

# Weekly Livelihoods Update

17 October 2018

- ✚ **Global Status of Agroecology:** Over the last decade, agroecology has rapidly moved from the margins and taken centre stage in global discussions on environment and development. Institutions like the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization increasingly argue that agroecology can significantly help alleviate hunger and poverty as well as contribute to meeting other sustainable development goals. In this context, the history and practices of agroecology are outlined, and some of the ecological, social, economic, and political challenges for transformation to agroecology and food sovereignty have been identified. United Nations (UN) hosted a major international symposium on agroecology in April 2018, which affirmed that agroecology is key to transforming food and agricultural systems and achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (FAO 2018). This growing international recognition is good news for farmers and social movements which argue for agroecological approaches to food, farming, and land use. However, the meanings of agroecology are now increasingly interpreted in different ways by different people and interest groups. To help better understand the increasingly contested nature of agroecology, this paper briefly focuses on the history of agroecology and the visions of modernity and/or tradition it is associated with. It then explores the practices, potential, and challenges of agroecological approaches that seek to transform—rather than conform with—the dominant agri-food regime. [For further reading: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/41/review-environment-and-development/global-status-agroecology.html>]
- ✚ **Gender diversity is likely to boost productivity growth: IMF study:** Gender diversity is likely to boost productivity growth, including in countries like India, as women bring new skills to the workplace, according to the IMF. The progress has been made in increasing female labour force participation in the past two decades but the pace has been uneven and large gaps remain, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a research paper. The paper asserted that gender diversity is likely to be beneficial to productivity growth, including countries like India, because women bring new skills to the workplace. Reducing female underemployment should yield greater gains than an equivalent increase in male employment: gender diversity brings benefits all its own, it said. "Women bring new skills to the workplace. This may reflect social norms and their impact on upbringing, social interactions, as well as differences in risk preference and response to incentives, for example," said the latest IMF discussion note 'The Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: New Mechanisms, New Evidence'. "As such, there is an economic benefit from diversity that is, from bringing women into the labour force over and above the benefit resulting from simply having more workers," the IMF said. [For further reading: <https://www.theweek.in/news/biz-tech/2018/10/09/gender-diversity-is-likely-to-boost-productivity-growth-imf-study.html>]
- ✚ **Recent Downfall of the Indian Rupee:** Assessing the trends in India's balance of payments, it is argued that a combination of substantial trade deficit and a significant current account deficit financed predominantly by fickle portfolio investments could have made the rupee vulnerable to the moods of the global capital market. India's huge dependence on oil imports along with high gold and electronic imports could also have played their roles in making the exchange rate volatile. The exchange rate of the Indian rupee has always been an emotive issue in India and has often

tended to have generated more heat than light. The current episode of the downfall of the rupee is no exception. After all, the movement of the Indian rupee/United States (US) dollar exchange rate from less than Rs.65 in early April 2018 to almost Rs.73 by the end of September 2018 has turned out to be substantial. Owing to the underlying issues, opinions in this context have a tendency to differ substantially. But, over the last year, the US economy has been showing signs of healthy growth. The job figures are pointing towards historically low un-employment figures and the gross domestic product (GDP) is poised to grow close to 3% in 2019 (IMF 2018). Consequently, the US Fed has started pushing up the reference interest rates and with the recent increase on 26 September, the benchmark rates have crossed the 2% mark for the first time since 2008. [ For further reading: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/41/commentary/recent-downfall-indian-rupee.html>]

✚ **India needs strong leadership to boost growth:** India needs strong and decisive leadership at the Centre to promote growth, get rid of poverty and transform the country into a developed nation, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said Tuesday. With general elections due early next year, Jaitley said the country does not need an 'unstable coalition' government and individuals who lack understanding of policies at the helm. Swift decision-making of the Modi government has helped in handling the IL&FS crisis, Jaitley said while addressing the 98th annual session of Assocham."India needs a government and leadership which has absolute clarity about the direction so that this unique position which IMF refers to as a sweet spot in the world, this sweet spot we continue to occupy for next two decades. If you are able to do that, we can get rid of the curse of poverty and in our lifetime probably see India as a developed country," he said. Indian economy grew at 8.2 per cent in the April-June quarter of the current fiscal. It grew at 6.7 per cent in 2017-18 fiscal. [For further reading: <https://www.theweek.in/news/biz-tech/2018/10/16/india-needs-strong-leadership-to-boost-growth-jaitley.html>]

✚ **India ranks 103 on global hunger index:** India is among the 45 countries that have "serious levels of hunger". India has been ranked at the 103rd position among 119 countries on the Global Hunger Index, says a report. According to the report, prepared by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide, India is among the 45 countries that have "serious levels of hunger". In 2017, India was ranked at the 100th position but ranking for this year is not comparable, it said. The GHI, now in its 13th year, ranks countries based on four key indicators—undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting and child stunting. Child wasting refers to share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute under nutrition. India is ranked below many neighbouring countries, including China (25th spot), Nepal (72), Myanmar (68), Sri Lanka (67) and Bangladesh (86). Pakistan is placed at the 106th position. While noting that hunger varies enormously by region, the report said this year's GHI scores for South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara reflect serious levels of hunger. [For further reading: <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2018/10/15/india-ranks-103-on-global-hunger-index.html>]