Transforming Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits

FAO is implementing a Global Environment Facility-funded Green-Ag Project to catalyse a transformative change in India’s agriculture sector. The aim is to support national and global environmental benefits and conserve critical biodiversity and forest landscapes. The project aims to harmonize priorities and investments between India’s agriculture and environment sectors to achieve national and global environmental benefits without compromising India’s development objectives. It is being implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare and the State Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.

Following a multi-sectoral approach and building on existing institutional arrangements, the project adopts a landscape approach wherein each landscape includes a mix of conservation and production areas. This involves working with multiple stakeholders to enhance productivity while recognizing the critical ecosystem services that conservation areas provide for sustaining that productivity. The project’s incremental investment will serve to catalyse alignment of much larger government, donor and private sector investments to promote and incentivize wide adoption of agroecological practices.

Matching FAO’s expertise to India’s development priorities

FAO assistance in India is shaped by the 2019-2022 FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF), which is centred on four priority areas.

- **Sustainable natural resource management (NRM) for improved agricultural productivity**
- **Stronger food and nutrition security systems**
- **Increase resilience of rural livelihoods to climate change, recurrent natural disasters and assistance in transboundary cooperation**
- **Increase farmers’ incomes through improved skills, increased market linkages and value addition in the agriculture sector**

Jointly formulated with the Government and other partners, the CPF reflects relevant priorities in key national development policies and is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) for India 2018-2022.

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Food and agricultural policy support

FAO’s Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policy (MAFAP) programme seeks to establish country-owned and sustainable systems to measure, monitor, analyse, and advocate for reform of food and agricultural policies to enable more effective, efficient and inclusive policy frameworks in developing and emerging economies.

In India, MAFAP will complement ongoing Government efforts to monitor and analyse policies related to food and agriculture for informed decision-making. This will help to strengthen the evidence base for policy reforms. This is particularly important in the Indian national context where agriculture, including livestock, remains the principal source of livelihoods for almost 60 percent of rural households and 86.2 percent of Indian farmers, who are small and marginal holders.

Fostering climate resilient upland farming systems

The Jhum based upland farming system covers approximately 60 percent of the total agricultural area in the hill states of Nagaland and Mizoram. Approximately, 100,000 ha of forest in Nagaland and 20,000 ha in Mizoram are cleared for Jhum cultivation each year. FAO is providing technical assistance to the State Governments of Nagaland and Mizoram under the IFAD-funded project referred to as FOCUS (Fostering Climate-Resilient Upland Farming Systems in the Northeast). The aim is to develop smallholder farmers' capacity to adapt to climate change by making jhum cultivation more sustainable and gender-inclusive. FAO is also supplementing the project through Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) resources to develop sustainable value chains for commodities produced through agroecological techniques.

Upscaling natural farming systems

FAO is providing technical assistance to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for scaling up agroecology through policy support and Farmer Field Schools designed to improve farmers’ livelihoods and ecosystem resilience. This TCP project aims to support the Government’s efforts to reach 6 million farmers and convert 8 million ha into natural farming fields under the Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP).

Strengthening capacities for nutrition-sensitive agriculture; and food systems

FAO is supporting the Government of India in creating an enabling environment to promote nutrition-sensitive food systems, agricultural policies and interventions, and effective nutrition education strategies. The project is funded with support from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and includes partners from the National Institutes of Nutrition (NIN), Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) and Agriculture Extension Management (MANAGE). The aim is to ensure nutritional objectives are mainstreamed into the agriculture sector.

Building capacity for pest surveillance

Through an emergency project under the TCP, FAO is supporting the Government of India in enhancing capacities and developing an Action Plan for the Sustainable Management of Fall Army Worm (FAW) infestation of major maize-producing regions of India. In June 2019, FAW infestations had spread to 20 states within 10 months of the pest first being detected. The project will focus on the promotion of ecology-based IPM and biological control options and review of regulatory frameworks. It will also support improved early warning and monitoring for FAW (customizing FAO’s FAMEWS mobile app) to generate real-time knowledge on host range and migration patterns in Indian agro-ecologies and cropping systems.

Global knowledge transfer

To strengthen activities under the South-South Cooperation (SSC) Framework, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2018 between FAO and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to foster institutional capacity development, technology and experience transfer to other developing countries. The resulting partnership aims to improve access to and exchange of information, knowledge and expertise with direct benefits for the services that FAO can provide to member countries, in particular in relation to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“Let us forge a true partnership, built on mutual respect and trust, and strengthened by our joint goal of reaching the SDGs and creating a world free of hunger.”

Qu Dongyu
FAO Director-General