

EVENT BOOKLET

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Forum of Enterprises for
Equitable Development

***Annual Survey on the
State of Marginal Farmers of
India 2024***

***“Impact of Climate Change on
Marginal Farmers”***

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Forum of Enterprises for
Equitable Development

The Forum of Enterprises for Equitable Development (FEED) is dedicated to enhancing the livelihoods of marginal farmers through advocacy, research, and collaboration with various stakeholders. It strives to ensure that these farmers have access to new opportunities and resources that can lead to sustainable development.

FEED is committed to improving the economic wellbeing of marginal farmers in India. It aims to transform agricultural practices, enhance local markets, and develop human capital. FEED's strategy includes engaging with professional agencies to improve farm production systems and transition from subsistence to commercial farming. By leveraging public investments and technology, FEED seeks to create institutional aggregations and modern value chains.

FEED advocates for marginal farmers by connecting them with the private sector and promoting their interests through seminars, policy briefs, and research papers. It emphasizes the importance of data-driven decision-making and partnerships to support the resilience and growth of these farmers. FEED's goal is to foster a business-oriented approach to small-scale farming, encouraging dialogue and forming program coalitions that can change the narrative for marginal farmers.

Vision & Mission

Vision

Create new pathways to profitable agriculture for marginal farmers

Mission

FEED envisions a future where marginal farmers thrive, empowered by inclusive economic opportunities, technological advancements, and supportive policies. We aspire to reshape the agricultural landscape, ensuring resilience, growth, and dignity for all marginalized farmers across India.

The logo for FEED (Forum of Enterprises for Equitable Development) features the word "feed" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "f" is orange, and the letters "e", "e", and "d" are green, with a gradient effect from light to dark green.

Forum of Enterprises for
Equitable Development



CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

As the Chairperson of the Forum of Enterprises for Equitable Development (FEED), I present our second annual report on "Climate Change and Marginal Farmers." This report highlights our dedication to enhancing marginal farmers' incomes through advocacy and strategic initiatives. Our survey shows that 40.9% of farmers experienced droughts and 32.6% excessive rains, leading to major crop losses. Despite government schemes, gaps remain in adopting climate-resilient practices. We advocate for sustainable farming, improved financial inclusion, and innovative solutions. Enhanced coordination among agricultural departments and better use of forest land are essential. I look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

On June 25th, FEED hosted an insightful and productive event focused on the challenges and opportunities faced by marginal farmers in India. The event, attended by esteemed guests and industry leaders, featured engaging discussions and actionable insights aimed at transforming the agricultural landscape. This summary encapsulates the key points and takeaways from the sessions.

Session 1: Economic Structure and Sustainable Farming

Samik Sundar Das, Senior Specialist, World Bank

Discussed the evolving economic structure and questioned the sustainability of relying solely on agriculture for marginal farmers to move away from subsistence living.

Samuel Praveen Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, GoI

Emphasized transforming agriculture from a livelihood means to an enterprise. Highlighted the importance of engaging rural youth and fostering their entrepreneurial spirit.

EXECUTIVE

**Harish Damodaran,
National Editor, Indian
Express**

Stressed the importance of providing marginal farmers with capital and market access to engage in high-value agriculture.

**Session 2: Innovative
Strategies and Climate
Adaptation**

**Rina Soni, Executive
Director, Passing Gifts
Pvt. Ltd.**

Highlighted the need for innovative strategies to turn marginal farmers into entrepreneurs.

**Priyanka Singh, Chief of
Rural Transformation,
Reliance Foundation**

Emphasized the importance of insurance and security in agriculture to protect farmers and ensure long-term stability.

**Rajendra Jog, Country
Director, Syngenta
Foundation**

Discussed the crucial role of innovation, skills, and entrepreneurship, supported by NGOs and government initiatives.

**Navin Horo, Senior
Advisor, GIZ**

Focused on measures to help marginal farmers adapt to climate change effectively.

**Bharti Joshi, Interim CEO,
Grameen Foundation**

Highlighted revitalizing farmer interest groups to enhance their role from primary associations to dynamic models driving change within the FPO movement.

SUMMARY

Session 3: Outcome-Based Approaches and Inclusivity

**Aman Pannu, President,
DCM Shriram Foundation**

Discussed the potential of an outcome-based approach for providing better benefits and opportunities for marginal farmers.

**Dipanwita Chakraborty,
Regional Director, Cargill**

Emphasized the positive impact of gender inclusivity in the agricultural supply chain.

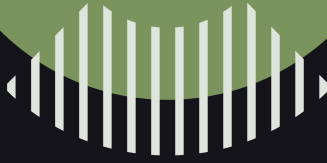
**Rajesh Jain,
President, Ayekart**

Highlighted the pivotal role of private firms in empowering marginal farmers and improving their productivity and livelihoods.

Conclusion

The event underscored the need for collaborative efforts among all stakeholders—government, corporates, NGOs, and farmers—to ensure the sustainable development of marginal farmers. By focusing on innovative strategies, market linkages, responsible sourcing, and inclusivity, we can pave the way for a prosperous agricultural sector in India.

Thank you to all participants and speakers for their valuable contributions and continued commitment to the cause of marginal farmers.



REPORT LAUNCH

The main highlight of the event was the release of the Annual Survey on the State of Marginal Farmers of India 2024 with the core theme being the examination of impact of climate change on the marginal farmers. This was the second annual report by the Forum of Enterprises for Equitable Development (FEED) in collaboration with the Development Intelligence Unit underscoring their commitment as a knowledge organization dedicated to advocacy and strategic leads for income enhancement of marginal farmers. The event involved three major sessions, where the focus was on how to develop synergies between public and private sector to bring forth a convergence of efforts necessary for inclusive development and making agriculture and related activities a remunerative livelihood option.





Sandeep Ghosh, DIU

Mr. Ghosh presented the key findings of the Annual Survey on the State of Marginal Farmers of India 2024 during the panel discussion. The survey, conducted via telephonic interviews by the Sambodhi panel, included 6,615 farmers across 21 states, covering six zones of the country.

Key Findings:

- 01** Only 7% of the respondent farmers cultivated crops in all three seasons: kharif, rabi, and zaid. A significant 95% farmed in two seasons, kharif and rabi, with 91% showing a preference for the kharif season.
- 02** The findings revealed that 80% of marginal farmers reported losses due to adverse climatic events in the last five years. Among them, 43% stated they lost at least half of their standing crop, with droughts and non-seasonal rains being the major contributors.
- 03** This climate-induced hardship has led marginal farmers to increase their engagement in part-time occupations, animal husbandry, and temporary migration in search of labor opportunities.
- 04** The survey found that 69% of respondents were members of some form of agricultural organization such as FPOs, FPCs, PGs, PEs, PACS, or Cooperative Societies. These organizations primarily provided subsidized agricultural inputs, credit support, and crop insurance.
- 05** Government scheme coverage was examined, revealing maximum participation in PMKSY and the lowest in PMFBY at 35%.
- 06** The survey also delved into the access to and usage of farming-related infrastructure, focusing on custom hiring centers, cold storage, and seed and fertilizer outlets.
- 07** Another critical point of study was the access to technical advice and extension services. A positive response was noted, with 72% of farmers confirming access, primarily through other progressive farmers and input dealers rather than formal sources such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras.
- 08** Less than one-third of marginal farmers affected by adverse climatic events have adopted any Climate Resilient Agriculture Practices. The biggest barriers to adoption were high upfront costs and limited knowledge.



MR. SAMIK SUNDAR DAS

SENIOR SPECIALIST
THE WORLD BANK

Mr. Das raised several critical points during the panel discussion on the release of the Annual Survey on the State of Marginal Farmers of India 2024. He highlighted the absence of risk identification in the report, specifically concerning adverse climatic events and the coping strategies employed to deal with them. He questioned whether the continued focus on agriculture is due to a lack of alternative livelihoods for farmers.

Mr. Das addressed the slow pace of structural changes in agriculture and the need for inputs to make agriculture a sustainable livelihood alternative. He emphasized that while land area cannot be increased, its productivity can be improved. However, efforts to achieve this productivity boost are often disjointed. He agreed that temperature is a significant factor but stressed that water management is another critical element being overlooked.

He pointed out that knowledge and advisory services face significant challenges in ensuring last-mile delivery, despite technological advancements. He also noted that the aggregation of farmers into Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) is intended to de-risk them from multi-dimensional risks. However, he cautioned against viewing aggregation as a shortcut to achieving long-term goals. Effective capacity building of these organizations is essential, and FEED could play a vital role in this aspect.

Mr. Das also highlighted the lack of convergence on the demand side at the gram panchayat level, where schematic convergence is crucial. He advocated for a decentralized approach to setting the development discourse, ensuring that local needs and conditions are addressed effectively.



MR. SAMUEL PRAVEEN KUMAR

JOINT SECRETARY
MOAFW, GOI

Addressing the current climate challenges, he emphasized that climate change is no longer just a subject of research but a reality we are experiencing. He detailed how various Government of India initiatives are assisting in making agriculture more climate-resilient and remunerative. He highlighted the efforts of the MoAFW's extension division, which has been undertaking significant initiatives with the help of six lakh front-end extension workers. Despite these efforts, he acknowledged that they are insufficient given the rapidly changing demands.

Mr. Kumar emphasized the need to strengthen the extension mechanism and the importance of digital extension as the way forward. He announced the upcoming launch of a state-of-the-art Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for agriculture, leveraging existing systems to empower farmers. The primary focus of this initiative is to deliver digital extension services directly to farmers' doorsteps.

He cited the example of the Kisan Call Centre, noting its limitations, and stressed the necessity of going digital. Kumar highlighted the importance of behavioral changes, particularly the significant role of youth, who, due to their enterprising nature, are less risk-averse than previous generations. He also discussed the critical role of women in agriculture, noting that women tend to be faster adopters of technology. When women come forward collectively, such as through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), progress accelerates significantly.

Lastly, Mr. Kumar addressed the challenge of information overload from multiple sources. He suggested that the solution lies in leveraging private sector efficiency and technology to converge efforts and limit content to what is relevant for farmers. He provided the example of the Agriculture Investment Fund, which has successfully developed 65,000 agri-entrepreneurs, demonstrating the potential of targeted, efficient information delivery.



MR. HARISH DAMODARAN

NATIONAL EDITOR
THE INDIAN EXPRESS

Mr. Harish Damodaran highlighted the need to expand the discussion of climate change beyond just rainfall, emphasizing the crucial role of temperature variations in soil health. He stressed that for marginal farmers, relying solely on crop agriculture is not sustainable. Instead, they should also engage in complementary occupations like animal husbandry, as well articulated in the report.

Damodaran suggested that research should move beyond conventional crops like wheat and rice to explore various fodder varieties. He proposed that becoming a fodder farmer and owning livestock could be a viable alternative to avoid the volatility of crop agriculture. He emphasized that while the land cannot be expanded, efforts should be focused on developing market linkages and enabling access to affordable credit. He advocated for animal agriculture, citing it as more climate-resilient and remunerative compared to crop agriculture.

He argued that simply moving people out of agriculture through conventional models will not work. Instead, there is a need to create jobs linked to agriculture through diversification, not just on the farm but also outside and close to it. This involves transitioning from raw produce to value-added products, thus creating more sustainable and profitable livelihoods for marginal farmers.





DR. SANJEEV CHOPRA

CHAIRMAN
FEED

Dr. Sanjeev Chopra emphasized that agriculture often becomes a default option for marginal farmers, with survey findings indicating that the majority of respondents rely on additional incomes. He agreed with Mr. Damodaran's point that while land cannot be expanded, efforts should focus on improving access to capital, enhancing skill sets, and developing market linkages.

However, Dr. Chopra noted that certain negative externalities must be addressed first. This can be achieved either through policy interventions, the adoption of a new extension model, or by fostering synergies between public and private stakeholders to shift the focus from short-term objectives to long-term solutions.

He highlighted the issue of disappearing farm villages, rapid urbanization, and mass migration from rural to urban areas. This trend underscores the urgent need to create sustainable and profitable agricultural practices to retain and support marginal farmers in their rural communities.





MR. RAJENDRA JOG

COUNTRY DIRECTOR
SYNGENTA FOUNDATION INDIA

Began with highlighting Syngenta's comprehensive approach to empowering marginal farmers through education, training, and extension support. Syngenta's Agri-entrepreneurship program which focuses on rural youth, equipping them with agronomy skills and providing two years of mentorship to facilitate their journey into entrepreneurship. These agri-entrepreneurs subsequently serve as hyper-local service providers, offering vital last-mile assistance to 150 farmers per village. The program has proven successful, with both farmers and entrepreneurs earning an incremental income of up to ₹2 lakh per annum.

Mr. Jog also emphasized Syngenta's partnership with the Environmental Defense Fund to promote climate-smart resilient agriculture. They have revamped educational curricula for both youth entrepreneurs and farmers, emphasizing practices like soil health management, Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), and alternate wetting and drying techniques.

In Vidarbha district, Syngenta has implemented these climate-resilient agriculture principles in a model village initiative. Over the past year, they focused on training farmers to understand the productivity and income benefits of these practices, though initial farmer interest in environmental impacts was limited. Mr. Jog noted that 90 million hectares of land in India are degraded, with soil organic carbon levels falling below desirable thresholds.

Highlighting their proactive approach, Mr. Jog mentioned that Syngenta facilitated soil testing for 30,000 farmers last year, covering test costs and providing detailed reports with recommendations for soil health preservation. This initiative enabled farmers to reduce fertilizer costs by up to 10 percent, demonstrating tangible benefits from sustainable agricultural practices.



MS. PRIYANKA SINGH

CHIEF - RURAL TRANSFORMATION
RELIANCE FOUNDATION

Ms. Singh talked about the key contrasts between last year's annual report and this year's findings, particularly focusing on the increased membership of FPOs/cooperatives and the concentration of marginal farmers in specific Indian states. She emphasized how Reliance Foundation is contributing to transforming agriculture from a struggling enterprise into a resilient and smart business avenue.

Ms. Singh addressed the discrepancy where farming remains economically challenging, noting that while productivity gains are evident in crops like wheat, paddy, maize, chickpeas, and soybeans, market values lag behind. She emphasized the need to recalibrate investment priorities to prioritize productivity and yield enhancement, factors critical for increasing earnings among marginal farmers.

Regarding land ownership, Ms. Singh questioned why farmers are reluctant to sell land despite agriculture's economic challenges. She pointed out deficiencies in safety nets, both in collaboration with public entities and through foundational initiatives, highlighting innovative approaches such as weather-based insurance schemes. She cited a pilot initiative with WRMS that integrated weather forecasts into insurance products, offering bundled services to mitigate risks for marginal farmers. The scheme demonstrated a high premium-to-compensation ratio, particularly beneficial for high-value crops.

Ms. Singh concluded by cautioning against abrupt shifts in cropping patterns in a country where a significant proportion of the population is malnourished. She stressed the importance of realistic solutions that consider the socio-economic realities of farmers, advocating for sustainable strategies that enhance both productivity and market value to ensure long-term agricultural viability.



MR. NAVIN HORO

SENIOR ADVISOR
GIZ

He appreciated that the report provides comprehensive coverage to both dynamic and static challenges faced by farmers, with a focus on regenerative farming to transform agriculture into a remunerative livelihood option that is climate-resilient. He highlighted how addressing the challenges posed by climate change requires a transformative approach in delivering solutions.

He highlighted the importance of advisory services and decentralized block-level contingency plans to keep farmers informed about weather-related issues and help them plan their activities accordingly. Mr. Horo proposed leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and the extensive network of ICAR and Krishi Vigyan Kendras to develop localized solutions based on their vast knowledge base.

Another critical aspect discussed was the promotion of alternate livelihood avenues and integrated farming systems to make agriculture a viable business proposition for farmers. Ensuring food and nutrition security was underscored, suggesting innovative financing mechanisms at national and state levels. Mr. Horo advocated for leveraging existing programs and resources to generate positive externalities, including exploring carbon credits as a potential avenue.

He emphasized the need for a quadrilateral approach to interlink agriculture, soil, water, and climate, aiming for inclusivity and transformative change rather than short-term fixes that may lead to resource leakages. Mr. Horo highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer knowledge transfer to create a snowball effect in adopting sustainable agricultural practices.



MS. RINA SONI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PASSING GIFTS PRIVATE LTD.

Ms. Soni provided insights into their approach, emphasizing consistent engagement with farmers, particularly women, to diversify income sources. She highlighted technical training in agriculture and regenerative practices such as organic farming and zero tillage. Heifer International aims to transform today's marginal farmers into agrovet-entrepreneurs by empowering them with best practices in animal management and healthcare.

Their model focuses on holistic development centered around marginal farmers, enabling locally led changes that transform beneficiaries into contributors. Ms. Soni advocated for a shift from mass production to production by the masses, supported by blended financing models including catalytic and impact funds. This approach aims to sustainably enhance livelihoods and foster community resilience.



MS. BHARATI JOSHI

INTERIM CEO
GRAMEEN FOUNDATION

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MS. AMAN PANNU

PRESIDENT
DCM SHRIRAM FOUNDATION

Ms. Pannu highlighted the indispensable role of the corporate sector in empowering marginal farmers through substantial resources, intellectual capital, and innovative strategies. She elaborated on the “Meetha Sona” Program, a collaborative effort involving four sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh, funded by IFC, Solidaridad, Mahindra, and E3M over the past decade. This initiative exemplifies how private sector synergies can address multidimensional challenges such as soil health, water conservation, and climate resilience. Ms. Pannu emphasized impressive outcomes from the program, including saving 740 billion liters of water and doubling soil organic carbon content from 0.25 to 0.5. These achievements, driven by best agricultural practices adopted and taught to farmers, resulted in a 15% improvement in yield and positively impacted 2.25 lakh farmers.



MR. RAJESH JAIN

PRESIDENT
AYEKART

Mr. Jain emphasized the transformative role of private firms in elevating marginal farmers' productivity and livelihoods, particularly through high-value agriculture. He noted the rarity of aligning high-value crops with marginal farmers but highlighted Ayekart's significant investments in farmer training and technology deployment. These efforts aim to facilitate a seamless transition towards climate-resilient agriculture. Mr. Jain underscored the complexity of not only aggregating farmers but also ensuring high quality output, emphasizing the integration of private sector efficiencies into cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)..



MS. DIPANWITA CHAKRABORTY

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
CARGILL

Ms. Chakraborty emphasized the critical importance of connectivity between farmers and the corporate sector, focusing on profitability, inclusivity, and sustainability. She underscored that for private sector engagement with farmers to be successful, benefits must accrue to both parties, with tangible gains that farmers can readily perceive. This necessitates a holistic approach to streamline processes and procedures.

In terms of inclusivity, Ms. Chakraborty highlighted the need to prioritize underrepresented groups, particularly women, ensuring their active participation and benefit from agricultural initiatives. She also addressed sustainability concerns, both in operational and financial capacities. A key question raised was the exit strategy for grant funding, emphasizing the need for initiatives to scale effectively after initial funding phases out.



Media Highlights

Annual Survey on

the State of Marginal Farmers of India 2024

THE WEEK

80 of marginal farmers affected by extreme weather events Report

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affected over 60 per cent of Indian marginal farmers: Report

IANIS - General News - 2024-06-25 18:15

AGRICULTURE

Rain-related events impacting India's marginal farmers more than extreme heat: Survey

The 'State of Marginal Farmers of India 2024' said that a third of its 6,615 respondents reported having to cope with adverse weather in the last five years.

BHASKAR LIVE

HOME NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT SPORTS BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

Extreme weather events in last 5 years affected over 60 per cent of Indian marginal farmers: Report

More than 50% marginal farmers affected by extreme weather events in last 5 years, according to survey

The survey which included 6,615 farmers across 21 states in India was conducted by Enterprises for Equitable Development (FEED) in collaboration with the Deccan Herald (DH).

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

A farmer sowing fertilizer for his crops. | H Jashwanth Kumar

Nation

'Climate change hit small farmers in 5 yrs'

Jitendra Choubey

Updated: 26th Jun, 2024 at 8:49 AM

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80%

More than 50% marginal farmers reported losing crops due to extreme weather events: Report

The survey

NDTV Profit

Top Losses of Marginal Farmers in India Hit 80% Due to Extreme Weather: Report

Hindustan Times

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Extreme weather, erratic rain hurt marginal farmers: Report

By Jayashree Nandi

ThePrint

India

80% of marginal farmers in India affected by adverse climatic events: Report

खोज

Head Topics

इंडिया

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कहानियाँ

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