are selling urea at a price which is 10-20 per cent more than the actual. All respondents use family labour in the maize field. The plants of summer paddy are tiny at present, that will be ready for harvest by June.

The harvest of wheat has been started in the village. All farmers in the village manually harvest wheat. At the time of the interview, all respondents reported that they are working with their family members in the wheat field, once they finish their wheat harvest, they plan to labour out in others' field. So far, the lockdown has not affected the agricultural works. However, farmers are more concerned about the sale of wheat. On the question that what if the Government extends the lockdown, one of the respondents said, "मोदी जी भले lockdown बढ़ा दे लेकिन हमारा गेहूँ खरीद लें (Modi ji may extend lockdown but make sure procurement of wheat)". He further adds that many of the farmers do not have storage capacity and production is not much; hence, they sell wheat to local traders. They are anticipating that local traders will buy wheat at lower price and store, as these traders have small warehouses. However, unlike previous years, local traders have not approached farmers for procurement of wheat this time.

There are many cycle rickshaw pullers, daily-wage workers and grocery workers, in the village, who have lost their jobs and are unable to go for their works because of lockdown. The two migrant workers, who were interviewed, had recently returned from New Delhi and Surat respectively. One of the respondents was working in a textile company in Surat. He had returned to the village for Holi. The other respondent was working as a construction worker in New Delhi. He had left New Delhi on the day of Junta Curfew (22 March), anticipating that curfew might be

extended. However, he could not get the train so, he first reached to UP border, and then by changing multiple vehicles, he reached Munger and then Katihar. According to him, when PM announced the Junta Curfew, he and his co-workers had anticipated the long term lockdown. They had no work since the announcement of Junta Curfew and being daily wage workers, and it was difficult for them to continue living in Delhi without work and money. Currently, these migrant workers are without and work in the village.

The residents of the village are dependent on the market for most of the essential food items. The beginning of lockdown witnessed an unprecedented rise in the price of essential food items, as a result of that district administration had issued a rate chart, listing maximum wholesale and retail price for essential items. However, despite the proactive measure of the administration, residents of the village are paying higher prices.

## कटिहार जिला प्रशासन द्वारा जारी आवश्यक समानों का दैनिक भाव

समाहरणालय, कटिहार  
(जिला आपूर्ति प्रशाखा)

बाजार भाव का दैनिक प्रतिवेदन 24.03.2020

क्र०	वस्तु का नाम	थोक भाव (किन्टल में)	खुदरा भाव (किलो में)	अभ्युक्ति
1.	अरया चावल (मोटा)	2200-2300	24-25	
2.	अरया चावल (महीन)	3000-5000	32-53	
3.	उसना चावल (मोटा)	2400-2500	25-26	
4.	उसना चावल (महीन)	3000-5500	31-60	
5.	गेहूँ	1700-2000	18-21	
6.	आटा 50 किलो पॅकेट	1200-1220	27-28	
7.	चना दाल	5800-6000	61-65	
8.	रूर/अरहर दाल	8500-9500	90-100	
9.	उरुद दाल	9500-10000	96-110	
10.	मूंग दाल	9000-10000	95-105	
11.	मसूर दाल	5500-6000	58-62	
12.	मोनी	3700-3750	39-40	
13.	गुड़	4000-4300	44-46	
14.	ग्राउण्ड नट ऑयल (15 किलो)	3750-4500	250-300	
15.	सरसों तेल साधारण (रानी सुपर प्रति टोन)	1200-1250	100-105	
16.	सरसों तेल (रानी सुपर प्रति टोन)	1550-1600	108-110	
17.	वनस्पति प्रति टोन	1050-1100	80-90	
18.	सोया तेल प्रति टोन	1470-1500	100-105	
19.	सूर्यमुखी तेल (प्रति टोन)	1050-1200	80-90	
20.	मांग ऑयल (15 किलो)	1300-1400	93-95	
21.	गुड़	3300-3500	39-40	
22.	वाग	11000-51000	115-550	
23.	नमक	190-200	9-10	
24.	आलू	1500-1700	16-21	
25.	घाज	2000-2200	23-30	
26.	टमाटर	2000-2300	22-30	
27.	सर्जिकल मास्क		15 ₹0 प्रति पीस	
28.	2 प्लाई मास्क		25 ₹0 प्रति पीस	
29.	3 प्लाई मास्क	उपलब्ध नहीं है	-	
30.	एन-95	उपलब्ध नहीं है	-	
31.	सेमेटाइजर 100 ml.		100 ₹0	
32.	हेण्डगॉस Dettol 200 ml.		50 ₹0	

जिला आपूर्ति पदाधिकारी,  
कटिहार।  
24/03/2020

**The table below shows the prices of some of the essential food items in Kurraitha village.**

Items	Price before lockdown	Price during lockdown
Rice (Short Variety) (Rs/Kg)	26-28	30
Rice (Fine variety) (Rs/Kg)	36-38	40
Wheat Flour (Rs/Kg)	28	30
Gram (Whole) (Rs/Kg)	55	60
Gram (Split)/Moong/Masur (Rs/Kg)	65-66	70
Arhar daal (Rs/Kg)	90-95	100
Mustard Oil (Rs/L)	110-120	120-130
Potato (Rs/Kg)	15-16	20
Onion	20-25	25-30

Source: Respondents.

Unlike other food essentials, the price of milk has gone down in the village. For the initial two-three days of lockdown, milkmen were selling milk at a throwaway price. Many of the milkmen of Kurraitha village are a bulk supplier of milk to the sweets shops in the village and Katihar market. As a result of the lockdown of sweet shops, demand for milk had contracted and hence has impacted the price. One of the respondents reported that milkmen have now started processing of milk to remove fat. The milkmen are selling fat and fat-less milk separately. The fat-less milk, which was available for Rs 30-35 per litre, is now being sold at Rs 20-25 per litre.

The respondents have informed that the frequency of visits by Police in the village has increased. Police are enforcing the lockdown actively, but this enforcement is limited to economic activities only; the movement of residents from one home to another in the village has not stopped. All shops in the village are closed except vegetable, grocery and fertiliser shops.

To sum up, the agricultural households need two immediate reliefs; procurement of wheat at a reasonable price and regulation of fertilisers' rate. The residents, who are wage earners, require regular food and essentials supply and some form of non-agricultural work within the village. The respondents have informed that the MGNREGA is non-functional in the village, in light of the rise in unemployment, works under the scheme would be helpful. The milkmen have devised an innovative method to decrease their loss, but there is scope to provide further help; through establishing a supply system of milk between rural and urban areas with the help of cooperatives, the loss of milkmen can be mitigated.

**Wheat Harvest**



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**Makhana (Fox-Nut)**



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## **Maizeni**



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