

How the new farm laws undermine sustainability and equity

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- More than 3 lakh farmers have committed suicide since 1995.
- Climate crisis is aggravating the crisis in agriculture.

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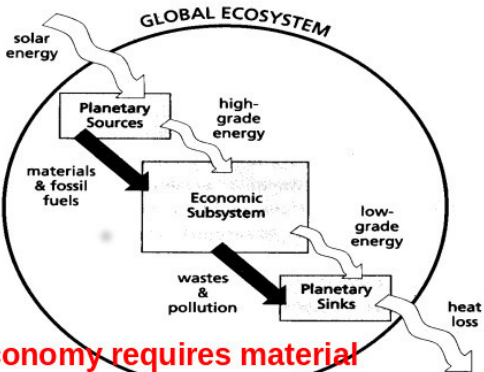
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- *Loss of employment and further concentration of wealth*
- *Adverse effect on soil fertility and climate change*

Economic system as part of a Global Ecosystem



Economy requires material and energy throughputs

Figure 1: Economy as a subsystem of the global ecosystem

Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity

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- *Biocapacity* is the biologically productive area available *per capita* or for a community, region or all of humanity to generate on a sustainable basis renewable resources for its use and to absorb its wastes.

Global Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity

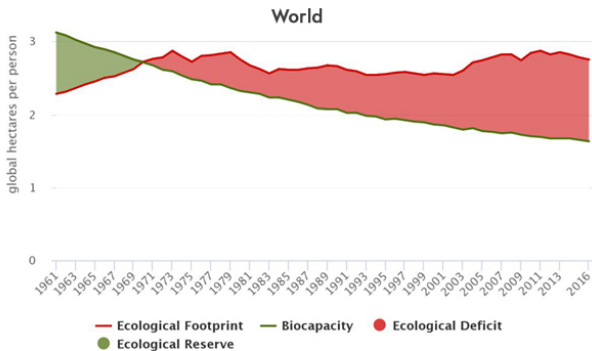


Figure 2: Trends of *per capita* values of *Ecological Footprint* and *Biocapacity* globally (Source: Global Footprint Network; <https://data.footprintnetwork.org>)

India's Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity

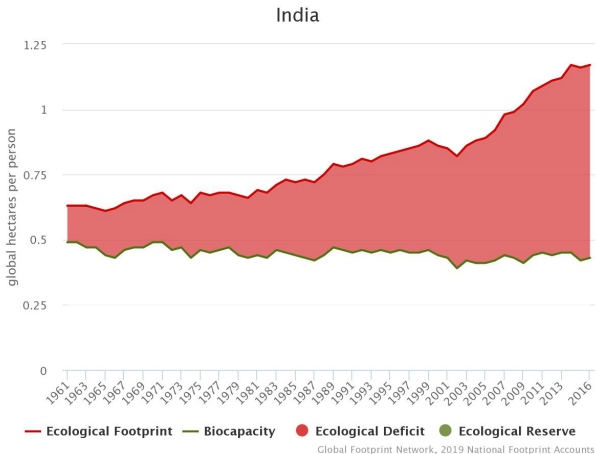


Figure 3: Trends of *per capita* values of *Ecological Footprint* and *Biocapacity* of India (Source: Global Footprint Network; <https://data.footprintnetwork.org>)

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- Exploitative use of natural resources must be curbed instead of encouraged in pursuit of GDP growth.
- Agriculture has a role not just in providing food and employment but also in eco-restoration.

Should we still pursue growth?

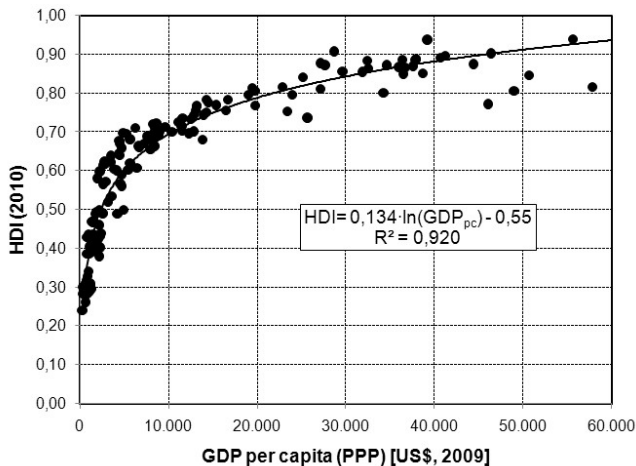


Figure 4: HDI vs per capita GDP (Source: Data from UNDP, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries> (2016))

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Human Welfare and Ecological Footprints compared

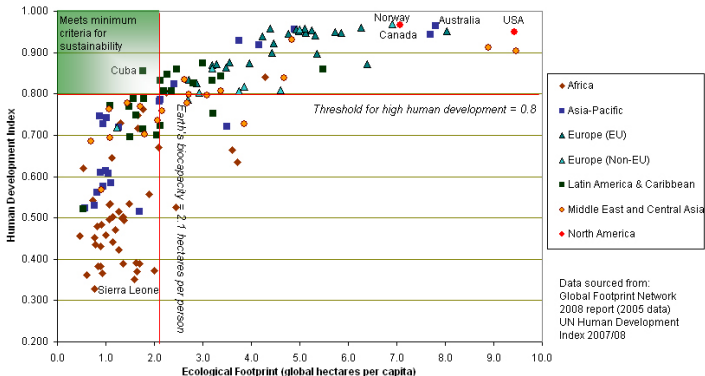


Figure 5: HDI vs *per capita* Ecological Footprint (Source: Global Footprint Network, 2008 report)

Suggested policy measures

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- Encroachment on natural ecosystems must be stopped and degraded ecosystems must be allowed to recover.
- Diversion of agricultural land for industrial purposes must be stopped.
- The trend of migration of people from villages to cities and from agriculture to other sectors of the economy must be reversed.
- Though *per capita* carbon footprint of India is far below the global average, our remaining quota for use of fossil fuels must be used for building infrastructure for sustainability rather than for consumption.

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- Instead of subsidising manufacturing and service sectors in pursuit of GDP growth, taxes must be imposed on draining of biocapacity. The revenues earned from such taxes must be invested in providing attractive minimum support prices to farmers.
- Instead of subsidising artificial fertilisers, tax must be imposed on the carbon emission associated with its manufacture and transport. A minimum income guarantee must be given to farmers making a transition to ecological farming during the transition period.

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- Land use management must be done at the level of micro-watersheds. Pooling of land for farming in cooperatives must be encouraged. The economy of farming suffers when labour is commodified.

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- Our policies must encourage movement of people from urban to rural areas and from other sectors to agriculture.
- Ecological agriculture must be promoted.
- We must learn from the experience of Cuba after the collapse of USSR.

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- What is lacking is not science and technology but the necessary social values and politics needed to dismantle prevailing power structures.