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# Dried Small Fish

Ecology, Value Chains  
and Nutrition



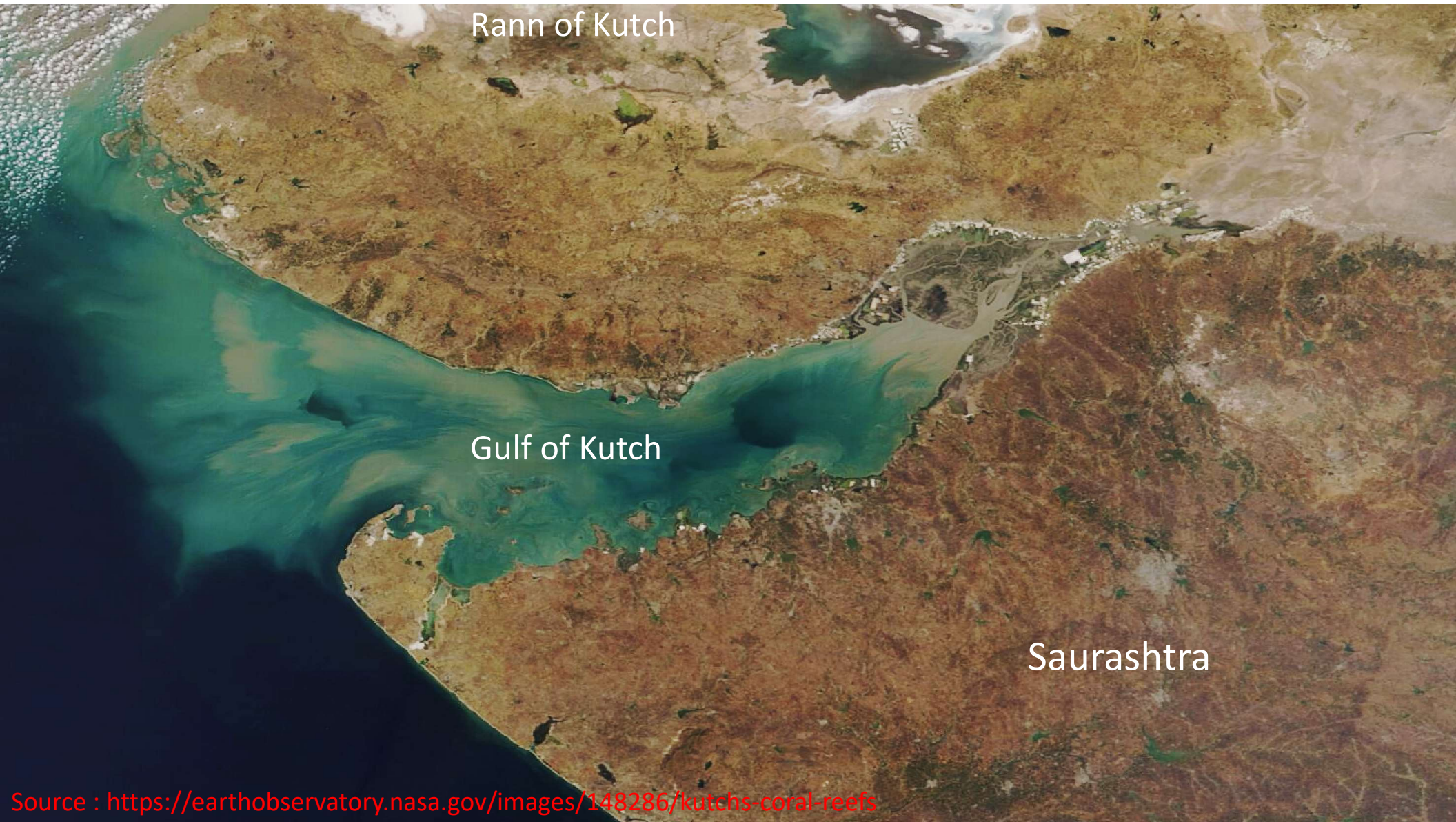
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# Small Fish and Small Fisheries on the Kutch Coast: Insights from a Field Study

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Rann of Kutch

Gulf of Kutch

Saurashtra

Source : <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/148286/kutchs-coral-reefs>

- Kutch in Gujarat is the largest coastal district of India with a coastline of approximately 400 km
- The Gulf of Kutch is the north-eastern arm of the Arabian Sea, located between the saline mudflats called the Rann of Kutch and the Saurashtra peninsula in west central India
- Since the early 2000s the coast is in the eye of a storm where two kinds of development imaginations are at loggerheads – one that aggressively promotes port-led industrialisation and coastal development, and the other that advocates a people-centric, ecologically sustainable development that protects traditional livelihoods and marine bio-diversity
- Fishing and fish drying by small artisanal fishermen is at the centre of this controversy



## The Study

Structured survey of 33 dried fish processors in four villages (~9000 total fishing households across all) and seven traders including a producer company that is the largest trader in the market

# Characteristics of Kutch Fisheries

- Kutch has extensive intertidal zone of creeks, estuaries and mudflats ideal for traditional fishing
- Shallow sea, with large marshy areas
- *Bandars* away from fishing villages
- Small scale fishery
  - using in-board diesel engine-fitted motorised boats
  - *Pagadiya* fishing
- Trawler fishing in Jakhau
- Mostly bag nets (*gunjaa*) are used; some also have gillnets (*ras*)
- Fishing is done by Muslim Wagher community



Source: Kutch Fish



## Fishing in Kutch



Source: KutchFish

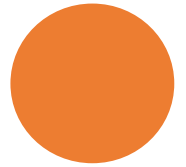
- The processors in the sample collectively produced 493 ton dried fish during September 2020-June 2021 worth Rs. 16.74 million
- The catch was composed mainly (63 %) of mixed waste fish (or *kuto* in local language) used for manufacturing animal feed
- Golden anchovies formed 20% and Bombay Duck 6%
- The feed processors also buy golden anchovies separately to be mixed with trash fish for protein fortification
- Prawns are available seasonally, most of which are sold in boiled form in the local and nearby markets



- Every processor is tied to a trader through a loan advance. This is true of even the FPC
- The dried fish has to be sold to the traders every 15 days at predetermined prices plus the loan repayment instalment
  - Anchovies and trash fish goes to Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana
  - Bombay duck to Maharashtra, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka
  - Prawns within Gujarat (to Patan, Surendranagar, Viramgam, and Ahmedabad)

- There are about 25 traders in the market
- They either approach fishers directly or through commission agents
- Price for each species is fixed by the merchants collectively for the entire year
- 25% of the value of catch is deducted against the loan amount

- There is no local market for dried fish
- Women's role very critical as vendors (mainly of Pagadia catch) and in sorting and drying fish
- Quality has been a concern – unwashed drying, presence of sand and waste fish; improved somewhat over time



- Despite efforts at collective marketing started since the late 2000s, decline in the fisheries economy continues
- Catch has depleted
- Commercial fish varieties harvested very rarely
- The state is singularly focused on coastal industrialisation – invisibilisation of the small fishing sector
- Sustainability of fishing as a livelihood opportunity is a big question