

Event Report of the Workshop

Food Security in India: The Interactions of Climate Change, Economics, Politics & Trade



(Participants at the interactive workshop at Committee Room 1, NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi on Tuesday, 04th October 2016)

Tuesday, 4th October, 2016

New Delhi, India



Table of Contents

Background	3
Inaugural session	3
Session 1: Impact of climate change on agriculture	4
Session 2: Economic geography in the context of food trade	4
Session 3: Impact of food policies on communities and households	5
Session 4: Advocacy module and panel discussion	6
Way Forward.....	7
Annexure 1: Background note & Agenda for the workshop.....	7
Annexure 2: Press Release for the event.....	7
Annexure 3: List of Participants	8

Background

1. CUTS International in collaboration with IFPRI organized a national workshop on 4th October, 2016 at NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi titled 'Food security in India: The interactions of climate change, economics, politics & trade'.
2. The project (FOODSEC) is supported by the Research Council of Norway. The project has four work packages (WP) led by its four partners viz., Consumption Research Norway (SIFO), CUTS International, International Food and Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) to explore a model for analysing household food security in India through the interactions of climate change, economics, politics and trade.
3. This workshop was held as part of the advocacy module and intended to share the outputs of each work package (WP) by respective partners with a wider audience of policy makers, academia, and civil society organizations to facilitate an informed discussion on how the project findings can be taken forward into policy action.



Inaugural session

4. About 40 participants including project partners and representatives from various sectors of government, academia, civil society organisations from various parts of the country attended the national workshop.
5. Welcome address was given Pramod K. Joshi, Director South Asia, IFPRI in which he mentioned how climate change, agricultural production, trade and food security are interlinked and emphasized on the recent initiatives by the government of India to facilitate interstate trade, e.g. a unified national market, goods and services taxes, etc.
6. This was concurred by Pradeep Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International who chaired the opening session wherein he mentioned the importance of linking national food security to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the significance of Southern voice of regional integration in asserting its presence for promoting a food secure and sustainable future for its consumers.
7. The chief guest of the event Minister Counsellor Hanne Meldgaard, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Norway, New Delhi highlighted the cooperation existing between India and Norway in knowledge sharing and research for the past

several years and stressed on the importance to ensure both access and availability in the context of food security.

8. Bruno Dorin, Head, Economics and Development Research Area, Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, in his keynote address, said that understanding the agro-ecology as a science for better management of food security issues in India was imperative.
9. Following this, a brief introduction to the project objectives and activities was given by Arne Dulsrud, Head of Research, SIFO.

Session 1: Impact of climate change on agriculture

10. In this session Siwa Msangi, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI shared the findings from WP1, i.e. impact of climate change on agricultural production. His focus was on enhancing resilience of India's agricultural economy to climate shocks. Emphasis was laid on the significance of physical storage of food grains, exchange mechanisms (trade), cash transfers and social safety nets in building resilience. To combat the effect of climate shock on water availability and agriculture groundwater resource management is important. Community based water conservation mechanisms such as diversifying agriculture, incentives to keep the land fallow, water allocation based on cropped area and aquifer recharge were proposed as strategies to enhance groundwater storage.
11. The discussion following the presentation necessitated that groundwater use and management strategies should be developed based on agro-climatic zones. Furthermore, the need for reforming power subsidy policies was also highlighted as power subsidies often lead to groundwater exploitation.

Session 2: Economic geography in the context of food trade

12. This session comprised of two presentations. Arne Melchior, Scientist, NUPI presented findings from a meso-level analysis of economic geography of inter-state food trade in India and Karl Rich, Director, Lincoln University Centre for International Development shared a case study on potato value chains in Bihar, India.
13. Arne's presentations examined the food price differences across Indian states during 2004-2014 using food consumer prices from household surveys and wholesale/retail prices for selected goods. The



findings suggested that the factors influencing price difference of food commodities among different states of India are poor connectivity, cost of transportation and proximity to the site of production, local preference and high per capita income.

14. Karl's presentation look at the quantitative impacts over time of different investment, trade, and policy scenarios in the potato value chain, particularly those that can mitigate climate change effects, using a system dynamics model of the potato value chain that builds on previous qualitative studies. Reducing storage costs, either through subsidies or increased competition could reduce the price variability in potatoes, as pointed out by Karl.
15. The discussants opined that decreasing transactional costs for farmers and increasing their bargaining power by removing the intermediaries will lead to decrease the price difference. Further they added that adoption of better crop management strategies in potato, use of improved cultivars (in terms of yield and nutritional quality) and development of cold storage units would enhance production and stabilise the market and help in alleviating food insecurity in the backdrop of climate change.

Session 3: Impact of food policies on communities and households

16. Unni Kjærnes, Researcher, SIFO, presented the findings from household survey conducted in rural and urban settings in the state of Bihar and Karnataka. The districts of Sheohar (Bihar) and Raichur (Karnataka) were selected for the rural settings and the slums in Patna and Bengaluru were targeted for the urban scenarios of vulnerable households.
17. The survey focussed on the eating habits of vulnerable households and their source of procurement. It was observed that the quality of diet was much better in Karnataka regarding the number of meals as well as inclusion of protein. Purchasing power determined the inclusion of nutritious food items in their diet whereas for staples the households depended on the Public Distribution System (PDS).



18. In rural areas, own production/ farming also contributed to their daily diets. With respect to source of procurement, the survey underlined the importance PDS in determining household food security. The study also flagged the non-inclusion of eggs/ milk in the Mid-Day

Meal and poor implementation of the MGNREGA employment scheme in Bihar.

19. The discussion which followed the presentation brought to light several issues regarding the implementation hurdles in MGNREGA in Bihar. The discussions also talked about the diversified diet (traditional food of the poor included millets and pulses) was compromised due to politics which promoted rice and wheat consumption as well as significance of animal protein from sources other than poultry and goat and is a taboo especially for the poor belonging to lower caste.

Session 4: Advocacy module and panel discussion

20. In his presentation, Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International shared the policy options for each work package to achieve food security. He highlighted that there is a mismatch between the supply and demand of technologies and hence the need to strengthen agricultural research and extension services. He opined that reforming irrigation and power subsidies would reduce the pressure on groundwater. With regard to trade, given that inter-state transportation charges are too high, India should broaden its markets to nearby countries too so that the consumers will benefit. The recent initiative of goods and services tax and unified market would also reduce the transactional costs.



21. The discussion which followed also emphasised on the recommendations on strengthening agricultural research and extension, aquifer planning and recharging for groundwater use, tenant reforms and need for incubation centres for building the capacity of Farmer Producer Organisations.
22. The yield gaps due to climate change have to be bridged through efficient use of resources. Empowering of consumers is possible through enhancing their purchasing power, generating employment/ livelihoods and by means of safety nets.
23. The new approach of the Indian government in direct transfer of subsidies to beneficiary account will definitely reduce the leakages in the implementation of public programs.

24. In the case of PDS, a combination food entitlement and cash transfer would be more effective. An argument against cash transfer is that the food prices will be influenced by market forces and this would increase the vulnerability of low-income households. But wherever markets are competitive this can be resorted to.

Way Forward

25. Arne Dulsrud and Bipul Chatterjee expressed gratitude to the project partners for presenting their research findings and the participants for the rich and fruitful discussion.
26. Based on the feedback from the discussants and the panellists, the project partners will be working on respective research papers and finalising for wider dissemination.

Annexure 1: Background note & Agenda for the workshop

The background note and agenda for the event can be accessed here: <http://www.cuts-citee.org/FOODSEC/Events.htm>

Annexure 2: Press Release for the event

The press release for the event can be accessed here: <http://www.cuts-citee.org/FOODSEC/media.htm>

Annexure 3: List of Participants

For contact details of participants, please email: sma@cuts.org

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Registration Form

Workshop on
Food Security in India: The Interactions of Climate Change, Economics, Politics & Trade
Tuesday, 04th October 2016, Venue: Committee Room 1, NMAC Complex, Pusa, Delhi

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