

## Current Affairs 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 by Saurabh Pandey

### Essequibo

- Venezuela's move to hold a referendum on whether it should exercise sovereignty over Essequibo, a vast, oil rich disputed region that is now part of neighbouring Guyana, has cut open old wounds and inflamed tensions between the South American nations.



- Venezuela has always retained claims over Essequibo, which it says was stolen when the north south border was drawn by colonial powers over a century ago.
- In 1966, Venezuela and the U.K. entered into a temporary Geneva Agreement on the border (Guyana was a British colony) to maintain the status quo while seeking to find a practical, peaceful and satisfactory solution for all.
- Guyana, the only English speaking country in Latin America, maintains that the 1899 border agreement between international arbitrators (from Britain, Russia and the U.S.) is final and approached the International Court of Justice in 2018, requesting a ruling.



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- Venezuela on the other side has always argued that it was not part of the 1899 agreement, which it calls null and void.
- The Hindu

### Change in agri food system

- report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), published earlier this month, has laid bare the staggering hidden costs of our global agrifood systems, surpassing an astonishing \$10 trillion.
- In middle income countries like India, these costs constitute nearly 11% of the GDP, which manifests as higher poverty, environmental harm, and health related impacts, including undernourishment and unhealthy dietary patterns.
- The report blames “unsustainable business as usual activities and practices” for these escalating costs, pointing to a need to transform agri-food systems.
- One way to do so is to shift to multi-cropping systems that have the potential to protect farmers’ well-being, improve nutritional outcomes for our communities, and positively impact ecological health.

### What are the impacts of intensive agriculture?

- Impressive improvements in agricultural productivity have been achieved in India over the last five decades by mainstreaming mono-cropping systems and chemical intensive farming practices.
- The Green Revolution focused on the marketing of high yielding varieties of paddy and wheat on agricultural lands, which now constitute more than 70% of India’s agricultural production.
- The infusion of seeds purchased from multinational corporations and fertilizers undermined seed sovereignty, dismantled Indigenous knowledge systems, and fuelled a shift from diverse crop varieties and staples such as pulses and millets to monoculture plantations.
- This trend also compromised the nutritional needs of households and resulted in adverse ecological consequences including excessive extraction of groundwater.
- This privatization and deregulation of agricultural inputs also increased indebtedness among agrarian households.

### Which are the crops being favoured?

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- Under the National Food Security Act 2013, 65% of households (around 800 million people) in India are legally assured a right to food at subsidized rates through the Public Distribution System and welfare programmes such as the Integrated Child Development Services and the Midday Meal Scheme.
  - To meet this requirement, the procurement of food crops is coordinated by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), which is required to maintain a central pool of buffer stock and to procure, transport, and store food grain stocks in the country.
  - However, this procurement policy heavily favours rice and wheat.
  - At the same time, other water-intensive cash crops like sugarcane and areca nut have also flourished under policies favouring investments in dams and canal irrigation (favourable for sugarcane) and free electricity for bore wells (favourable for areca nut).
  - This trend threatens food security and the production of nutritional crops.
  - The expansion of sugarcane cultivation affects biodiversity, increases the pressure on groundwater resources, and contributes to air and water pollution.
  - And ironically, small and marginal farmers in India are among the most food and nutrition insecure.
- How can crop diversification help?**
- A systemic shift in food regimes, from local to global value chains, is essential.
  - The starting point for addressing these complex systemic issues could arise from local efforts, such as the diversification of farms.
  - Diversified multi-cropping systems, rooted in agro-ecology principles, could be a viable solution to revitalize degraded land and soil.
  - Practices known by various names locally, like 'akkadi saalu' in Karnataka, involve intercropping with a combination of legumes, pulses, oilseeds, trees, shrubs, and livestock.
  - But the FAO report says that there are substantial "hidden costs" associated with the current systems which need to be factored into long-term evaluations of income.
  - Moreover, millets, whose yield per hectare is comparable to those of rice and wheat, are also more nutritious, grow in semi-arid conditions without

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burdening groundwater tables, require minimal input, and provide a diversified food basket.

- While crop diversification will involve some loss of productivity using a narrow metric of kg/Ha, it would preserve natural capital and allow farmers to become nutritionally secure

### How can farmers transition?

- Transition needs to be systematic, allowing farmers to adjust gradually.
- For instance, moving from chemical intensive practices to non-pesticide management, then adopting natural farming practices, can reduce input costs.
- Farmers can diversify income through value addition, incorporating livestock and poultry
- A visual representation of a diversified farm involves allocating 70% for commercial crops, 20% for food and fodder, and 10% for environmental services like oilseeds (acting as trap crops).
- Over time, the fraction of commercial crops could be lowered to 50% and border crops could be replaced with locally suitable tree species for fruits and fodder.

- Integrating livestock rearing could further improve incomes.

- addressing challenges related to local seeds, institutional arrangements for market access, drudgery, and the need for farm labour is crucial when envisioning such a transition.

- The Hindu

### Cauvery delta agriculture change

- The reference year for cultivation is 2018-2019 it emerges that the delta has declined as a hub of rice cultivation in the State, coinciding with the fall in the availability of water, caused mainly by changes in water sharing arrangements between Karnataka, the source of the Cauvery, and Tamil Nadu.
- “During the ‘green revolution’ years of the 1970s and 1980s the region changed from a single crop region to a double cropped region
- Agriculture and irrigation policy did not address the challenges that came from a fall in water supply from the Cauvery.
- Neither were crops suitable for a new water regime introduced, nor were micro level irrigation systems modernized.

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- With the droughts in the delta in 2000, 2002, 2008, 2012 and 2016, and floods and devastation caused by Cyclone Gaja in 2018, it is clear that the region “needs crop regimes and agricultural policy that are suited to a region of intermittent drought and cyclonic activity.”
- "In the Atlantic and in the Southern hemisphere (Indian Ocean and South Pacific), tropical cyclones receive names in alphabetical order, and women and men's names are alternated.
- In the Northern Indian Ocean, nations began utilizing a new method for naming tropical cyclones in 2000; the names are listed alphabetically by country and are gender-neutral,".

### The Hindu

#### Michaung cyclone

#### Why is the cyclone named as Michaung?

- The name of the cyclone ‘Michaung’ was proposed by Myanmar, which signifies resilience and fortitude.
- This is the sixth cyclone to develop in the Indian Ocean this year and the fourth to form in the Bay of Bengal.
- Earlier, the Indian Meteorological Department had predicted that Cyclone Michaung was expected to form in the southwest Bay of Bengal

#### How are cyclones named?

- The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and member countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission (ESCAP) are responsible for naming each tropical cyclone.
- The names of cyclones depend on the regional rules.



### The Hindu