

Farm loss due to climate change a reality: Study

Erratic rainfall, changing soil conditions call for programmes to fortify farmers

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While those like the US President, Donald Trump, have chosen to live in denial, the farmers in India are already grappling with the impact of climate change.

Erratic rainfall has robbed them of the yield and exposed them to agrarian stress such as lower prices for their produce, distress over mounting loans, prompting marches against the government and also suicides. Time has come to make the farmers more resilient, says an NGO that has run a study on the fallout.

The study has found that Maharashtra is one of the most vulnerable states to be hit by climate change. Official at the agriculture department agreed that they needed to be prepared for what's coming. "The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change mentions that in the past two decades climate change has inflicted losses to the tune \$80 billion globally and now it will cause losses of \$9 billion annually," said managing trustee of Watershed Organisation Trust, Crispino Lobo.

He also elaborated that in India, every 1 per cent rise in temperature causes 6-7 per cent loss in both Kharif and Rabi crops. "If the planet continues to warm up by 2-3 degrees each year, the loss will escalate to 12-15 per cent, accord-



Farmers have suffered losses due to climate change. For instance, 1,200 pomegranate plants were wrecked in Nimgaon

ingly," Lobo said.

"The high temperatures are robbing the soil of moisture and the fertilisers and chemicals are taking away its moisture retention capacity," added Arjuna Srinidhi, a researcher involved in the study. The solution lies in reverting to organic farming to maintain the health of the soil. "Harvesting rainwater alone would not suffice, but channelising it and increasing its efficiency would allow better use of water and reduce agrarian distress," he added.

There is no walking away from these findings as joint director at the agriculture office (Pune), Dilip Zende said, "Climate change effects such as reduced rainfall, drought, hailstorms, pests due to extreme weather conditions and resultant poor yield has wrecked

losses amounting to 7 per cent of the cultivated land." He, however, refuted that annual losses cannot be predicted as the conditions keep changing. "The crop losses can be measured after they are reported, following the government's panchanama," he said.

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