


Chapter 20

Climate Change and Feminization of Agriculture in India: Mapping the Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The feminization of agriculture in India, driven by male migration to urban areas, intersects with the growing challenges of climate change, creating a complex landscape of both opportunities and challenges. Women, increasingly responsible for agricultural work, face heightened vulnerabilities due to their reliance on natural resources and limited access to adaptive technologies, credit, and decision-making power. Climate change exacerbates these challenges, intensifying workloads and threatening food security as crop yields decline and traditional farming practices become less viable. However, this convergence also presents opportunities for empowering women through targeted interventions such as land ownership, access to climate-resilient technologies, and involvement in decision-making processes. By recognizing and supporting women's critical roles in agriculture India can enhance agricultural productivity, promote gender equality, and build climate resilience in rural communities.

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INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Climate change represents one of the most profound and pressing challenges of the 21st century. Characterized by rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increasing frequency of extreme weather events, climate change poses significant threats to the natural environment and human societies. The causes of climate change are multifaceted, involving the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere due to human activities such as fossil fuel combustion, deforestation, and industrial processes. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that without substantial reductions in GHG emissions, global temperatures could rise by more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, leading to severe and irreversible impacts on ecosystems and human livelihoods. In recent decades, the phenomenon of the feminization of agriculture has gained increasing attention. This term refers to the growing participation of women in agricultural activities, a trend that has been driven by multiple factors including male outmigration, changes in rural labor markets, and shifts in household structures. In many developing countries, men often migrate to urban areas or abroad in search of better employment opportunities, leaving women to take on greater responsibilities in farming and rural livelihoods. Consequently, women have become the primary agricultural producers, making critical contributions to food production and household nutrition.

A GENDERED ANALYSIS: LINKING CLIMATE CHANGE, FEMINIZATION OF AGRICULTURE, AND FOOD SECURITY

Women have a critical role in agricultural output, particularly in small-scale and subsistence farming, where they often perform the majority of the farm labour and greatly increase the food security of households. The term “feminisation” of agriculture refers to the trend of an increasing number of women engaging in farming operations in India. In rural India, where agriculture is the primary source of employment, women have traditionally played a significant role in agricultural duties like planting, weeding, and harvesting crops as well as taking care of livestock. However, due to a variety of socioeconomic circumstances, including as migration, urbanisation, and changing demography, males are leaving rural regions in greater numbers in pursuit of work in cities, leaving women to assume farming tasks. Understanding the interconnectedness of climate change, feminization of agriculture, and food security requires a gendered analysis. Women play a crucial role in agriculture and food systems, yet they often face gender-specific challenges that can exacerbate their vulnerability to climate change and food insecurity. This aims to explore the synergies and trade-offs between these three critical issues through a gendered lens,

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