

# Growing Traditions

India's Agricultural Renaissance



INDIA, IN THE WORDS OF MARK TWAIN, is “the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, the great grandmother of tradition.”

In centuries past, India gave the world algebra, chess, surgery and navigation. At the dawn of the 21st, the country and its more than one billion people are on the brink of becoming one of the world’s leading economies.

India’s agricultural sector will play a major role in the country’s emergence as a world economic power. Agriculture accounts for more than one-quarter of the country’s gross domestic product and employs 63 per cent

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of the labor force. India’s economy is driven largely by domestic demand which, due to the rural nature of the economy, depends on agricultural growth.

Seventy-three per cent of India’s people live in rural areas, and many of them are entirely dependent on agriculture for their economic survival. India is the world’s largest producer of many key agricultural products including sugar, jute, mangoes and tea.

Facing continuing growth and a diminishing amount of land for cultivation, Indian farmers are constantly in search of methods to improve crop yield. With the help of companies like Borax – whose agronomists have been

Most countries’ agricultural sectors are dominated by a few major crops. Not so for India. Many of the crops grown in India are particularly susceptible to boron deficiency, among them: oilseed rape, cotton, sunflowers, fruit, vegetables, tea, coffee and coconut.

working with local distributors and fertilizer companies for two years now – India’s small farms are beginning to find ways to dramatically increase yields and expand the varieties of crops they grow.

By carefully analyzing soil boron levels and deficiency symptoms in crops, scientists and agronomists are discovering that managing the levels of micronutrients like boron can make a big difference in the success of each season’s harvest. This knowledge is now making its way down to the front lines – namely, many thousands of farmers throughout India.

Boron is naturally present in all soil. It’s one of the 109

elements that make up the earth, and every member of the plant world relies on it to grow. Boron plays an essential role in a plant’s reproductive cycle, controlling flowering, pollen production, and seed development. Besides biochemically boosting plants’ growth functions, it assists in the chemical transport of nutrients and sugars throughout each plant.

Boron is also part of a healthy human diet. Many staples of the Indian diet – beans, potatoes, rice and tea – provide healthy amounts of boron, an important contributor to energy metabolism, bone strength and brain function.

In regions where heavy rainfall or farming practices have leached boron from the land, too little of the essential nutrient is left to support crop survival. Fertilizers, formulated with borates, can be applied to nutrient-deficient soil and render remarkable turnaround in plant quality and quantity.

Borax agronomists work with agrochemical industry leaders Rallis and the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative to spread the word about boron deficiency, its prevention and cure. Through these partnerships, Borax delivers its experience and its products – including *Solubor*®, a soluble borate powder for crop nutrient sprays and solutions, and *Fertibor*®, the standard borate for making compound fertilizers – to help millions of farmers deliver excellent crop quality and yield.