

Hardy Options

Eco-regional Notes on Climate Change And Semi-Arid Regions

a Climate Education booklet
for
Indian Network for Ethics in Climate Change
by
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english version by
John D'Souza &, Raajen Singh

with documentation and research support from
Veena B
Jacintha Menezes

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Preface

Small and marginal farmers, with land holdings below two hectares, constitute almost 80% of all Indian farmers, and more than 90% of them are dependent on rain for their crops.

Modernity has looked at this dependence as backward, and has promoted and subsidized irrigation, green revolution, genetically modified crops etc. Despite the thousands of crores spent on fertilizer and other subsidies, farmers are increasingly in debt and despair. Now we learn that the method of cultivation promoted has increased carbon emissions which have led to climate change – one of whose impacts is the further reduction in availability of water, besides erratic rainfall.

Sooryanarayan of Mallenipalli in Anantapur summarized the situation. He says “My father used to cultivate paddy on this land, as we are in the tank shed area. We then shifted to groundnut, as that was the commercial crop in the district. For the last two years, due to uncertainty of rains and weather, we have shifted to multi-cropping and crop rotation – one year jowar and the other year castor. And with the castor crop, we grow alasandra or red gram. We are cultivating *anumulu*, *alasandra*, *kandi*, *amudam*, *jonna*, *sajja*. Each one of us four brothers select one crop, And every year we change. Sooryanarayan’s father told us that this was exactly how they used to do farming in his days. The inputs were local, and the crop, a range of coarse grains consumed locally.

While these solutions have been promoted forcefully by NGOs like the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, the government in its sustainable agriculture mission, would still promote at the larger level modern agriculture and pin their faith on bio-technology, particularly GM crops. There are good economic reasons for this -- one of them is the mainstream monetary system on which modern

economy rests, will not work if more and more of us, managed a low carbon lifestyle of subsistence and localization.

This climate education booklet is aimed at explaining the basic concepts of climate change, and the politics around the climate change debate and action. It examines the issues faced by us in the semi-arid regions of this country, and looks at the options before us.

Please use this freely in your work. As a network, INECC is working with NGOs, and CBOs, to take this debate as well as action of climate change to the communities. We have collated a range of educational material, and will respond to specific requests and needs. Please contact the NGOs closest to you, and we will be glad to supply them this material so that they can adapt it and use it in your area.