



## Food Supply Threatened by Climate Change Says United Nations

**August 9, 2019**—The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) is alarmed by the latest U.N. report, [Climate Change and Land](#), which was released yesterday. The report warns that climate change is exacerbating pressures on the global food supply, threatening millions more with hunger, and potentially raising food prices for all.

"Every year, the U.N. releases pivotal reports warning us that **we're running out of time to take serious action on climate change**," said EESI Executive Director Carol Werner. "Last year, the IPCC's report, [Global Warming of 1.5 C](#), alerted us to the fast-closing window of time—11 years—we have to keep global warming below 1.5 Celsius, to avoid the most dramatic impacts. The latest report, *Climate Change and Land*, is one of the most troubling the IPCC has yet released: if we don't take swift action to reduce our emissions and increase our resilience, **millions will be at risk as agricultural yields fall because of rising temperatures and climate disruption.**"

The report was released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international group of more than 100 scientists from 52 countries. Significantly, it was approved by all 195 of the [IPCC's member countries](#), including the United States.

The global food supply faces many different threats. According to the report's authors, the world's agricultural resources are being exploited at "unprecedented rates," and these rates are unsustainable as things stand. Arable soil, for instance, is being lost 10 to 100 times more quickly than it is being formed.

Climate change will make all of this worse. Higher temperatures stress plants and livestock and lower yields in the tropics and semi-tropics, where many are dependent on subsistence agriculture or cash crops sold globally, such as [coffee](#). Warmer temperatures at higher latitudes, in Canada and Russia for instance, will likely increase crop yields, but such increases will not be enough to compensate for the yield reductions in the rest of the world. Extreme weather exacerbated by climate change is already disrupting crops everywhere. Devastating rains in the Midwest this year, for example, have [prevented the planting of 40 million acres of corn](#)—about half of the U.S. total.

Ironically, agriculture itself is part of the problem. Clearing forests and draining wetlands to make room for more farmland and pasture releases *5 billion* tons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere every year. The ever-increasing demand for meat is causing more and more methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, to be released from cattle.

The report does not simply raise the alarm; it also recommends solutions, such as raising land productivity with more sustainable agricultural practices, reducing food waste (about a third of U.S. food is wasted), curbing meat consumption, improving soil management, diversifying crops, reducing trade restrictions, making it easier for farmers in developing countries to access credit, and strengthening property rights.

According to the authors, "Acting now may avert or reduce risks and losses, and generate benefits to society." But waiting risks "irreversible loss in land ecosystem functions and services required for food, health, habitable settlements and production."

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Sources:

"Climate Change Threatens the World's Food Supply, United Nations Warns," New York Times.

*Climate Change and Land*, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

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