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Economics of Integrated Farming Systems

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Integrated Farming (IF) is a whole farm management system which aims to deliver more sustainable agriculture. It is a dynamic approach which can be applied to any farming system around the world. It involves attention to detail and continuous improvement in all areas of a farming business through informed management processes. Integrated Farming combines the best of modern tools and technologies with traditional practices according to a given site and situation. In simple words, it means using many ways of cultivation in a small space or land.

Statistics

Data from year 2023–2025 shows high economic returns for various IFS models:

- Average Net Return:** Regional studies report net returns ranging from ₹1.28 lakh for crop-based systems to over ₹4.95 lakh per hectare for complex models including dairy and aquaculture.
- Top Performing Models:**
 - Dairy + Fishery: Highest net income in coastal regions at ₹3,11,244/ha/year.
 - Crop + Dairy + Small Ruminants: Reported net returns of ₹1,20,004 with a return of 1.77 per rupee invested.
 - Horticulture-based IFS: Significantly more profitable than agriculture-based ones, with profits reaching up to ₹4.31 lakh per acre in hilly regions
- Daily Income:** Well-designed IFS models can generate a daily farm income of roughly ₹1,040, helping families become self-sufficient.
- Economic indicators:

Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR)

- Rice/Fish model: High BCR of 2.77 recorded in Kerala.
- General IFS: Usually ranges between 1.31 and 2.9, compared to roughly 1.22 for standalone crop farming.
- System Productivity: IFS can produce up to 3.89 times more system productivity (Rice Equivalent Yield) than conventional rice-wheat systems.
- Cost Savings: Resource recycling can save approximately 30–45% on input costs, particularly for fertilizers and animal feed.

Employment and Resource Efficiency

- Job Creation: A single IFS model can generate over 600 man-days of labour annually for a family, primarily through vegetable production and animal husbandry.
- Energy and Environment: IFS models utilize over 70% renewable energy through organic waste recycling. They have a lower Global Warming Potential (14,191 kg CO₂ eq.) compared to conventional farming (19,229 kg CO₂ eq.).
- Water Saving: Efficient models save roughly 5.9 kg of water per cubic metre, nearly 10 times more efficient than traditional rice-wheat cycles

- **Some take-aways:** For small and marginal farmers (who make up 86% of India's farming community), shifting to IFS is a primary strategy for **doubling farm income** while reducing reliance on expensive external inputs.

References

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