



International Crops Research Institute
for the Semi-Arid Tropics



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Dryland Systems

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COP21: Indian women leading the fight against climate change

Hyderabad | Derasar village, Rajasthan, India (26 November 2015) — As France gears up to welcome over 40,000 delegates, including world leaders like U.S. President Barack Obama, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping for the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference — twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21), the livelihoods of millions of dryland farmers across Africa and India are affected by climate related problems. But there are some success stories where farmers are leading the way and are finding potential ways to fight climate change.

According to the recent study by Lanzhou University in China, the dryland area of the world continues to expand by global warming, and if global emissions continue to rise, dryland area is expected to cover 56 percent of the world's land surface by 2100.

In the deserts of Rajasthan, India, women farmers are adopting farming methods, which show there is hope to combat climate change impact in the drylands, the ecosystems most adversely affected, and move out of poverty.

The Thar desert, spread over an area of 320,000 sq km, covers 60% of the state. The region faces water scarcity for 9 to 11 months in a year and frequent droughts (1 in 2.5 years).

These efforts are part of the [CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems](#), where work is underway in three states of India (Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) to empower farmers and local institutions to build resilient and sustainable farming systems that cope with the vagaries of current and future climate.

As [reported by Al Jazeera](#), Women leaders like Mrs [Mani](#) and Mrs [Rameshwari](#) from the Derasar village in Rajasthan, have been leaders in their community and taken on many innovations such as improved crop varieties including pearl millet and other crops suited to the region; fruit trees to provide nutrition and income; constructing embankments to capture rainfall and prevent runoff and soil erosion; and planting grasses and fodder trees to provide fodder for cattle.

Interestingly, new institutional arrangements have been implemented to enable communities to better manage common property resources such as the common grazing lands or to form women's self-help groups to weigh and market livestock for higher income.

This success is due to the partnership of different organizations coming together to work for a common cause. Local community and a grassroots organisation [GRAVIS](#) (Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti) along with scientific expertise from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics ([ICRISAT](#)) worked closely with the local community. Funding has also been critical coming from [CGIAR donors](#) around the world under the CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems.

“The strategy takes women’s needs into account by working directly with them. Women are empowered to take charge of their lives and reduce the vulnerability of the communities living in these harsh environments.” says Dr Shalander Kumar, Scientist, ICRISAT.

Launching video stories of women leaders who are successfully coping with climate change in the drylands:

Mrs Mani: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dB41x1SLlc&feature=youtu.be>

Mrs Rameshwari: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNcqofUsbaE&feature=youtu.be&t=1m49s>

See images at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/icrisatimages/albums/72157660946436199>

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About ICRISAT

The **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics** (ICRISAT) is a non-profit, non-political organization that conducts agricultural research for development in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa with a wide array of partners throughout the world. Covering 6.5 million square kilometers of land in 55 countries, the semi-arid tropics have over 2 billion people, and 644 million of these are the poorest of the poor. ICRISAT innovations help the dryland poor move from poverty to prosperity by harnessing markets while managing risks – a strategy called Inclusive Market- Oriented development (IMOD). ICRISAT is headquartered in Patancheru, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, with two regional hubs and six country offices in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a member of the CGIAR Consortium.

About ICRISAT: www.icrisat.org; For ICRISAT’s scientific information see: <http://EXPLOREit.icrisat.org>

About Drylands Systems

The **CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems** aims to improve the lives of 1.6 billion rural people and mitigate land and resource degradation in over 3 billion hectares covering the world’s dry areas. Dryland Systems engages in integrated agricultural systems research to address key socioeconomic and biophysical constraints that affect food security, equitable and sustainable land and natural resource management and the livelihoods of poor and marginalized dryland communities. The program unifies 8 CGIAR Centers and uses unique partnership platforms to bind together scientific research results with the skills and capacities of national agricultural research systems (NARS), advanced research institutes (ARIs), non-governmental and civil society organizations, the private sector, and other actors to test and develop practical innovative solutions for dryland farming communities. This program is led by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a member of the CGIAR Consortium. For more information please visit <http://drylandsystems.cgiar.org/>

CGIAR is a global agriculture research partnership for a food secure future. Its science is carried out by 15 research Centers who are members of the CGIAR Consortium in collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations. www.cgiar.org