

HOW CAN INDIA REDUCE ITS IMPACT ON GLOBAL WARMING

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Carbon footprint: India is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton and groundnuts. | Photo Credit: Getty Images

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has pointed out that since the industrial revolution, which started around 1800, human activities have released large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) due to fuel burning and other 'greenhouse gases' such as methane, nitrous oxide, and compounds of sulphur, phosphorous, ozone into the atmosphere, changing the earth's climate.

Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have increased by over 40%, from 280 ppm in the 18th century to 414 ppm in 2020, and greenhouse gases level by over these 200 years.

India had 170 million people in 1800, which has risen to 1.4 billion people today. And industrial revolution started only after India's Independence 75 years ago. While it has helped in reduction of poverty, it has also led to rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) site points out that we have a rural population that constitutes 70% of the country, and their main occupation is agriculture. This gives us a total food-grain production of 275 million tonne. India is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton and groundnuts. It, thus, becomes important that India try and reduce its carbon footprint as much as possible, more in its farming sector.

Farmers have come up with some admirable methods, with the help of agricultural professionals, by using solar panels in their fields, so that they can avoid diesel for groundwater pumps.

Sibi Arasu, an independent journalist from Bengaluru, writes, "Climate-friendly agriculture offers new income sources and is more sustainable" in the journal *Carbon Management* that India's carbon emissions could drop by 45-62 million tonnes annually. The government and professional groups have helped rural farmers put in solar panels to save money and gain greater income.

Indian farmers not only grow rice and wheat but produce other foodgrains as well. They grew about 121.5 million tonnes of rice and 109 million tonnes of wheat during the year 2020-2021. They also produce other foodgrains such as millets (*bajra*), cassava and more. They grow about 12 million tonnes of millets annually. Likewise, the amount of maize produced per year is about 28.6 million tonnes. It may also be added that millets have more proteins (7.3 m per 100 g), fat (1.7 g per 100 g) and fibre content (4.22g per 100g) than rice (protein content 2.7 g per 100 g; fat content 0.3 g per 100 g; and fibre content 0.4 g per 100 g).

It is, thus, healthier for us to add more millets in our diet, besides rice and wheat. And wheat is superior to rice as it has more proteins (13.2 g per 100 g), fat (2.5 g per 100 g), and fibre (10.7 g per 100 g).

India has about 20-39% vegetarians and 70% of the population eat meat — mainly chicken, mutton and fish (*Devi et al*). India, with its many rivers, has a vast coastline which is rich in

fishes. And fishes have high nutritional value and help in reducing carbon footprint (*Nature*, Jude Colman, September 13, 2022 issue). Thus, with farmers, meat sellers and fishermen, each contributing to India in reducing our carbon footprint, we can hope to be an exemplary nation for the EPA.

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