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Research Article

EXPLORING THE NEXUS BETWEEN RISING SEA LEVELS AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: A MULTI-COUNTRY ANALYSIS

*Md. Mahir Daiyan

Department of Environmental Science & Disaster Management, Daffodil International University, Daffodil Smart City (DSC), Birulia, Savar, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Global agricultural productivity is seriously threatened by the growing threat of climate change, which is principally manifested in rising sea levels. This research article undertakes a thorough evaluation of the available literature and analyses secondary data to explore the relationship between sea level rise (SLR) and agricultural productivity in depth. The study provides a more nuanced understanding of the various geographical effects of SLR on agriculture by closely examining global impacts with a specific focus on multiple case studies. Our assessment of the literature analyses the corpus of information already available on SLR, climate change, and how these factors affect agricultural practises. It points out a significant gap in the literature currently available: the absence of thorough, multi-country comparative studies. We close this gap by analysing the global and country-specific implications of SLR on agriculture by secondary data analysis, taking into account elements such crop production variations, modifications to agricultural techniques, and adaptive tactics. The results highlight the significant and frequently distinct effects of SLR on agricultural industries across several geographic contexts. They emphasise the pressing need for effective, region-specific adaptation measures to protect our global food system from the effects of climate change. This study also provides a platform for researchers and policymakers to engage in more focused and successful tactics, emphasising areas in need of immediate attention. This study makes a significant contribution to the ongoing conversation about climate change and food security by shedding light on the intricate relationships between agricultural productivity and climate-induced SLR.

Keywords: Climate Change, Sea Level Rise, Agricultural Productivity, Impact Assessment, Adaptation Strategies, Food Security, Coastal Agriculture, Global Comparative Analysis, Environmental Changes, Policy Implications.

INTRODUCTION

As the climate change situation worsens, it is becoming clear that it has far-reaching effects on many facets of global life. The impact of climate change on agriculture, a vital industry that supports economies and lives worldwide, is especially concerning. Rising sea levels, one prominent symptom of climate change, have drawn a lot of attention due to their potential to affect agricultural output (Smith *et al.,* 2021). Coastal agricultural lands, infrastructure, and ultimately food security are all threatened by sea level rise (SLR), which is brought on by the thermal expansion of the oceans and the melting of ice caps and glaciers (Neumann *et al.,* 2015). The separate effects of climate change and sea level rise on agriculture have been extensively studied, but there is a knowledge vacuum regarding the combined effects of both phenomena (Rosenzweig & Neofotis, 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a thorough and in-depth analysis of the impacts of sea level rise on agricultural output across a variety of geographic contexts. Understanding how SLR affects agricultural production is crucial in many different industries. It gives crucial policymakers knowledge that will help them develop strong, region-specific plans to protect the agriculture sector in the face of the climate issue (Hinkel *et al.,* 2014). For the academic community and professionals working on climate change adaptation and agricultural resilience, it also identifies crucial areas that require immediate attention (Mendelsohn, 2014).

Corresponding Author:** ***Md. Mahir Daiyan
Department of Environmental Science & Disaster Management, Daffodil International University, Daffodil Smart City (DSC), Birulia, Savar, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh

Last but not least, by highlighting the intricate connections between these worldwide issues and expanding our understanding of their varied effects, this study will make a substantial contribution to the body of information regarding how climate change affects agriculture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Climate Change and Rising Sea Levels

Global environmental issue with significant effects in many industries is climate change. It is fueled by elements that contribute to global warming, such as greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and modifications in land use patterns (IPCC, 2014). The thermal expansion of the oceans, together with the glacier and polar ice caps melting, is a substantial effect of global warming that raises sea levels (Church *et al.,* 2013). Between 1901 and 2010, the global mean sea level increased by around 19 cm, and future increases are expected (IPCC, 2019).

Sea-Level Rise's Effects on Agricultural Practices

Through a variety of intricate mechanisms, rising sea levels have both direct and indirect effects on agriculture, particularly in coastal but also in interior locations. The inundation of agricultural fields, which causes soil salinization and lowers the productive capacity of these lands, is one of the direct repercussions (Dasgupta *et al.,* 2014). Irrigation, which is essential for agriculture, is impacted by salinity intrusion into freshwater systems (Mimura, 2013). Additionally, sea-level rise is frequently linked to more intense weather and storm surges, which can result in significant crop loss (Neumann *et al.,* 2015). The amount of usable agricultural land is further diminished by SLR's role in coastal erosion (Barbier, 2015).

Strategies for Agriculture Adaptation

Given these difficulties, academics and professionals have started to concentrate on adaptation tactics to maintain agricultural production in the face of climate change. These include modifying farming techniques and planting patterns, introducing salt-tolerant crop types, enhancing water management, and constructing infrastructure for coastal protection (Adger *et al.,* 2005). Additionally, there is an increasing focus on strengthening farming communities' resilience through capacity-building and policy interventions (Bryan *et al.,* 2013).

Literature Gap

Although each of these fields of study offers significant insights, there aren't many comprehensive studies examining the connections between SLR and agricultural productivity on a worldwide basis. The transferability and applicability of findings are hampered by the existing literature's heavy reliance on specific nations or regions (Iglesias *et al.,* 2011). The bulk of studies also fail to adequately address the variety in consequences across various agricultural and geographic contexts, which is essential for comprehending the complexities of the problem and for creating successful adaptation methods (Lobell *et al.,* 2008). In order to give a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of sea level rise on agricultural output and the potential adaptation options, more thorough, multi-country comparative studies are urgently needed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

To assess the effects of sea level rise (SLR) on agricultural productivity globally and across particular case study countries, this study uses a descriptive, comparative research approach. The measurement and comparison of differences in SLR's effects on agricultural systems across various geographic and agricultural contexts is made possible by this strategy (Creswell, 2013).

Data Collection and Sources

Due to the research's global reach, time, and resource limitations, the data for this study was obtained through secondary sources. This strategy makes use of pre-existing data to provide a thorough and comparative examination across many contexts (Smith, 2008). Information was acquired from a number of sources, including:

1. Peer-reviewed publications and essays on climate change, SLR, agricultural effects, and adaptation techniques.
2. Official reports: Books produced by international organisations including the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
3. Databases: International and national databases that offer statistical data on parameters connected to climate change, such as sea levels and agricultural productivity.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used to analyse the data that has been gathered. The scientific literature, government reports, and other textual data are reviewed and synthesised using qualitative content analysis, which enables the extraction of pertinent data, insights, and trends (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Descriptive statistics are then used to analyse quantitative data in order to show both general and country-specific effects of SLR on agricultural productivity. To make the data easier to grasp, this entails determining measures of central tendency (mean, median), variability (standard deviation, range), and producing visual representations (graphs, charts) (Field, 2013). To support more solid interpretations and conclusions, inferential statistics may also be used to assess the importance of differences or correlations between variables where appropriate (Field, 2013).

Secondary Data Analysis

Overview of Secondary Data

The basis for this research is secondary data, which helps in comprehending the global effects of sea level rise (SLR) on agricultural production. Peer-reviewed scientific literature, reports from international organisations like the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as global and national databases that provide statistical data on topics like climate change, sea level rise, agricultural outputs, and more have all been used to compile these data. The utilisation of secondary data has made it possible to gain a comprehensive, worldwide view on the effects of SLR and the ensuing agriculture sector adaption efforts.

Analyzing Impact on Global Agricultural Production

The secondary data that was gathered was examined to determine the overall effects of SLR on agricultural productivity around the world. It is clear from the examined literature that agriculture will be significantly impacted by sea level rise, particularly in coastal locations but also indirectly in interior regions. Sea level rise has resulted in land flooding, soil salinization, and modifications to freshwater irrigation systems (Dasgupta *et al.,* 2014). Food security and economies that depend on agricultural outputs are impacted by the consequent decrease in these lands' productive capability (Barbier, 2015). Quantitative information from multiple databases also sheds light on the precise metrics used to assess the effects of SLR on agriculture. Graphs and descriptive statistics shed light on patterns in agricultural productivity throughout time in response to sea level rise. It is clear that the continuous rise in sea levels poses a substantial threat to the productivity of the world's agriculture without significant adaptation and mitigation measures (Mimura, 2013).

Country-Specific Case Studies

Additionally, the study makes use of secondary data to explore case studies that are country-specific. Due to the study's ability to analyse the variation in SLR's effects on agriculture across various geographical and agricultural contexts, a more nuanced knowledge of the overall picture is provided. The selected case studies cover a wide range of scenarios, from major nations with various geographical features, like the United States and

China, to smaller nations with low-lying coastal sections that are particularly vulnerable to sea level rises, like Bangladesh and the Netherlands. The analysis of secondary data from these case studies reveals diverse patterns of impact and reactions based on the geographic, social, and economic circumstances. For instance, the saline intrusion in Bangladesh's fertile Ganges delta region, which affects rice cultivation, has caused the country's agricultural industry to face substantial hurdles (Dasgupta *et al.,* 2014). In contrast, the Netherlands has effectively used cutting-edge sea defense systems and adaptive agricultural practises to reduce the effects of SLR despite being a low-lying country (Stocker *et al.,* 2013). The effects of SLR on agriculture varies greatly among regions in more populous and geographically diverse nations like the U.S. and China. A deeper knowledge of how geographic and climatic elements interact with agricultural systems under the danger of increasing sea levels is made possible by the research, which identifies regions of vulnerability and resilience. The research intends to shed light on the complex effects of SLR on worldwide agricultural productivity and provide ideas for future mitigation and adaptation measures through this in-depth secondary data analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Global Impacts

The results of the secondary data analysis show that sea level rise (SLR) has a significant impact on agricultural output around the world. The most noticeable and immediate effects are seen in coastal areas where rising sea levels may cause agricultural land to be submerged and soils to become salinized, significantly reducing agricultural production (Nicholls & Cazenave, 2010). Additionally, SLR has secondary effects on freshwater systems that alter rainfall patterns, boost the likelihood of coastal and riverine floods, and increase the frequency and intensity of storms. The direct devastation of crops, soil erosion, and the contamination of freshwater resources with saltwater all offer further dangers to agriculture (Wong *et al.,* 2014). In addition, these effects can interrupt critical irrigation systems and reduce soil fertility. These effects have further repercussions on a worldwide basis. Food price variations, supply chain disruptions, food insecurity, and increasing resource rivalry are all serious threats to global food security caused by SLR and the resulting decline in agricultural productivity in the impacted regions.

Country-Specific Impacts

The research delves into country-specific case studies, ranging from those with extensive low-lying coastal regions to those with different geographical features, further exposing the variation in SLR affects. SLR in Bangladesh has increased the frequency of coastal flooding and allowed salt water to enter the rich Ganges delta region. The cultivation of rice, a vital meal for the country's inhabitants, in particular, has been negatively harmed by this intrusion. According to Dasgupta et al. (2014), these effects are predicted to worsen, potentially endangering the livelihoods of millions of agricultural workers as well as the nation's food security. However, despite being one of the most vulnerable nations in the world to SLR, the Netherlands has been able to significantly reduce some of its potential effects. Due to the nation's advantageous location along the North maritime, innovative maritime defense systems and adaptive farming techniques have to be created and put into use. Despite rising sea levels, the country has been able to preserve agricultural productivity because to these measures (Stocker *et al.,* 2013). The effects of SLR on agriculture vary across regions for larger nations with various geographical terrain, like as the United States and China. Regions that are at higher altitudes and have a wider variety of water sources are less negatively impacted than certain coastal regions and those that depend on freshwater irrigation systems (Field *et al.,* 2014).

Contrasts and Comparisons

Based on criteria including geographic characteristics, the resilience of agricultural systems, socioeconomic considerations, and the efficacy of adopted adaptation techniques, a comparison of the case studies illustrates the wide range of consequences and responses to SLR. Since both Bangladesh and the Netherlands have low-lying coastal regions, they both face considerable dangers, but they have quite different capacities to address those threats. In contrast to the Netherlands, which has a high-income, diversified economy and has been able to invest in complex defence and mitigation measures, Bangladesh's economy, which is mostly rural and agrarian, has limited resources to adapt to SLR. Furthermore, although interior places may appear to be less directly impacted by SLR, indirect effects are still substantial. SLR can indirectly affect agriculture in these areas in a number of ways, including changes to agricultural trade patterns brought on by productivity changes in coastal regions, disruptions in supply networks, and increased migration brought on by coastal population displacement (Oppenheimer *et al.,* 2014).

Sea-Level Rising: Evidence and Projections

One of the most extensively studied effects of climate change, sea-level rise (SLR), has a large body of data proving both its occurrence and anticipated effects. Both the thermal expansion of warming saltwater and the melting of land-based ice as a result of rising global temperatures are the main causes of it (Church & White, 2011). Strong evidence of worldwide SLR is provided by modern satellite data as well as historical tide gauge records. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that between 1901 and 2010, the average worldwide sea level rose by around 19 cm, with an accelerated rate of rise seen in the later part of this time period (Church *et al.,* 2013). The accelerated rate of global warming seen during the 20th century is consistent with this acceleration. More recent satellite altimetry data indicates that over the past 20 years, the average annual rise in the global mean sea level has been roughly 3.2 mm. The pace of rise is also quickening, with the most recent estimates indicating a rate of about 4.8 mm/year during the previous ten years (Chen *et al.,* 2017). The predicted sea level rise varies depending on the utilised climate models and emissions scenarios. Significant SLR is anticipated to persist through and beyond the 21st century, even in the most hopeful scenarios. Such levels of SLR pose a significant threat to coastal communities, ecosystems, and economies worldwide, as demonstrated in the earlier sections of this research, with the IPCC projecting a global mean SLR of up to 1 meter by 2100, with a potential rise of several meters over the next few centuries if greenhouse gas emissions continue unabated (IPCC, 2019). Because of the current and anticipated effects of SLR on agricultural output, it is essential to keep an eye on sea level trends, increase the accuracy of estimates, and make investments in efficient mitigation and adaptation measures.

Analysis

A wide variety of secondary data sources, including global climate databases, records on agricultural yields, demographic information, and regional reports on the effects of climate change, were used in this study. According to a review of global data, mean sea level has been rising for the past 20 years at an average rate of roughly 3.2 mm/year, with this trend accelerating in recent years (Church & White, 2011). This information offers a strong basis for comprehending the seriousness and urgency of the current problem. The examination of trends in worldwide agricultural production was then done using the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) database. This investigation revealed a notable decline in agricultural yield over the previous 20 years in several coastal districts. These decreases are particularly obvious in low-lying nations like Bangladesh and Vietnam and are consistent with the reported rises in sea level. Research articles and national reports were used to find more specific data. A research by Dasgupta *et al.* (2014) offered information, for instance, on the quantity of land and population in Bangladesh that was at risk from SLR. This study estimates that a 1-meter SLR may flood around 22% of Bangladesh's total land area, displacing over 15 million people, the majority of whom work in agriculture. The severity of the problem at the national level is highlighted by these facts. Data on the Netherlands, however, paints a different picture. Despite having about 26% of its land below sea level (CBS, 2014), the nation's agricultural productivity has not significantly decreased. This is due to the nation's effective maritime defenses and flexible farming methods. Overall, the secondary data analysis reveals that sea level rise has a major influence on agricultural output worldwide, especially in low-lying coastal locations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

This study looked at how sea level rise (SLR) affects agricultural production around the world and found significant and varying effects across several geographic contexts. According to their findings, agriculture is seriously threatened by SLR, a well-known effect of climate change, especially in low-lying coastal areas. These areas' agricultural lands are increasingly under danger of flooding and soil salinization, which has a negative impact on crop production and poses a risk to global food security. The research also demonstrated the diversity of SLR affects and responses by looking at country-specific case studies. For instance, the Netherlands has been effective in reducing the consequences of SLR due to their sophisticated marine defense systems and adaptive agricultural practises, but Bangladesh is gravely endangered due to its geographical and socioeconomic situations.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The results of this study have significant policy and practise ramifications. First, in areas most susceptible to SLR, thorough adaptation techniques are urgently needed. This involves funding the development of crops that are resistant to climate change, strengthening coastal defenses, putting in place comprehensive disaster risk reduction plans, and using sustainable water management techniques. In addition, national and international strategies must take into account the indirect effects of SLR, such as changes in supply chains, agricultural trade patterns, and demographic shifts. The creation of policies and programs, as well as the construction of infrastructure and support for livelihoods that are climate resilient, are crucial for helping the impacted regions and populations.

Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the breadth of this study, a number of issues demand more investigation. Future research should go deeper into the socio-economic effects of SLR on rural populations, looking at changes in agricultural productivity as well as consequences on rural development and livelihoods. Further investigation is required into efficient SLR mitigation and adaptation measures for agriculture. This entails looking into cutting-edge crop types, farming techniques, and technological advancements that can aid agriculture in adapting to changing climatic conditions. Furthermore, because SLR is a long-term occurrence, it would be advantageous to perform longitudinal studies to track changes over time and evaluate how effective adaption tactics are over the long term. Despite being significant, the effects of SLR on global agricultural productivity are not insurmountable, to sum up. We can lessen these effects and guarantee the sustainability and resilience of our global agricultural systems via educated policy choices, strategic planning, and international collaboration.

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