

Study: Food crisis imminent within next decade if no change to climate policy

September 12 2012



Research released today shows that within the next 10 years large parts of Asia can expect increased risk of more severe droughts, which will impact regional and possibly even global food security.

The report, led by the University of Leeds and published by the UK-based Centre for Low Carbon Futures, highlights China, Pakistan and Turkey as the most seriously affected major producers of wheat and [maize](#) and urges policymakers to focus attention on climate change adaptation to avert an imminent [food crisis](#).

On average, across Asia, droughts lasting longer than three months will be more than twice as severe in terms of their [soil moisture](#) deficit compared to the 1990-2005 period. This is cause for concern as China and India have the world's largest populations and are Asia's largest [food producers](#).

The research was led by Professor Piers Forster from the School of Earth and Environment at the University of Leeds, who is also a lead author on [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) reports that have directly informed UN [climate negotiations](#) of the latest science. The study was based on climate change projections from 12 leading climate modelling centres around the world and finds clear signals of climate change emerging within the next 10 years.

Commenting on the results of the analysis Dr Lawrence Jackson, a co-author of the report, said: "Our work surprised us when we saw that the threat to food security was so imminent; the increased risk of severe droughts is only 10 years away for China and India. These are the world's largest populations and food producers; and, as such, this poses a real threat to food security."

Prof Forster said: "The message for policymakers is clear. The threat to food production in Asia from [drought](#) risk brought on by climate change could be felt in the next 10-15 years. Given the slow rate of progress achieved over the 20 years up to the recent United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), we cannot wait for actions to address the changes in the physical climate if we want to feed the growing Asian population and limit impact on global food security. Immediate actions are needed to achieve more sustainable use of water supplies and enhance adaptive capacity."

Jon Price, Director of the Centre for Low Carbon Futures, said: "We commissioned this new study because until now most projections on

food security and drought have been to the 2050s - far out of range for most policy makers to contemplate. Our report projects impacts for the 2020s. It shows in this period we will see marked increase in drought severity across much of Asia."

He added: "This new work takes a very different approach to traditional 50 year timescale global scale modelling by highlighting decisions and actions that need to be addressed immediately if we are to avoid the perfect storm on the horizon. What's new is that we are presenting evidence that drought will impact food production in the near term meaning policy makers no longer have to wait to make crucial decisions."

The report *Food Security: Near future projections of the impact of drought in Asia* is available online at www.lowcarbonfutures.org .

Provided by University of Leeds

Citation: Study: Food crisis imminent within next decade if no change to climate policy (2012, September 12) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-09-food-crisis-imminent-decade-climate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.