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Pathways for Enhancing Farmers' Income, Nutritional Security and Sustainable Food Systems

Thematic Session: WATER IN AGRICULTURE

Discussion Paper: Transforming Water and Agriculture in India

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Abstract: This paper develops the argument for twin propositions: (a) that the crisis in Indian agriculture cannot be resolved without a paradigm shift in water management and governance, and (b) that India's water crisis requires a paradigm shift in agriculture. If three water-intensive crops use up 80 percent of agricultural water, the basic water needs of the country, for drinking water or protective irrigation, cannot be met. The paper sets out how this paradigm shift can take place between 2020 to 2030 by shifting cropping patterns towards crops suited to each agro-ecological region, moving from monoculture to poly-cultural crop bio-diversity, widespread adoption of water-saving seeds and technologies, a decisive move towards natural farming and greater emphasis on soil structure and green water. At the same time, we advocate protection of India's catchment areas, a shift towards participatory approaches to water management, while building trans-disciplinarity and overcoming hydro-schizophrenia in water governance.

Keywords: crop diversification, agro-ecology, participatory water management, trans-disciplinarity, overcoming hydro-schizophrenia

The full text of the paper is available on the NITI Aayog website or you may contact FAO at fao-in@fao.org for a soft copy. Your feedback is welcome; you may send your comments on the discussion paper to FAO at the above email id.