

## Press Release

Pune, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2018

### **Maharashtra needs to make its agriculture resilient to climate change urges leading NGO – Watershed Organisation Trust**

- Flagship programme to make state drought free – the **Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan (JSA)** – is a step in the right direction , but threatened by **climate change**
- WOTR outlines steps to make JSA climate resilient. Urges government to include:
  - **Integrated Soil and water conservation** measures and initiatives to increase **water use efficiency**
  - Effective **crop-weather advisories** and **sustainable agriculture** practices
- Shares insights from its experience of **Water Stewardship Campaign** covering over 100 villages in Maharashtra. Will help implement the Maharashtra Groundwater Management Act

**Pune, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2018:** On the eve of World Water Day, Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR), made a presentation to the Members of Maharashtra Legislature. The presentation was part of an event titled “**Tackling Climate Change in Maharashtra**” that was presided over by the **Hon’ble Chief Minister, Mr. Devendra Fadnavis**.

Speaking about the flagship programme of the state government – the **Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan (JSA)** – **Crispino Lobo, managing trustee and co-founder WOTR**, said that its fundamental principles were sound and aligned towards achieving its objective of making Maharashtra drought free. He, however, cautioned the government that **JSA faces a major threat in climate change**. He said that irregular and intense rainfall would lead to “ **intense and high volume runoffs. This will affect all the major activities being implemented - Nalla deepening and training; Bandharas; Farm Buding and Farm Ponds**”

Mr Lobo explained that **climate resilience** means that people are better able to cope with and adapt to climate induced shocks (unseasonal and intense rainfall, poor rains and long dry spells, storms, rising temperatures, etc), reduce losses, maintain productivity and capitalise on opportunities that climate change offers. He then went on to **outline ways in which the JSA could be made climate resilient** and said that these strategies came from WOTR’s own experience of over 25 years in the field and from lessons drawn from a joint study **with Action on Climate Today under the UK-India Program** .

### **Strategies for building climate resilience in Maharashtra**

Speaking at the event in Central Hall, Vidhan Bhavan, Mumbai, Mr Lobo detailed out, step-by-step, how the JSA can be climate-proofed.

- **Soil and water conservation (SWC)** measures must be designed and implemented keeping in mind projected climate change impacts and local conditions;

- A “**Ridge-to-Valley**” integrated approach must be followed with area treatments being given priority over drainage line treatments. And emphasis must be given to protecting forests and planting trees
- Communities must be incentivised to adopt **Water Budgeting, Water Use Efficiency** and the **Ground Water Management Act, 2009**);
- Promote **Adaptive Sustainable Agriculture** – effective crop weather advisories; nature friendly agricultural practices; indigenous and improved cultivars; improved soil health, bio-diversity conservation and water efficient technologies.

Touching upon the importance of water conservation, he highlighted that 84% of water supply goes towards agriculture. “So we need to move to Adaptive Sustainable Agriculture. And Water Budgeting is the key to this. Based on this we plan the cropping pattern and promote practices that improve soil health and increase water use efficiency (“**more crop per drop**”), said Mr Lobo.

### **Water budgeting, stewardship and increasing water use efficiency – the key message from WOTR on World Water Day**

Connecting the work on climate resilience to the critical issue of water security, Mr Lobo said that WOTR had launched a pilot **Water Stewardship Campaign in 106 villages** where communities were being motivated to implement the key principles of the **Maharashtra Groundwater Management Act**. He highlighted some of the results as:

- 34,600 farming Households are participating in it
- There has been a 54% increase in adoption of water efficient technologies (drip, sprinklers) annually
- 8.95 billion litres additional water harvested in 2yrs
- 38.39 billion litres of water brought under Governance annually

Along with the message of water conservation Mr Lobo also spoke about the efforts in climate smart agriculture, where WOTR in collaboration with **IMD, CRIDA, the MPKV and the Marathwada Agriculture University**, have been giving weather based and crop-specific advisories to farmers since the last 5 years.

***“If we want to make villages in Maharashtra climate resilient, there is no alternative to watershed development and using available water efficiently”***, concluded Mr Lobo.