

Climate Change and India's Farmers

Posted at: 18/10/2024

Climate Change and India's Farmers: An FAO Insight

Context:

The FAO's recent report, "*The Unjust Climate: Measuring the Impacts of Climate Change on Rural Poor, Women, and Youth*," highlights how climate change disproportionately affects poor farmers in India. Key findings show the severe impact of climate-induced issues like heat stress, floods, and droughts on marginalized communities.

About FAO:

- **UN Agency:** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized UN agency established in 1945, headquartered in Rome.
- **Mission:** It focuses on defeating hunger, improving nutrition, ensuring food security, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - **Eradicate Hunger:** Ensures everyone has access to safe, nutritious food.
 - **Sustainable Agriculture:** Promotes environmentally friendly farming to preserve natural resources.
 - **Improve Rural Livelihoods:** Supports rural farmers, especially women, by providing tools, knowledge, and market access.
 - **Tackle Climate Change:** Advocates climate-resilient farming practices to protect food systems.

Key Findings of the Report:

1. Income Disparities:

- Poor households globally lose 5% of income due to heat stress and 4.4% due to floods.
- In India, rural poor households are highly vulnerable because they depend heavily on climate-sensitive agriculture.

2. Structural Inequalities:

- Poor farmers face deeper income losses during climate crises.
- They allocate more resources to sustaining agricultural production, reducing off-farm employment opportunities.

3. Impact of Heat Stress and Floods:

- Climate change widens the income gap globally.
- Floods increase this gap by \$21 billion annually, while heat stress adds over \$20 billion.
- In India, poor households experience a 33% reduction in off-farm incomes due to rising temperatures.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Expand Social Security:** Introduce anticipatory social protection programs to support vulnerable communities before extreme weather events.
- **Address Gender Barriers:** Promote workforce diversification, mentorship, and initiatives to empower women and youth in rural areas.
- **Gender-Transformative Approaches:** Challenge discriminatory social norms and empower women to make economic decisions.

NITI Aayog's Response:

India is addressing climate challenges through several key initiatives:

- **National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA):** Helps farmers adapt to extreme weather conditions with crop-specific solutions.
- **Employment Guarantee Schemes:** The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme ensures economic security.
- **Food Distribution Programs:** The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana provided free food grains during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Increased Women's Participation:** Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) show a significant rise in women's workforce participation, signaling progress toward gender equality.

