

Press Release

Investment in food systems transformation can be a game changer for climate change, Says GFPR Report 2022

July 18, 2022, Kathmandu: Climate change has been posing a growing threat to sustainable food system. Covid-19 and the current Ukraine crisis have further exacerbated global food and nutrition security leading to significant increases in poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. The 2022 Global Food Policy Report (GFPR), International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI) flagship report, focuses on policy responses to the challenges posed by climate change that policymakers should consider now. It highlights the urgency of accelerating innovation, reforming policies, resetting market incentives, and increasing financing for sustainable food systems transformation. It sets forth a broad range of policy options for accelerated action by policymakers as well as international forums for policy and investment decision-making.

The GFPR 2022 report was launch in Kathmandu where the key findings of the report were discussed with policymakers, civil society organizations and leading think tanks. The launch was organized by IFPRI in collaboration with Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Food systems are impacted by climate change and play a critical causal role. Globally, food systems, broadly defined, contribute more than one-third of the total greenhouse emissions. About one-fifth of total emissions come specifically from agriculture, forestry, and other land use (AFOLU). Investing in food systems transformation is a key piece of the puzzle in realizing a stable climate in the future.

“There are several promising innovations that can be applied to adaptation but with more warming adaptation will become less effective. Eventually we will all want a stabilized climate,” said Channing Arndt, Director of IFPRI’s Environment and Production Technology Division. “The global food sector will likely have to become not just zero emissions but a net sink in order to offset positive emissions elsewhere. These are the big challenges that we need to address over the next 30 years.”

The report emphasizes the development and adoption of new technologies and modes of operation through an enabling environment for climate change–related financing, integrated governance of natural resources, a stepped-up focus on healthy diets, improved efficiency of value chains, trade facilitation, reduction of food loss/waste, intelligent social protection, and repurposing of agricultural subsidies towards research and development on green innovations.

The report covers six regional chapters that highlight the diverse impacts of climate change in different parts of the world and identifies potential responses that can be taken up in the short and medium term in national and regional food systems. The South Asia chapter focuses on policies that support agricultural reforms.

“In South Asia the average temperature rise has been a little less than the global average temperature because of the cooling effect of aerosols, including short-lived climate pollutants. But it has its own negative health and agricultural consequences,” said Aditi Mukherji, Principal Researcher, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Coordinating Lead Author, IPCC AR6.

In South Asia, the report highlights that the increased groundwater depletion — at rates exceeding 2 cm per year in the Indo-Gangetic plain could have adverse impact on food and nutrition security in the region. Climate change is projected to reduce the rate of agricultural productivity growth at higher level of warming. Increased frequency and/or intensity of extreme events, such as high heat, extended droughts, and floods, becoming more frequent, are likely to play increasingly important roles in productivity and production.

For example, in Nepal, flood-induced damages to the area under paddy are already significant and projected to rise further. It is likely to reach 50 percent by the end of the century under a scenario with little emissions mitigation.

“Climate risks in South Asia are amplified by existing vulnerabilities, which have been further compounded by the impacts of Covid-19. It has led to decrease in yields, depleted natural resources, and associated income losses,” said Shahidur Rashid, Director South Asia, IFPRI. “The impact of climate change will make it extremely challenging for the region to achieve the SDG goals of zero hunger by 2030.”

The report finds that climate change shocks have direct and long-term impacts on food and nutrition security. A global study has projected that by 2050 South Asia will require three times its current food reserves, to offset such events. Greater levels of global emissions lead to significant increases in number of malnourished children compared to scenarios with lower emissions.

Rationalizing on food, fuel, and fertilizer policies could help support both adaptation to climate change and mitigation of GHG emissions in the region.

Some of the policy recommendations for South Asia highlighted in the report include increased investment in agricultural R&D, improved budget allocations towards promising sectors which are growing their share in agricultural GDP, reforms on fertilizer subsidies, changes in energy policies to avoid wasteful usage of electricity and water for irrigation, and reforms in agricultural support to avoid over production of specific crops. Looking forward, greater attention to the role of AFOLU as an emissions source and sink will be necessary to achieve a stable climate.

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. IFPRI was established in 1975 to identify and analyze alternative national and international strategies and policies for meeting the food needs of the developing world, with particular emphasis on low income countries and on the poorer groups in those countries. It is a research center of CGIAR, a worldwide partnership engaged in agricultural research for development. visit global website www.ifpri.org and regional website <http://southasia.ifpri.info/>