

## **Assessment Of Mitigation Strategies Adopted by Farmers to Counteract the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change on Agricultural Activities**

Yakubu, Fatihu Salmanu<sup>1</sup> and Parasar, Bibudha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, Institute of Agricultural Science (IAS) Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (Deemed to be University), Bhubaneswar, Odisha

### **Abstract**

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges, with significant implications for agricultural activities, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. The relationship between climate change and agriculture is symbiotic, as agricultural practices both contribute to and are affected by changing climatic conditions. The impacts of climate change on agriculture manifest through erratic rainfall, increased temperatures, droughts, and floods, all of which threaten food security and rural livelihoods. Farmers, who are highly dependent on natural resources, face declining crop yields, soil degradation, and increased pest invasions, making it imperative for them to adopt effective mitigation strategies. This study assesses the various strategies employed by farmers to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on their agricultural activities. These mitigation strategies are diverse and include agroforestry, crop diversification, conservation agriculture, and the adoption of climate-resilient crop varieties. The study categorizes these strategies into technological, agronomic, and ecosystem-based approaches, highlighting their efficacy and adoption rates among different farming communities across countries. Despite the adoption of these strategies, farmers across the countries encounter several challenges and barriers in effectively implementing climate change mitigation measures. Key barriers include limited access to financial resources, lack of awareness and information about climate-resilient practices, inadequate government support, and weak institutional frameworks. This research emphasizes the need for policy interventions, capacity-building programs, and improved access to climate-smart technologies to enhance the resilience of farmers in the face of climate change. The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the adaptive capacity of farmers and provide insights into strengthening the agricultural sector's response to climate variability.

## **Introduction**

Climate change and variability have emerged as key growth challenges for the world agricultural sector, which also threatens the livelihoods of rural communities. Countries are experiencing both long-term warming and increasing climate variability, and projections indicate that climatic variability will witness an upsurge in the coming decades. Climate change is known to exert both direct and indirect effects on agricultural activities. These factors have the capacity to increase greenhouse gas concentrations, modify land cover, and alter the redistribution of water resources. With an expected increase in ferocity, drought, moisture, and extreme temperatures, agriculture and food production will feel its impacts most intensely. Preparing and adapting agricultural activities to on-going climatic change are vital for improving food security. Activities tailored towards mitigating climate change in agriculture are important to diminish the effects of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Climate change impacts are substantially adverse for agricultural productivity and pose significant challenges for the achievement of the global goal of food security for all. Climate-smart agriculture represents the solution and offers the possibility of shifting towards sustainable and socially inclusive food systems. Adapting agriculture to climate change is an important way of reducing potential malnutrition among its population. The techniques that can be adopted to avoid potential damage to agriculture, worsening malnutrition, achieving human health benefits, and reducing rural and urban poverty are numerous. In addition to economic and social measures, the provision of up-to-date sciences, technologies, advisory services, and training should predominantly be target-specific and practically provided to farmers so that they can adopt these intensively. This should lead to an improvement in environmental maintenance, thereby contributing sensitively to sustainable social and economic security. The purpose of this study is to investigate the main strategies identified and assessed for mitigating climate change today, their limitations, and how farmers are adopting them. The findings presented in this research are derived from a systematic review of the literature, which was done using data from earlier investigations and books that were published.

**Climate Change and Agriculture** Climate change is one of the most significant global challenges of the 21st century, with profound implications for agriculture, a sector that is deeply intertwined

with weather and climate conditions. Agriculture, while a contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, is also highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which manifest through shifts in temperature, precipitation patterns, extreme weather events, and rising sea levels. These changes directly influence agricultural productivity, the stability of food systems, and the livelihoods of farmers worldwide, particularly in regions dependent on rain-fed agriculture, such as sub-Saharan Africa. Climate change, characterized by global shifts in temperature, precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events, has become a significant challenge for agriculture. Agricultural activities are highly sensitive to climatic conditions, making climate change one of the key threats to global food security (FAO, 2016). The relationship between climate change and agriculture is complex, as it involves direct and indirect impacts on crop production, livestock, and water resources.

### **Agriculture's Role in Climate Change**

Another important factor in climate change is agriculture. Globally, the sector accounts for approximately 10-12% of total anthropogenic GHG emissions, primarily through activities such as livestock production, rice cultivation, and the use of synthetic fertilizers (Smith et al., 2014). Agricultural practices, including deforestation for farming, slash-and-burn agriculture, and inefficient use of water and fertilizer, contribute to emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), which exacerbate climate change (Olaniyi, 2013). However, agriculture also presents opportunities for mitigating climate change through practices that reduce GHG emissions or enhance carbon sequestration. These include adopting agroforestry, conservation tillage, integrated pest management, and using renewable energy sources on farms. As such, the relationship between agriculture and climate change is twofold, requiring strategies that both reduce agriculture's contribution to climate change and improve its resilience to its impacts.

### **Impacts of Climate Change on Agriculture**

The most evident impact of climate change on agriculture is the effect on crop yields. Changes in temperature, especially heat stress during critical growth periods, can reduce yields of staple crops like wheat, maize, and rice (Lobell & Gourdji, 2012). Increased atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) can stimulate plant growth, but this benefit is often outweighed by the negative effects of drought, heat waves, and shifting growing seasons. For instance, longer dry spells and erratic rainfall

patterns have been shown to disrupt planting schedules and lead to crop failures (IPCC, 2014). The production of livestock is likewise susceptible to climate change. Rising temperatures affect feed quality, water availability, and animal health. Heat stress can reduce livestock productivity by lowering milk yields, growth rates, and reproduction efficiency (Nardone et al., 2010). Furthermore, the increased frequency of extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts, impacts the availability of feed and water, leading to higher production costs and reduced profitability for farmers. Changes in precipitation patterns and the increased evaporation from higher temperatures reduce the availability of freshwater for irrigation. In regions where rain-fed agriculture is dominant, reduced rainfall can drastically limit agricultural output (WWAP, 2012). In some cases, this has already led to shifts in agricultural zones and forced farmers to adopt new crops or techniques better suited to changing conditions (Porter et al., 2014). According to Ayanlade, Radeny, and Morton (2017), Farmers report experiencing more erratic rainfall patterns and increased occurrences of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, which have disrupted planting and harvesting schedules, reduced yields, and caused loss of livestock. The agricultural sector, which employs a significant portion of population, is at risk of becoming less productive, threatening food security and economic stability.

### **Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies**

To cope with the adverse effects of climate change, farmers are adopting various mitigation and adaptation strategies. These include improving irrigation efficiency, adopting climate-resilient crop varieties, and implementing sustainable farming practices like agroforestry and conservation agriculture (Pretty et al., 2018). Additionally, governments and international organizations are promoting policies to support farmers in building resilience to climate change, such as providing financial incentives for sustainable practices and improving access to climate-related information (FAO, 2016).

### **Types of Mitigation Strategies**

The strategies adopted by farmers generally fall into four broad categories: agronomic, technological, ecosystem-based, and socio-economic:

#### **1. Agronomic Strategies**

Agronomic mitigation strategies involve adjustments in crop management practices to either reduce GHG emissions or make agriculture more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

**a) Crop Diversification:** Farmers diversify their crops by planting different types of crops in the same field or rotating crops seasonally to reduce vulnerability to climate variability. Crop diversification also helps improve soil health and reduce the risk of total crop failure due to climate-related events.

**b) Conservation Agriculture:** This strategy includes practices like minimum tillage, cover cropping, and crop residue retention, which enhance soil structure, moisture retention, and fertility while reducing carbon emissions from soil disturbance. These practices are becoming more widespread among smallholder farmers in Nigeria, especially in drought-prone areas.

**c) Use of Climate-Resilient Crop Varieties:** Farmers are increasingly adopting drought-tolerant, pest-resistant, and early-maturing crop varieties that are better suited to changing climatic conditions. These varieties can help mitigate the effects of erratic rainfall patterns and rising temperatures.

## 2. Technological Strategies

Technological strategies focus on the application of innovations and technologies that help mitigate the effects of climate change.

**a) Improved Irrigation Techniques:** With changing rainfall patterns, many farmers adopt more efficient irrigation systems, such as drip or sprinkler irrigation, to conserve water and ensure a more reliable water supply for crops. These technologies help minimize water wastage and reduce the energy required for pumping water.

**b) Renewable Energy for Agriculture:** The use of renewable energy sources, such as solar-powered irrigation pumps and bioenergy for processing agricultural products, helps reduce the carbon footprint of farming activities. Solar energy, in particular, has gained popularity in rural Nigeria, where access to electricity is limited.

**c) Precision Agriculture:** Precision agriculture involves using data and technology (such as sensors, drones, and satellite imagery) to optimize crop management decisions, such as planting, fertilization, and irrigation, to reduce input waste and maximize efficiency. While this technology is still in its early stages in developing countries, it has potential for mitigating climate change impacts by improving resource use efficiency.

## 3. Ecosystem-Based Strategies

Ecosystem-based strategies focus on managing and protecting natural ecosystems to mitigate the impacts of climate change on agriculture while simultaneously reducing GHG emissions.

**a) Agroforestry:** This strategy involves integrating trees and shrubs into farming systems to improve soil fertility, reduce erosion, and sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Agroforestry systems provide multiple benefits, such as enhancing biodiversity, improving water retention in soils, and offering additional sources of income through the sale of timber and non-timber forest products. Many farmers are adopting agroforestry to address soil degradation and reduce reliance on synthetic fertilizers.

**b) Sustainable Land Management (SLM):** SLM practices, including terracing, contour farming, and gully rehabilitation, help to prevent soil erosion and improve land productivity under changing climatic conditions. These techniques also support the conservation of biodiversity and water resources, which are essential for long-term agricultural sustainability.

**c) Soil Carbon Sequestration:** Farmers can increase carbon storage in soils through organic farming practices, such as the use of compost and biochar. These practices not only mitigate climate change by storing carbon in the soil but also enhance soil health and fertility, making farming systems more resilient.

#### **4. Socio-Economic Strategies**

Socio-economic strategies involve changes in social and economic practices to build resilience to climate change and promote the adoption of sustainable practices.

##### **a) Farmer Cooperatives and Knowledge Sharing**

Farmers often form cooperatives or participate in community groups to share knowledge about climate change adaptation and mitigation practices. Through these networks, farmers gain access to improved seeds, financial services, and climate-related information. These cooperatives also enable collective action, such as group investments in irrigation infrastructure.

**b) Access to Microfinance and Insurance:** Financial institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria have introduced microfinance schemes and weather-indexed insurance programs to help farmers cope with climate-induced losses. Microfinance enables farmers to invest in a climate-smart technology, while insurance provides a safety net against extreme weather events.

**c) Diversification of Livelihoods:** To reduce their dependence on agriculture, many farmers diversify their income sources by engaging in non-agricultural activities, such as trading, handicrafts, or providing services. This strategy helps mitigate the financial risks associated with crop failures and fluctuating agricultural productivity caused by climate change.

### **Policy Interventions**

Effective policy interventions are essential to promote resilience in the agricultural sector. Governments must formulate and implement policies that align agricultural production with climate goals, encourage sustainable practices, and provide financial support to farmers. Current agricultural policies in many regions fail to address climate change adequately, often promoting practices that exacerbate environmental degradation (IPCC, 2014). To counter this, governments should introduce policies that incentivize the adoption of sustainable agricultural techniques, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and integrated pest management (FAO, 2016). Additionally, reforms that promote secure land tenure systems are crucial, as they give farmers the long-term security needed to invest in climate-smart practices (Lipper et al., 2014).

### **Challenges and Barriers for Mitigation Strategies Adopted by Farmers**

Globally, farmers are progressively implementing mitigation tactics to lessen the effects of climate change on agriculture. Increasing water efficiency, implementing crop types resistant to climate change, switching to sustainable agricultural methods, and cutting greenhouse gas emissions are some of these tactics. But putting these techniques into practice is not without its difficulties. Farmers encounter a number of challenges and barriers that make it more difficult for them to successfully offset the effects of climate change, from technological restrictions to fiscal restraints.

These are some of the Challenges:

1. Farmers encounter financial obstacles when implementing mitigation techniques, particularly in poorer nations where substantial upfront costs are associated with policies like drought-tolerant crop varieties and irrigation systems.
2. Farmers in many areas are not completely aware of the risks associated with climate change or the possible mitigation options. Due to a lack of information availability, especially in rural regions, many farmers are unaware of contemporary methods like conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and the use of seeds that are climate resilient.

3. Technology accessibility is a critical component in agricultural mitigation techniques' effectiveness. But the required technology is out of reach for farmers in many parts of the world, especially in low-income areas. For example, water-efficient modern irrigation methods are often pricey and unavailable.

4. Farmers' capacity to implement mitigation techniques is significantly shaped by institutional structures and governmental regulations. Current agriculture policy might not always be in line with efforts to mitigate climate change. Subsidies for crops that require a lot of water, for instance, could promote behaviours that undermine climate resilience.

5. The unpredictability of climate change itself makes it difficult for farmers to plan for climate mitigation. Farmers find it difficult to apply consistent mitigation techniques due to weather pattern variability, which can include erratic rainfall, unforeseen droughts, or unseasonal heat waves.

6. Adoption of mitigation techniques may also be hampered by social and cultural norms. Agricultural techniques are firmly ingrained in tradition in many farming communities, and altering time-honored practices may encounter resistance.

7. Additional obstacles to farmers implementing mitigation techniques include infrastructure and market accessibility. A lot of mitigation strategies, like growing crops organically or moving to crops that are more adaptable to climate change; need access to markets where consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable goods. However, lacks of storage facilities, inadequate transportation infrastructure, or a lack of market knowledge make it difficult for farmers in many rural locations to access these markets.

### **Recommendations and Ways Forward**

A multifaceted strategy is needed to successfully address the obstacles farmers have while implementing climate change mitigation measures. Coordination between governments, financial institutions, international organizations, and farmers themselves is required for this. The following suggestions tackle the particular issues mentioned and provide strategies for encouraging the broad implementation of sustainable farming methods.

1. Governments can provide subsidies or tax breaks to farmers that use sustainable agricultural techniques such as organic farming, water-saving devices, and renewable energy sources on their farms.

2. Provide programs for agricultural insurance to help farmers offset the financial risks involved with implementing new crop varieties or technology.
3. Strong agricultural extension services that give farmers access to the most recent information on crop management, climate change mitigation, and innovative technology should be funded by governments and non-governmental organizations.
4. Use mobile technology and digital platforms to disseminate information to farmers, especially in rural and remote areas.
5. Collaborate with businesses in the private sector to lower the cost and increase smallholder farmers' access to climate-smart technologies including drip irrigation, drought-resistant crops, and precision agriculture equipment.
6. Assisting farmers in implementing renewable energy technologies, like solar-powered irrigation pumps, can help them become less reliant on fossil fuels and enhance their energy efficiency.
7. Adoption of climate change requires strong institutional support and policy frameworks.

### **Conclusion**

The assessment of mitigation strategies adopted by farmers to counteract the adverse impacts of climate change on agricultural activities reveals the necessity for proactive and sustainable approaches. Farmers are increasingly using techniques such as crop diversification, water conservation, and climate-resilient seed varieties to adapt to changing climatic conditions. However, they face numerous challenges, including financial constraints, lack of access to modern technologies, and inadequate policy support. Strengthening capacity-building programs, improving access to climate-smart technologies, and formulating supportive policies are critical steps in enhancing the resilience of the agricultural sector. Coordinated efforts across stakeholders are essential to ensure that farmers can effectively mitigate climate change impacts and safeguard food security.

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