



Rainforest Alliance's Contribution to the Decade of Family Farming

Introduction

The Rainforest Alliance is an international non-profit organization, striving to build a future in which nature is protected and biodiversity flourishes, where farmers, workers, and communities prosper, and where sustainable land use and responsible business practices are the norm. It promotes best management practices in agricultural landscapes, as defined in the Sustainable Agriculture standard. It provides training and technical assistance to enable their uptake by producers and certifies farms that apply the practices. It builds demand in the private sector to buy certified agricultural products, so that sustainability can be embedded in the supply chain.

Initiatives to support the Decade of Family Farming

The Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture standard was updated in 2016 to integrate climate-smart practices that build climate resilience on farms. In India, agriculture employs over half of the working population. 86% of agricultural production is managed by smallholders. Over the last 40 years, the average farm size has reduced from over 3 hectares to 1.6. Farming families need better access to information, technology, extension services and finance to manage their farms against pests and diseases, conserve their soils and increase their productivity. Climate change makes their task more challenging, as rainfall patterns change and temperatures rise. The Sustainable Agriculture standard guides farmers in making assessments of their vulnerability to climate change impacts, using water and other resources efficiently, applying integrated management systems and biological controls to reduce pests and diseases and conserving and restoring tree cover on their farms. Satellite and digital technology allows information of value to the farmer, such as weather patterns and soil quality, to be disseminated quickly and cost-effectively. The standard requires equal treatment and safe working conditions for men and women. Rainforest Alliance encourages crop diversification for food security. 1.35 million farms in 40 countries have improved their farming systems to achieve Rainforest Alliance certification. In India, certification has been widely adopted in the tea and coffee sectors and is also evident in spices and horticulture.

The role of public policies

India has a very wide range of policies and initiatives to promote increased agricultural output, sometimes with price supports. They are less focused on conserving soil health and avoiding land degradation. The government has estimated that India lost 2.54% of its GDP in 2014/15 due to land degradation. The National Mission for Green India and National Initiative on Climate-resilient Agriculture support integrating trees and shrubs and promote adaptation in agricultural production. Such policies, when implemented through participatory and decentralized processes, and with effective coordination across different units of government, provide critical leadership and resources in determining the way that farming families manage their land.

Promoting collaboration and partnerships

The combination of strong policies, based on sound research, and market signals that favour sustainable agriculture create an enabling environment for climate-smart production systems. A



quarter of a million tons of tea in India is grown on Rainforest Alliance certified farms because tea companies want to buy certified tea. Development agencies recognize the power of the private sector in providing technical expertise, market opportunity and improved buying practices- values that can attract young farmers and sustain initiatives. Specialist civil society agencies can bring expertise in reducing social barriers to inclusion and increasing gender equality. Public-private-producer partnerships to bring these partners together in a coordinated programme are increasingly common. Rainforest Alliance is discussing with the government of India and Global Environment Facility an initiative to promote climate-smart farming.

How climate-smart agricultural approaches serve the case of family farming and smallholders.

The Decade of Family Farming aims to end poverty, reduce inequality and combat climate change, with full social inclusion. It specifically contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 2: *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*. The Indian tea industry is vital for the national economy and rural livelihoods. Assam produces half of India's tea and creates income for 3 million people. A study by the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati found that Assam, particularly the Brahmaputra valley, underwent significant changes in rainfall pattern and temperature in recent years. The Tea Research Association is modelling likely impacts of climate change over the next 50 years. It found that the average temperature in Assam rose by 1 degree Celsius in the past 90 years, and that there is higher incidence of pests. Such data sets can be used by state governments and tea companies to develop and invest in plans to sustain tea production, which requires a specific temperature range to achieve high productivity and quality. This is a common interest of all parties and can be achieved through applying climate smart practices where tea production will continue and planning economic diversification where temperature changes mean that it may not.

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