

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

### Understanding Impacts on Agrifood Systems and Evaluating Policy Options

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#### **Key messages**

- As climate change became a central focus of food policy research, research expanded from projecting global and national impacts on agriculture to assessing risks to households and individuals and options for policy responses, and from a focus on mitigation toward actions that support both mitigation and adaptation.
- Model-based projections broadly agree on the key agricultural impacts of climate change: declining productivity growth and nutrient density of crops and reduced food security, with the greatest impacts at lower latitudes and in low-income countries.
- Research focused on identifying and reducing risks for vulnerable populations, particularly small-scale producers and women, identifies “hot spots” and effective adaptation strategies.
- Farm-level adaptations show promise for protecting livelihoods and food security but have not been adopted at scale. Research explores the barriers to greater impact of these innovations.
- Climate-smart agriculture research emphasizes synergies among adaptation, mitigation, and productivity goals at the farm level, and shows that climate-smart practices can reduce hunger.
- Evidence on disparities in climate impacts between high- and low-income countries and within countries, where impacts are greater on marginalized peoples, supports policies for climate justice.

Looking to the future, policy research on climate and food systems should aim to:

- **Improve identification of hotspots and targeting of resources** by combining yield projections from crop models with information on the local importance of crops and local indicators of vulnerability, including social inequalities.
- **Increase capacity for modeling** the frequency and impact of extreme climate events and better incorporate feedback mechanisms, impacts on labor productivity, economic growth, and nutrition, to allow comparison of the effectiveness of potential policy responses.
- **Identify and help to prioritize scalable adaptation strategies** that can be effective both at large and local scales.
- **Identify effective mechanisms to address climate injustice** and ways to make climate governance more representative of vulnerable communities, including women and poor populations.
- **Combine climate modeling and household survey analysis** at the country level to provide policy-relevant foresight and evidence to decision-makers as countries undergo major socioeconomic and environmental changes in coming years.
- **Inform the design and implementation of climate interventions and policies** that better address broader development goals such as food security, nutrition, and health.

**C**limate change is a major challenge of our time, with global and far-reaching—though often uncertain—effects on and from agriculture and food systems. Rising temperatures and changing weather patterns are already increasing the risk of hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity among the world’s poorest and most vulnerable populations. Natural disasters such as droughts and flooding are becoming more frequent and intense, while climate change makes arable land and freshwater scarcer and agricultural productivity harder to increase (Parry et al. 2009). New or more damaging pests, pathogens, and weeds will challenge farmers. Agriculture is also a major contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Thus, policies and investments for the agrifood sector must support both the goals of reducing GHG emissions and sequestering carbon (Mbow et al. 2019; Smith et al. 2018) and increasing farmers’ resilience through adaptation to climate change and income growth.

However, as it becomes less likely that the world will meet its 2015 Paris Agreement goal of keeping the global temperature increase below 1.5°C, the risks to agriculture and difficulty of adaptation are growing rapidly, especially in low-income countries.

Climate change has rapidly shifted from a peripheral concern to a central focus of food policy research. Early research was primarily model based, with a strong focus on projecting potential global and national impacts of climate change on agrifood systems and examining adaptation policies and priorities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and GHG mitigation policies in wealthier countries. This research has now expanded to encompass a wider array of methods, with a strong focus on assessing the risks and vulnerabilities faced by diverse households and individuals and their options for responding to climate shocks and stressors.

This chapter reviews the evolution of research on climate change, food security, and food systems and reflects on IFPRI's major contributions to understanding climate change impacts and identifying promising policies and investments for mitigation and adaptation. Looking ahead, we explore promising new research directions, including advancing understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities to support policy prioritization that will facilitate low-emission development pathways and avoid maladaptation—that is, actions that increase vulnerability to climate change or result in adverse outcomes or diminished welfare for some populations.

## **Evolution of research**

### **Models to assess global, regional, and national impacts of climate change**

Several types of models are used to assess the impacts of climate change on agricultural production, food prices, and food security, including econometric models and simulation models. These all show broad areas of agreement on the key impacts of climate change, although specific quantitative results can vary substantially.

*Econometric models* estimate the impact of climate change on crop yields based on an analysis of the relationship between historical precipitation and temperature, on the one hand, and crop yields or total production on the other hand. Some models extend this analysis to consider impact on total factor productivity (TFP). Econometric analysis of TFP provides a more comprehensive measure of impact than crop yields, as it captures

interactions between changes in outputs and inputs, including not only land but also capital, labor, and technology, throughout the entire sector (see, for example, Lobell, Bänziger et al. 2011). Other research considers the impact of climate on land values or farm net revenues (such as Mendelsohn et al. 1994, 1996).

*Simulation models* include both process-based crop models and global economic models.<sup>1</sup> *Process-based crop models* model physiological processes of crop growth and incorporate environmental factors such as temperature, water, and light, as well as soil parameters, cultivar choices, and agronomic management practices, to estimate the impact of climate variables (and therefore climate change) and other factors on crop yields (Feng et al. 2023). Prominent crop models include DSSAT (Jones et al. 2003) and the APSIM series (Keating et al. 2003), both developed by universities and research organizations.

*Global economic models* that address climate change impacts, including partial and computable general equilibrium models (CGEs), combine economic models of the agriculture sector (or multiple sectors, in the case of CGEs) with crop models and climate system models known as general circulation models (GCMs).

GCMs are numerical models representing physical processes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere, and land surface, and are used to simulate changes in temperature, precipitation, and other variables over time. They are the most advanced tools currently available for simulating the response of the global climate system to increasing GHG concentrations. Global economic models also employ different assumptions about Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs), which represent alternative futures for economic and population growth, with implied Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs), which represent potential GHG emission levels in the atmosphere and the subsequent increase in solar energy that would be absorbed (radiative forcing).

Global economic models can capture the economic feedback effects generated by climate shocks and estimate their impacts, not only on production but also on food demand, prices, and thus food security. For example, IFPRI's International Model for Policy Analysis of Agricultural Commodities and Trade (IMPACT)<sup>2</sup> is a system of models that links information from climate models, crop simulation models, and water

1 See De Salvo et al. (2013) and Feng et al. (2023) for detailed descriptions of these types of models.

2 [www.ifpri.org/project/ifpri-impact-model/](http://www.ifpri.org/project/ifpri-impact-model/)

models with a core global, partial equilibrium, multimarket model focused on the agriculture sector (see Robinson et al. 2024). It links to the GLOBE CGE model to capture whole-economy impacts of climate change. IMPACT relies on GCMs produced by ISIMIP (Inter-Sectoral Impact Model Intercomparison Project) and based on CMIP (Coupled Model Intercomparison Project) data created to inform the reports of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Finally, it is important to note that IMPACT and similar modeling systems consider the impacts of temperatures and precipitation that affect crop productivity, but generally do not yet account for climate variability, extreme events (droughts, floods, and heat waves), sea level rise, or shifting pest and disease patterns. As a result, the aggregate modeled impacts summarized in the next section are likely conservative.

### **Modeling results: Impact of climate change**

Across all types of models, most analyses have focused on four major crops: maize, rice, soybeans, and wheat (although IMPACT includes a much larger set of crop and livestock commodities, including many that are important in LMICs). This reflects the importance of these crops, which provide half of total global calorie availability. The models show broad areas of agreement on the key impacts of climate change (De Salvo et al. 2013; Feng et al. 2023).

Table 4.1 summarizes the findings on the impact of climate change on crop yields, commodity prices, and TFP from modeling studies, concentrating on relatively comprehensive meta-analyses and reviews of research studies that summarize the results from many analyses, as well as two seminal individual papers on global historical yields and TFP effects that address impacts in LMICs (Lobell, Bänziger et al. 2011 and Ortiz-Bobea et al. 2021, respectively). The estimated impacts vary across models, due to differences in the models themselves and differences in assumptions on the severity of climate change, projections of economic and agricultural growth, and underlying parameters. For each cited paper in Table 4.1 that covers multiple studies, there are also differences across individual studies, resulting in a range of projections around the mean values shown.

### **Crop yields and total factor productivity**

There is substantial agreement among these studies that climate change is already having an appreciable negative impact on crop yields and TFP, and that it will continue to affect these key outcomes negatively to 2050 and

**TABLE 4.1** Impact of climate change on crop yields, prices, and agricultural total factor productivity (TFP), mean results

Type of model	Year	Global/Region	Crop	Impacts of climate change				Citation
				Without adaptation (%)		With adaptation (%)		
				Yield	Price	TFP	Yield	
Crop model	2050	Global	Maize, Rice, Soybeans, Wheat	-11 (mean)			-4.6 (mean)	Hasegawa et al. (2022) Meta-analysis, 202 studies
				-6.2 (median)			-1.6 (median)	
Crop model	Change from 1998 to 2084	Global	Maize	-24.1				Jägermeyr et al. (2021) Results from 12 crop models and 5 GCMs
			Soybeans	-2.1				
			Rice	1.7				
			Wheat	17.5				
Crop model	2050	Africa	Wheat	-17				Knox et al. (2012) Review of 52 studies
			Sorghum	-15				
			Millet	-10				
			Maize	-5				
			Maize	-16				
			Sorghum	-11				
Econometric model	2050	Low latitudes				-86*	Huang and Sim (2016) Review of 130 studies	
		Lower-middle latitudes				-71*		
		Higher-middle latitudes				-15*		
		Upper latitudes				0*		

\* Percent of studies that find negative impacts of climate change on crop yields.

Table 4.1 continued

Type of model	Year	Global/Region	Crop	Impacts of climate change				Citation
				Without adaptation (%)		With adaptation (%)		
				Yield	Price	TFP	Yield	
Crop models, econometric regression, and field-warming experiments	Future impact per each 1°C increase in mean global temperature	Global	Maize	-7.4				Zhao et al. (2017) Multiple studies
			Wheat	-6.0				
			Rice	-3.2				
			Soybean	-3.1				
Econometric model	1980 to 2008	Global	Maize	-3.8	18.9			Lobell, Bänziger, et al. (2011) <sup>a</sup>
			Wheat	-5.5	6.4			
Econometric model	1961 to 2020	Global				-21.0		Ortiz-Bobea et al. (2021) <sup>b</sup>
		Africa				-26 to -34		
		LAC				-26 to -34		
		North America				-15		
		Europe				-10		
		Coarse grains (mainly maize)						
Global economic model	2050	Global	Coarse grains (mainly maize)	-12.5	11.8			Nelson et al. (2014) Mean results from 10 global economic models
			Wheat	-9.9	15.9			
			Rice	-9.3	13.9			

**Note:** (a) Other studies of this type include Miao, Khanna, and Huang (2015); Schlenker and Roberts (2009); Lobell, Schlenker, and Costa-Roberts (2011); and Choi and Helmberger (1993). (b) Other studies of this type include Liang et al. (2017) and Xiang et al. (2022).

beyond. The reduced crop yields and TFP due to climate change raise crop prices and reduce food consumption, worsening food security (see below). The negative impacts tend to be greatest for maize, although not in all studies. Maize is highly sensitive to temperature fluctuations, especially during critical growth stages, and has a relatively high water requirement, making it vulnerable to drought conditions. The estimated mean global impacts of climate change on crop yields are generally in the range of  $-5$  percent to  $-15$  percent in 2050 compared to a no-climate change scenario. Although this may seem relatively small, these reductions can cost 5 to 10 years of crop yield growth for major commodities. As shown in Table 4.1, the impacts of climate change vary by region. Nearly all studies that assess regional differences find that losses are larger at lower latitudes, mainly in low-income countries that can least afford or adapt to these impacts.

### **Nutrient effects**

Recent findings show that climate change also affects the nutrient content of crops. According to the IPCC, while increased atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  relative to current levels is projected to boost crop yields ( $\text{CO}_2$  fertilization), it is also expected to significantly decrease the nutritional value of crops, particularly by lowering protein and key micronutrient density (the available nutrient content per unit of grain or other commodity) in staple grains like wheat and rice (Mbow et al. 2019). For example, a meta-study by Myers et al. (2014) found that wheat grown at 546–586 ppm atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ , compared with wheat grown at ambient levels, has 5.9–12.7 percent less protein, 5.2–7.5 percent less iron, and 3.7–6.5 percent less zinc (Mbow et al. 2019). Projections from IMPACT of per capita availability of nutrients in 2050 show that technological advances, market responses, and  $\text{CO}_2$  fertilization will all increase crop and livestock production and therefore global availability of dietary protein, iron, and zinc (Beach et al. 2019). However, these potential benefits are significantly offset by the adverse impacts of climate change on both agricultural productivity and nutrient density. A study that compared projections based on two different datasets found that both predict global dietary reductions in protein, iron, and zinc relative to levels associated with current  $\text{CO}_2$  emission levels, although the size of the declines differ ( $-4.1$  percent,  $-2.8$  percent, and  $-2.5$  percent, respectively, for one dataset;  $-2.9$  percent,  $-3.6$  percent, and  $-3.4$  percent, respectively, for the other) (Beach et al. 2019). The combined effects of elevated atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ , climate change, and associated nutrient reductions are projected to slow growth in nutrient availability for protein, zinc, and iron (Beach et al. 2019). Low-income nations already facing high

#### **Box 4.1 Modeling to inform policies for improved food security and climate change adaptation in the Philippines**

From 2014 to 2016, IFPRI and the CGIAR Research Programs on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security (CCAFS) and Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM) partnered with the Philippines' National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the country's top socioeconomic planning body, to assess the impacts of climate change on agriculture and food security and to examine policies and investments for adaptation. NEDA conducts macroeconomic forecasting, policy analysis, and research, playing a crucial role in shaping policies and investments for the agriculture sector and the broader economy to address climate change challenges. The project engaged key NEDA officials early on, ensuring that outputs from analysis and modeled scenarios were relevant to policies, plans, and investments. The modeling identified investments that can improve food security under climate change as well as policies that worsened outcomes, including rice import quotas. These outputs informed the preparation of the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022 and the 2019 Rice Tariffication Law. In 2016, training sessions were provided, focused on using IMPACT results to inform policies on investments, food security, and malnutrition. NEDA organized three sessions for 63 government staff (22 men, 41 women) to build regional capacity in modeling methodologies.

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**Source:** CGIAR (2018).

rates of nutrient deficiencies are likely to bear the greatest burden. Regardless of the baseline scenario used to project future consumption patterns, rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels will hinder progress in reducing global nutrient deficiencies. In fact, the nutrient impacts offset any benefits of CO<sub>2</sub> fertilization on the availability of protein, iron, and zinc (Beach et al. 2019). These findings are consistent with another study, which found that the nutrient densities of protein, iron, and zinc of major crops are likely to decline by 3–17 percent if the world reaches 550 ppm atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, resulting in an additional 175 million people who are zinc-deficient and 122 million who are protein-deficient worldwide in 2050, if dietary patterns do not change (Smith and Meyers 2018).

#### **Food security**

Climate change also reduces food security. The climate-change-related reductions in agricultural yields described above will be tempered, but not fully

offset, by expansion in crop areas as prices rise. The resulting net decline in agricultural production decreases food availability and further raises prices, leading to lower per capita incomes and greater hunger. By 2050, world commodity prices are projected to be 16–18 percent higher as a result of climate change, as compared with a no-climate-change scenario, making it more difficult for low-income consumers to afford healthy diets (Sulser et al. 2021). Estimates from IFPRI’s IMPACT model show that climate change will slow global progress toward ending hunger, leaving 78 million more people (a 19 percent increase) chronically hungry by 2050 compared to a no-climate-change scenario (Sulser et al. 2021). More than half of this increase is expected to occur in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Investments in climate adaptation**

The IMPACT model was used to evaluate the costs of adapting to climate change through investments in agriculture (Sulser et al. 2021). Offsetting the projected 78 million-person increase in hunger requires an increase in annual funding for international agricultural research from US\$1.62 billion to \$2.77 billion between 2015 and 2050. Additional investments of \$12.7 billion in water and \$10.8 billion in infrastructure per year are also required, totaling \$24.7 billion annually to address climate-driven hunger impacts. Other modeling studies suggest even higher costs for adaptation or mitigation to alleviate hunger; the diverse estimates reflect differences in study objectives, sectors covered, climate considerations, and methodologies (Fan et al. 2018; Mason-D’Croz et al. 2019; Rosegrant et al. 2022). For example, Germany’s Center for Global Development (ZEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimate that between \$39 billion and \$50 billion per year are needed to end hunger by 2030 (ZEF and FAO 2020). However, another study suggests that an investment of \$33 billion annually could not only end hunger but also double small-scale producer incomes by 2030 and keep agricultural GHG emissions aligned with the Paris Agreement targets (Laborde et al. 2020).

The impact of adaptation and mitigation investments could be enhanced, and the prospects for meeting global sustainability and development goals in 2030 increased by improvements in supporting policies and investments. These enabling conditions and specific policy approaches—including improved value chains, finance, extension, gender-responsive policies and investments, social protection, implementation of smart subsidies, and agro-ecological and landscape approaches—are discussed in other chapters of this report.

## **Assessing the vulnerability of households and individuals to climate change and options to respond**

Another body of policy research examines household and individual vulnerability to climate change and explores mechanisms to increase the resilience of the poor, women, and other vulnerable populations in the face of short- and long-term climate change impacts (see also Chapters 6 and 13).

### **Shift toward adaptation**

The impacts of climate change on agriculture are devastating for the livelihoods and well-being of small-scale producers in LMICs, who are reliant on natural resources and have limited capacity to adapt (Adger et al. 2003; Easterling et al. 2007; Morton 2007). While early efforts to address climate change emphasized the need for mitigation of GHG emissions, the IPCC's 2007 assessment report included a focus on adaptation. The report highlighted the inevitability of changes in climate that were "baked in" due to historic emissions and, thus, the urgent need for adaptation (IPCC 2007; Mertz et al. 2009; Solomon et al. 2009).

Agricultural adaptation is now a key priority in many low-income countries to protect the livelihoods and employment of large shares of the population and to reduce the risk of worsening food insecurity and hunger (Bizikova et al. 2015; UNEP 2024). In the 2010s, low-income countries began to engage in adaptation planning in a more coordinated way through the National Adaptation Plan process, recognizing that they were likely to experience the worst impacts of climate change. The process, which was established in 2010 and reinforced by the Paris Agreement in 2015 (Huq et al. 2004; Reid and Huq 2008), helped 171 countries (87 percent of parties to the UNFCCC) put adaptation plans in place by 2024, although the effectiveness of these plans is mixed and implementation often lags (UNEP 2024). Broadly speaking, key adaptation strategies emphasized in many of these plans include adjustment of planting dates, diversification of production, selection of resilient and/or stress tolerant crop varieties and animal species, improved irrigation and water management, adoption of precision agriculture and other resource conserving strategies, and expansion of climate information services.

Early policy research introduced several important concepts, including vulnerability, exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, that have guided the study and measurement of adaptation (Adger 2006; Bryan et al. 2000; Smit et al. 1999, 2001). This work identified human adaptation as a process of adjustment to long-term changes in climate (often in anticipation of these changes),

as distinct from coping with short-term climate variability, in order to minimize risks and take advantage of opportunities (Smithers and Smit 1997), while recognizing that effectively coping with climate shocks in the short-term may facilitate adaptation to long-term climate changes (Burton 1997). It also described the complexity of adaptation processes, which require actions at multiple scales and by multiple actors, as well as the varied forms of adaptation responses, which can be spontaneous or planned, anticipatory or reactive, and incremental or transformative (Kates et al. 2012; Smit et al. 2001).

### **Identifying hot spots**

As climate change has become a reality in many parts of the world, the critical role of smallholder farmers in LMICs in adapting to climate change has been widely recognized, given that smallholders (those with less than 2 ha of land) produce 30–34 percent of the global food supply (Ricciardi et al. 2018). Research focused on identifying and reducing risks, building resilience capacities, and coping and adaptation strategies for smallholders began to emerge in the early 2000s. Papers explored vulnerability to climate change and identified “hotspots” based on the level of exposure to climate change, sensitivity of agricultural production systems, communities, households, and individuals to its negative impacts, and adaptive capacity of farm households and regions (Deressa and Hassan 2009; Gbetibouo and Hassan 2005; Gbetibouo, Ringler, and Hassan 2010; Kurukulasuriya et al. 2006). More recent analyses of hotspots integrate gender, recognizing that entrenched inequalities limit women’s adaptive capacity (Koo et al. 2022; Lecoutere et al. 2023).

### **Farm-level adaptation**

Research also documented and classified autonomous farm-level adaptation to long-term climate change (that is, spontaneous actions taken by farmers) (Bryant et al. 2000; Smit 1996). This work looked at the types of strategies and innovations adopted by farmers, including new technologies (such as irrigation and new crop varieties) and management strategies (such as soil and water conservation measures, changing planting dates, or adjusting inputs to deal with climate-related challenges), and diversification on and off farm (Below et al. 2010; Jagnani et al. 2021).

Autonomous adaptation measures initiated at the farm level are important but largely incremental (as opposed to systematic and transformational). They are thus insufficient to address the challenges posed by climate change at scale without support from policies and investments to accelerate and deepen adaptation and ensure participation of many stakeholders (Adger et

al. 2005; Burton and Lim 2005; Smit and Skinner 2002; Thornton et al. 2018). Research has explored the determinants of farm-level adaptation in order to identify both constraints and entry points for interventions to facilitate greater uptake (Bryan et al. 2009, 2013b; Deressa et al. 2009a; Hassan and Nhemachena 2008; Silvestri et al. 2012). The key determinants identified include access to credit and climate information, land tenure security, and wealth status. Knowledge of these can inform policies and programs for managing climate risks and facilitating agricultural sector adaptation. Examples include the development of climate information services (Ziervogel et al. 2010) and insurance and bundled financial products (see Chapter 10) (Kramer 2023; Ndegwa et al. 2020), as well as social protection programs (see Chapter 11) (Tenzing 2019). IFPRI made an important contribution to this household-level research with a focus on how smallholder farmers' perceptions of long-term climate change affect their adoption of adaptation strategies (Gbetibouo et al. 2010; Deressa et al. 2011; Maddison 2007).

### **Emergence of climate-smart agriculture**

Research has emphasized the potential synergies between adaptation and mitigation goals and actions and encouraged more coordinated efforts to achieve both goals, as well as greater productivity (Ayers and Huq 2009; Rosenzweig and Tubiello 2007). While the early promise of carbon markets as an opportunity for low-income countries to be paid for contributing to mitigation goals in the agriculture sector has not produced the expected boon (Lipper and Zilberman 2018), this “win-win” option did increase interest in finding climate solutions that offer benefits for adaptation, mitigation, and smallholder farmer livelihoods (Bryan et al. 2010). In addition, the Paris Agreement requires countries to identify voluntary emissions reductions in the context of long-term low-emission development strategies, thus balancing mitigation and development goals (Waisman et al. 2019). This search for synergies led to the development of the climate-smart agriculture (CSA) framework, which facilitates evaluation of agricultural practices and climate change strategies across three goals—productivity (and profits), adaptation, and mitigation (FAO 2010; Lipper and Zilberman 2018). For example, in Kenya, a study identified several farm-level practices that support all three goals; these practices include integrated soil fertility management, improved livestock feeding, and irrigation and soil and water conservation in arid areas (Bryan et al. 2013a). Modeling-based approaches to assess the effectiveness of CSA practices have shown that widespread adoption of these practices at the global level can contribute to all three goals, while increasing food accessibility and

reducing hunger (De Pinto, Cenacchi et al. 2020). However, CSA is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Priorities for CSA vary based on the policy context, agroecological conditions, and farming systems among other factors, and different stakeholders often have different preferences regarding CSA outcomes (Khatri-Chhetri et al. 2017; Mwongera et al. 2017). The CSA framework has also been criticized as a set of purely technical solutions that ignore power dynamics that lead to inequitable distribution of benefits (Rosén et al. 2017; Taylor 2017).

### **Climate justice**

Climate justice discussions arose from recognition of the divide between high-income countries, which bear most of the responsibility for climate change, and those mostly low-income nations that are experiencing the worst impacts. Concerns initially focused on the imperative for wealthier countries to reduce GHG emissions and support adaptation investments (Hossain et al. 2021), leading to the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund at COP27 in 2022 (although the fund is still grossly underfunded) (see also Chapter 18).

More recently, greater attention is being paid to the unequal impacts of climate change—and of climate interventions—within countries and communities due to gender and other social differences (Bryan et al. 2024; FAO 2024). Entrenched inequalities in agrifood systems influence the distribution of climate change impacts in ways that increase the vulnerability of already marginalized groups, such as smallholder producers and other value chain actors, the poor, women, and Indigenous Peoples. Many of those affected by structural inequalities, who lack access to resources and services, are also least able to adapt to climate change impacts (Bryan et al. 2024). Even within the same household, individuals have different needs, preferences, and capacities to respond effectively to climate shocks and stressors (Kristjanson et al. 2017). These differences are driven by gender as well as other social identities, such as ethnicity, caste, and class (Djoudi et al. 2016) (see Box 4.2). Ensuring that resources and services are targeted to the most vulnerable groups (that is, through social protection programs and climate information and financial services); facilitating group-based approaches; addressing structural inequalities, such as women's unequal access to land or restrictive social norms; and ensuring that all stakeholders participate in policy processes are some approaches to addressing inequalities through climate action (Bryan et al. 2024). Implementing these measures also requires policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to have the capacity to design and implement equitable policies and programs.

#### **BOX 4.2 Gender in climate change research**

Women and men experience and respond to climate change impacts differently. Over the past decade, research by IFPRI and others has advanced our understanding of the linkages between gender and climate change, particularly gender and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) (Gardezi et al. 2021). This work has explored gendered differences in vulnerability (exposure, sensitivity, adaptive capacity) and adoption of climate change responses (and the ability to negotiate for preferred responses), as well as outcomes of climate change and response choices for well-being (Bryan et al. 2017; Kristjanson et al. 2017). Gender-differentiated impacts of climate change depend on many factors, including how climate change affects gendered asset dynamics, labor allocation, and control over income. Men and women tend to own different assets, in line with sociocultural norms, and draw on these assets in different ways in response to climate and other types of shocks (Quisumbing et al. 2018; Rakib and Matz 2016). Whose assets are affected can depend on a variety of factors, including the type of shock and the context. Extreme climate events also affect labor allocation in agri-food systems. These events cause both men's and women's labor contributions to decline, particularly under heat stress, but the declines are larger among men. This leads to a relative increase in women's agricultural labor burden under increasingly hazardous working conditions that have implications for their well-being (Lee et al. 2021; Nico and Azzarri 2024). In addition, *The Unjust Climate*, an FAO report to which IFPRI contributed, shows that women-headed households experience greater income losses as a result of extreme climate events, and women farmers suffer greater crop losses despite adopting climate-smart strategies at rates similar to men (FAO 2024). The report suggests that gender-responsive agricultural extension services are needed to enhance the effectiveness of women's adaptation efforts (see Chapter 8).

Our understanding of women's and men's differing experiences with climate shocks and stressors, access to climate information, and awareness and adoption of CSA practices is enhanced by collection and analysis of intrahousehold data (Bryan et al. 2021; Twyman et al. 2014). Findings from Bangladesh, Kenya, Senegal, and Uganda show that while both men and women are adjusting their farming practices in response to climate change, women tend to be less aware of CSA practices and less likely to adopt them. However, when women have access to climate information and are informed about CSA practices, they are just as likely or, in some cases, more likely to adopt these practices, particularly when they pertain to their livelihood roles. Research from India, Kenya, and Uganda also shows that targeting women with information, including through innovative approaches such as

video-based extension, can be an effective way to increase their awareness and adoption of CSA practices (see Chapter 8) (Barooah et al. 2023; Kato et al. 2023; Ndegwa et al. 2023). However, other constraints, such as lack of access to labor or capital, can limit adoption of some practices despite awareness and interest.

Women's empowerment is also an important vehicle for increasing climate resilience and managing climate risks (Bryan et al. 2024; Huyer et al. 2021). For example, a study from Bangladesh shows that women's input into agricultural decisions and participation in groups increases crop diversification away from rice and toward more fruit and vegetable production, with positive implications for both climate resilience and dietary diversity (De Pinto, Seymour et al. 2020). Women also play key roles in maintaining food security and nutrition under climate change, including through their roles along nutrition-sensitive value chains (such as dairy products) (Kane et al. 2024) and in minimizing food safety risks, which are increasing with climate change (Brown 2018).

## **Looking forward: Improving understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities**

### **Better identification of hotspots**

Some critical consequences of climate change's impacts on agriculture are not captured by the global averages from models, because they will be most damaging in specific locations ("hotspots") or during extreme events, (Jägermeyr et al. 2021; Rosegrant et al. 2024). In addition to reducing productivity, climate change can also amplify agriculture's environmental impacts, including GHG emissions, water use and scarcity, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss, increase nitrogen and phosphorus pollution as a result of increased fertilizer use, and cause more frequent and severe pest outbreaks, leading to higher pesticide use and pollution (Yang et al. 2024).

Crop modeling helps identify locations that are particularly vulnerable to higher yield losses for any given crop under climate change (Jalloh et al. 2013; Hachigonta et al. 2013; Nelson et al. 2010; Thomas 2024; Thomas et al. 2018; Waithaka et al. 2013). Combining these data with information on the local importance of the crop can systematically identify hotspots, a critical step to assist planners in pinpointing investments geographically for the development of climate-resilient cultivars and to support farmers in growing crops better suited to emerging climate patterns. Identifying where these areas of

high exposure and sensitivity overlap with populations that are more susceptible to harm—based on their wealth status, gender inequality, and degree of malnutrition, among other factors—can improve targeting of resources to the most vulnerable.

### **Advancing models to better understand climate change impacts**

Uncertainty about the future climate—due to differences among climate models and emissions scenarios—and increased variability and intensity of precipitation due to higher temperatures make it reasonable to expect increasingly frequent extreme climate events. However, current models are inconsistent in projecting increased variability, and modeling the impact of extreme events on food security and agricultural productivity is challenging, given the current limitations of biophysical models. As computer processing speeds increase, doors are opening to allow better modeling of the changes in frequency of extreme events (Thomas, Robertson et al. 2022; Thomas, Schlosser et al. 2022), which will make it possible to compare the effectiveness of various interventions, not simply in raising mean yields but also in mitigating the impact of such climate shocks. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done in this area. Some recent efforts have quantified feedback mechanisms that have not been previously incorporated into most bioeconomic models, including measures of livestock productivity losses (Hertel and de Lima 2020; Thornton et al. 2022). However, aquaculture still needs to be incorporated into bioeconomic models of climate change impact.

An important area for further research is the impact of climate change on labor productivity losses due to heat stress. While substantial work is being done on heat stress in non-agricultural settings, little is known about the impact in the agriculture sector, where heat stress is likely worse because most work is done outdoors (Hertel and de Lima 2020). One recent study addresses this gap, revealing that some regions worldwide are already experiencing significant declines in agricultural workers' ability to perform physical labor due to heat exposure during critical crop-growing periods. The resulting declines in worker productivity will exacerbate challenges by increasing the demand for labor, reducing output, and driving up food prices, which will place additional strain on vulnerable populations (Nelson et al. 2024). Further research is needed to understand these impacts, as well as study of potential adaptation strategies, which could include shifting to crops that thrive in cooler seasons, increasing mechanization, and providing more access to shade, drinking water, and body-cooling measures (Nelson et al. 2024).

Substantial work has been done on the direct climate impacts on economic growth. One study shows that economic productivity is nonlinear with temperatures across all countries, peaking at an annual average of 13°C and declining sharply at higher temperatures (Burke et al. 2015). This relationship is consistent globally and evident in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities across developed and developing nations. Other work finds that higher temperatures significantly reduce economic growth in poor countries, lowering growth rates in addition to output levels, and broadly affect agriculture, industry, and political stability (Dell et al. 2012).<sup>3</sup> These findings highlight climate's role in economic development and, like the results on TFP and agricultural yields, point to substantial negative impacts on poorer nations. This work has not generally been incorporated into bioeconomic modeling, despite the important implications for household food security. Additional work on the relationship between economic growth under climate change in agricultural growth and general economic growth would be valuable. Likewise, in addition to the work described above on the decline of nutrient availability in foods due to the CO<sub>2</sub> fertilization effect, more research is needed on the implications for nutrition outcomes and the identification of interventions that could alleviate negative impacts of climate change on nutrition.

### **Challenges for adaptation**

While the adverse impacts of climate change on agricultural production are many and severe, there are also many opportunities for adaptation that should be taken up by researchers and policymakers. Some of these adaptations occur across geographic scales—shifting maize, for example, to cooler locations, changing planting dates, or identifying cultivars more suited to the future climate. Others can be very local, such as barns with cooling for livestock or mechanization to replace agricultural labor. However, there is little evidence that adaptation measures, even if they are locally effective, are sufficient in the aggregate. Using comprehensive panel data across diverse geographies and a wide range of outcomes—including mortality, agricultural productivity, crime, conflict, economic output, and damage from flooding and tropical cyclones—a recent study finds limited evidence of effective adaptation (Burke et al. 2024). Among 21 outcomes studied, 6 show statistically significant

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3 See also Barrage (2020); Burke, Davis, and Diffenbaugh (2018); Casey, Fried, and Goode (2022, 2023); Diffenbaugh and Burke (2019); Donadelli et al. (2017); Golosov et al. (2014); Hassler et al. (2019); Letta and Tol (2019); and Nordhaus and Boyer (2003) for the whole economy.

declines in sensitivity to climate change, 5 show increased sensitivity, and the others show no significant change. This suggests that the adaptation measures studied in the paper have not significantly reduced overall climate impacts. To reduce future damage, it is crucial to identify scalable, effective adaptation strategies (Burke et al. 2024).

Looking ahead, the impacts of climate change will be compounded by other major changes. In many countries, population growth is increasing demand for food and often for agricultural land to produce that food. This is likely to create pressure to expand agriculture into forests or other natural areas, leading to further increases in GHG emissions and possibly to losses in biodiversity, ecosystem services, and tourism. As populations grow and change, agricultural labor may move to other sectors, either seasonally or permanently. In response to this pressure, farms may consolidate, further freeing labor for agricultural processing or shifting it to manufacturing or services. Within households, changes in income sources can lead to reallocation of labor, with implications for the time requirements of both women and youth. Combining climate modeling and household survey analysis allows us to address these multidimensional analytical challenges. Country-level modeling enables researchers to project shifts among sectors, and impacts on food security, poverty, and gross domestic product (GDP). Providing this foresight to decision-makers can inform policymaking for adaptation and mitigation as well as food security.

### **Increasing the resilience of the poor, women, and other vulnerable populations**

The vulnerability of marginalized populations can be expected to intensify as the impacts of climate change become more severe, unless policies, investments, and actions adequately address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on these groups. To ensure that climate action yields more equitable outcomes, while accelerating progress toward adaptation and low-emission development pathways, more research is needed on effective mechanisms to address climate injustice. Finding ways to make climate governance at multiple scales more representative and inclusive of the perspectives and knowledge of vulnerable communities will be essential. For example, women's leadership in climate governance and the inclusion of grassroots women's organizations in climate decision-making processes can ensure that policies, investments, and interventions reflect women's diverse needs and priorities (Morgan et al. 2024). Frameworks such as the Women's Empowerment in Agrifood Systems Governance (WEAGov) can be used to measure the extent of women's

inclusion and leadership in climate governance (see Chapter 6) (Ragasa et al. 2022). Collective, group-based approaches are powerful vehicles for strengthening women's empowerment and building resilience to climate change (Cabot Venton et al. 2021), including by increasing access to public entitlements (Kumar et al. 2021) and ensuring that agricultural information reaches women (Alvi et al. 2021) (see Chapters 8 and 14). But more research is needed on the scope for these platforms to accelerate climate action while reducing inequalities and on the factors that determine the effectiveness of more inclusive climate governance.

To avoid maladaptation, climate action to increase resilience must go hand-in-hand with addressing inequalities and facilitating empowerment of vulnerable groups. Action must include targeted interventions that build the resilience capacities of the most vulnerable people to respond to current and future climate-related challenges, including displacement and migration (see Chapter 13). Promising interventions include those that reduce climate risks, such as crop insurance and financial products tailored to smallholder producers (see Chapter 10), including women, and social protection programs that also promote adaptation and mitigation objectives (see Chapter 11) (Hidrobo et al. 2024; Timu and Kramer 2021). However, more research is needed on the effectiveness of these interventions in increasing resilience and the extent to which they can reduce inequalities and facilitate empowerment. More research is also needed on mechanisms to ensure that climate finance for adaptation efforts, such as loss and damage funds, and mitigation actions that reach and benefit the most vulnerable agrifood system actors, are not diverted by powerful interests (see Chapters 15 and 18). Policy research must also move beyond a focus on agricultural production to include building resilience along entire agrifood value chains, especially for micro, small, and medium enterprises that play important roles in supply chains and can contribute to low-emission development (see Chapter 7) (Liverpool-Tasie and Parkhi 2020).

Last, while the evidence on inequalities in climate change impacts, adaptive capacities, and policy processes has grown considerably over the past decade, much of this evidence comes from local case studies. The FAO's *Unjust Climate* report has begun to quantify the differential impacts of climate change across LMICs—but key gaps remain (FAO 2024). For example, many analyses have been done at the level of the household head, ignoring intrahousehold differences in climate change impacts. More individual-level data are needed for monitoring adaptation progress among the most vulnerable groups and for more effective targeting of interventions.

## Conclusions

Climate change will slow progress on food and nutrition security, with impacts varying by location, time, and scale. To counter the impact of climate change, investments in increasing productivity must be a high priority. As an example, the African Union recently approved the 10-year Strategy and Action Plan for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), reaffirming the commitments of member states to use 10 percent of public spending to finance agriculture with the goal of achieving 6 percent annual growth of agricultural GDP (see Chapter 19). Follow-through and focusing on productivity investments not only by the African Union but also by donors, international agencies, and governments around the world will be essential.

To increase the effectiveness of larger investments in productivity and to achieve complementary objectives, a number of additional actions should be taken. Greater effort is needed to integrate climate considerations into agricultural and food policies, national planning, and budgets, while also designing climate interventions that support gender equality and nutrition. Many adaptation and mitigation options address both climate and food security constraints, such as risk, uncertainty, imperfect markets, and lack of credit or insurance. For instance, redirecting subsidies for fertilizer, water, and energy into productivity-enhancing investments could drive agricultural growth and reduce GHG emissions (see Chapters 3 and 18) (Rosegrant et al. 2022). However, to be effective, climate solutions must be tailored to local contexts through inclusive planning processes that integrate local knowledge, values, and diverse perspectives. This has implications for the ways in which research is conducted (that is, in partnership with local research institutes and taking into consideration the priorities of diverse stakeholders) and policy decisions are made. Nature-based climate solutions, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and natural water storage, can both contribute to reducing GHG emissions and also increase availability of safe water resources, make air safer to breathe, and increase food security.

Greater attention is being given to the unequal impacts of climate change—and climate interventions—due to poverty, gender, and other social differences. It is also recognized that climate interventions risk exacerbating these inequalities if they do not address resource gaps and prioritize solutions that meet the needs of the most vulnerable. More effective interventions would integrate technical solutions with enabling and empowering measures and approaches, such as expanding information and financial services, promoting inclusive governance arrangements, and addressing constraints to women's participation.

Future work must go beyond measuring and predicting biophysical and socioeconomic impacts to integrate adaptation and mitigation into development agendas and prioritize actions that advance development goals including food security, better nutrition, and gender equality. To prevent maladaptation, more research is needed to identify and assess interventions that enhance nutritional outcomes and build resilience in vulnerable groups, especially women and the poor. This will require better data collection, monitoring, and evaluation efforts to track progress toward these outcomes as climate actions are scaled up.

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