

Foundation for
Agrarian
Studies

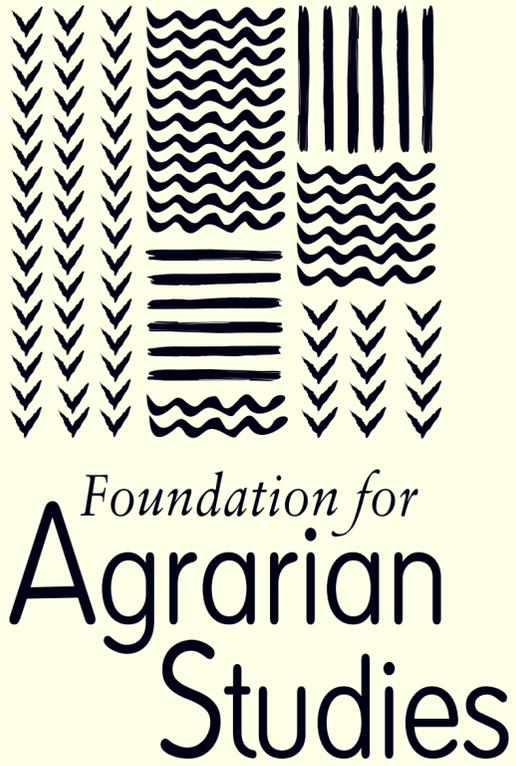


International Conference on
Agrarian Change

November 06-09, 2025

Thiruvananthapuram

Conference Booklet



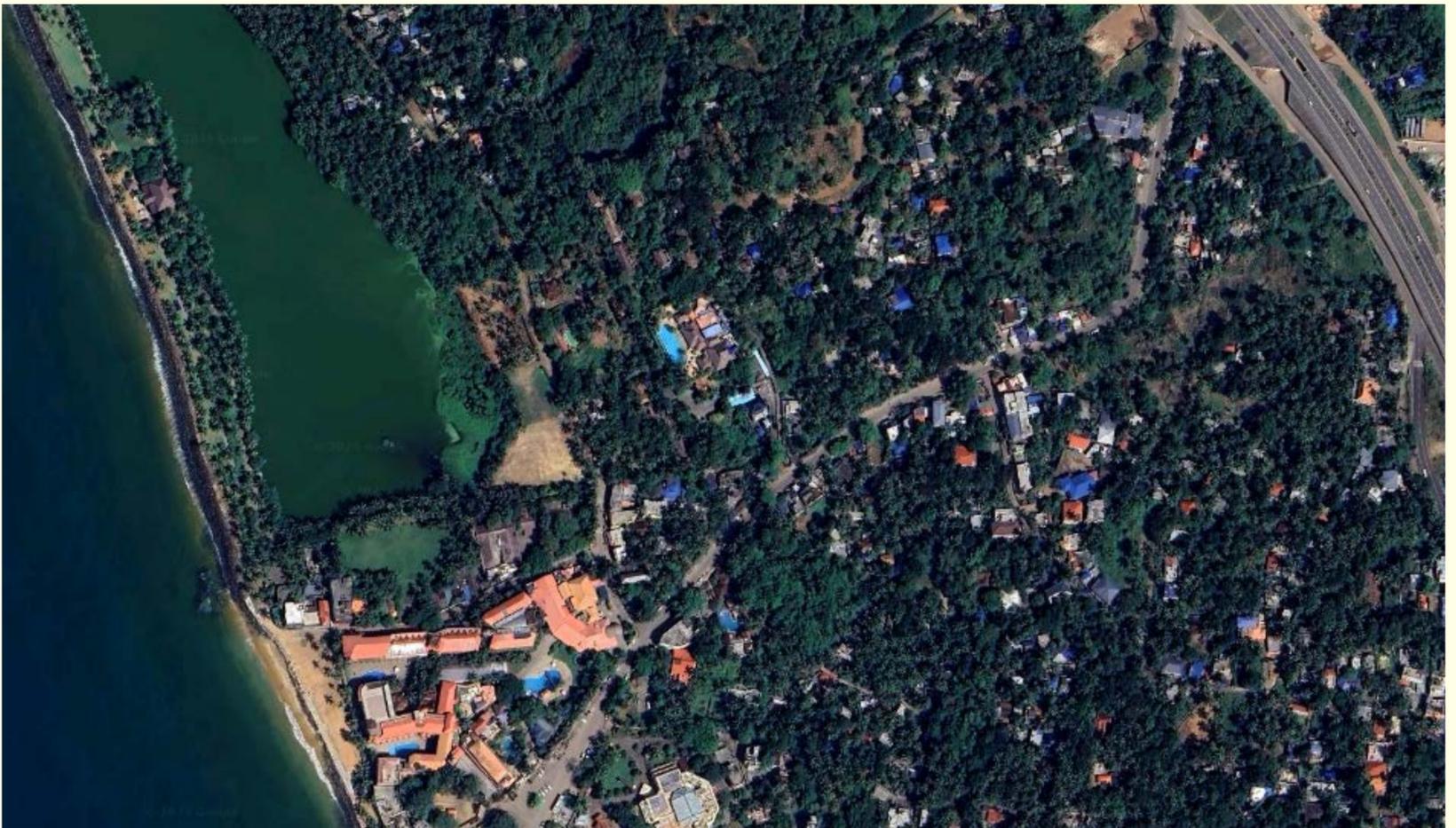
At the Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS), the study of agrarian change involves examining the means and instruments of production, the relations of production in the rural setting, and the broader context in which these operate. This inquiry extends further to issues of migration, livelihood and living standards, housing, access to education, and the many other challenges that shape the everyday lives of hundreds of millions of people in India's countryside.

- V. K. Ramachandran,
Managing Trustee, Foundation for Agrarian Studies,
Convenor, International Conference on Agrarian Change 2025

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CONFERENCE VENUE



TAP IMAGE TO OPEN MAP

Uday Samudra Leisure Beach Hotel,
Samudra Beach, UDS Corporate Office,
GV Raja Road, Kovalam,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 695527



Google Map Link:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/bKEFPeCMHoq67paU6>



ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Eleven years ago, the Foundation for Agrarian Studies held a landmark international conference on Agrarian Issues. Since then, there have been major changes, nationally and globally, that have affected the agrarian economy (rural economy) of India and of other developing countries. The Foundation for Agrarian Studies is holding a conference in Thiruvananthapuram from November 6 through 9, 2025, that will take stock of current thinking and scholarship on rural change.

The discussions at the conference will focus on the following broad themes:

1. Productive Forces and Relations of Production in the Countryside
2. The Role of Modern Science and Technology in Advancing Agriculture
3. Poverty and Standards of Living in Rural Areas
4. The Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture and Rural Development

The aim of this conference is to identify ways to address these pressing problems of small producers and agrarian economies by bringing together scientists and social scientists, policy makers and grassroots activists from India and elsewhere.

CONFERENCE THEMES



PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The agrarian question is central to the analysis of the dynamics of both national and global capitalism, particularly because production relations in agriculture and in rural areas are deeply intertwined with class, gender, and – in India and other parts of South Asia – caste and other hierarchies.

In many parts of the world, class divisions in agriculture are stark, with a land-owning elite controlling the means of production while the majority – wage workers, peasant farmers and smallholders – struggle for subsistence. In south Asia, class relations are inextricably linked with caste oppression and exclusion. Women, despite being the backbone of farming and agricultural work, are often denied land ownership, equal wages, and equality in decision-making. This intersection of class, gender, caste, and other hierarchies is a feature of contemporary rural production systems in India and elsewhere.

Understanding agrarian change requires studying and analysing the interactions between global processes (i.e., the actions of multinational capitalism and corporations); national processes (i.e., changes determined by national governments, national ruling classes, and national political movements); and local processes (i.e., the specific dynamics of the infinite variety of local agrarian regimes, and of different scales of agricultural and rural development that exist in rural areas today).

In the recent past, there have been radical advances in the forces and instruments of production available to agriculture, and consequent changes in the relations of production, the characteristics of individual social classes, and the conditions of the lives and livelihoods of the rural masses. A key feature of the present situation, particularly in India, is the emergence of new demands and new forms of struggle among farmers.

CONFERENCE THEMES

THE ROLE OF MODERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN ADVANCING AGRICULTURE

The development and application of science and technology have historically played a pivotal role in transforming agricultural productive forces, shaping the trajectory of food production and distribution. From the Green Revolution to the more recent advent of genetically modified crops, gene editing, and precision farming, technological advance has increased agricultural yields significantly.

In addition to enhancing productivity and thereby food security, modern biotechnology contributes to the achievement of multiple objectives in agriculture and related fields. These include climate resilience and sustainability, adaptation to different agro-ecological regimes, improved nutritional quality, disease and pest resistance, and accelerated crop processes.

Agriculture needs constant advance, both to meet new challenges of climate change and ecological pressures and to provide improved nutrition for the malnourished – at least one billion people – with a sustainable footprint. Continuous progress in agricultural science and technology is necessary if agriculture is to meet these needs by, say, 2050, when the population of the world is projected to be 9.7 billion from the present 8 billion.

Science and technology are the products of the collective labour and knowledge of humanity. In the present world, however, the overwhelming bulk of the products of this collective effort are owned by capital, while society and the people at large must deal with the consequences and risks arising from the commoditisation and appropriation of scientific knowledge. A particularly stark example of the increasing concentration of scientific research in the private sector is in the field of agriculture and genetic engineering technologies. In addition, the relations of production at different levels – the global level, the level of national economies, and in different agricultural production systems – prevent income-poor cultivators in different parts of the world from realising the full potential and benefits of modern biotechnology. To achieve genuine food security, public investment in science and technology must be encouraged, ensuring that innovations are accessible to all.

The scientific research agenda of sustainable agriculture is also sought to be diverted towards a number of “alternatives” to science. These range from the glorification of subsistence production with low inputs and low productivity to welcoming obscurantist initiatives such as zero budget natural farming.

Immense changes are now happening in the science of food production and in the application of science and technology to agriculture and allied activities. It is a matter of great urgency that progressive social scientists recognise – and analyse – the potentially emancipatory impact of the scientific and technological revolution on the lives and livelihoods of the working people in rural areas across the world while ensuring that the benefits of this advance are made available to the peasant masses. The conference will discuss the socio-economic implications of technological adoption in agriculture.

CONFERENCE THEMES

POVERTY AND STANDARDS OF LIVING IN RURAL AREAS

In the post-pandemic period, the long-term tendency towards a reduction in poverty and food insecurity has been reversed in large parts of the developing world. In India, there was a huge return of workers from urban to rural areas. Rural wages have stagnated in the last few years, and, by a recent estimate, over a quarter of the rural population – hundreds of millions -- live in extreme poverty. This context gives urgency to the questions being explored under this theme, namely, changes in poverty and deprivation among the agrarian population of India and other countries.

Poverty and deprivation are defined broadly to include access to income and other resources (land, in particular) but also deprivation in basic capabilities such as ability to be healthy, to be educated, to secure nutritious food, as reflected in the Human Development approach. In India, official statistics and policy have neglected poverty as measured by income or household expenditure. There are two recent rounds of expenditure surveys that can be used to estimate the level and intensity of poverty. Income levels can also be gauged from wages and earnings, and changes in employment.

Our focus is on the living standards of poor peasants and manual workers or the mass of the working poor. The FAS-PARI village surveys are unique in providing a nuanced picture of deprivation, where levels of income, ownership of assets, conditions of housing, educational attainment, and many other measures of living standards can be understood not only in combination but specifically across socio-economic classes.

We need to learn from the experience of regions and countries that have been able to bring about reduction in poverty and deprivation. The experience of China is unique in terms of ending extreme poverty in a record period of time and on a mass scale.

Poverty and inequality are distinct but related. We need to document extreme poverty and monitor disparities within countries and across countries, especially rural-urban inequalities.

CONFERENCE THEMES

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The impact of global warming of anthropogenic origin is an increasingly potent threat to agriculture globally and to the livelihoods and well-being of those engaged in agricultural and related activities. It will also endanger the food and nutrition security of all countries and regions. Adaptation to the impact of global warming, taking note of the potential range of future global temperature increase, is a critical issue for agriculture today.

An understanding of adaptation in agriculture requires not only analysis of the technological issues involved, but also of social, economic and political contexts, especially in the less-developed countries. Given the extensive contribution of small producers to agricultural production, the vulnerability of their lives and livelihoods, and their urgent developmental needs, adaptation measures must also be equitable, protecting and enhancing their livelihood choices and providing increase in incomes, consumption levels, asset and wealth creation and overall well-being.

Another challenge to agriculture in the global South, including in India, is the push for a policy shift in agriculture that prioritises climate change mitigation over the need to increase agricultural production and productivity. The bioresources of the global South are sought to be positioned as the key global carbon sink for the world, and the source of energy through biofuel crops, without considering the importance of adaptation for food and nutrition security. Mitigation is also sought to be pushed through by means of market-based policies, increasingly favouring carbon trading in agriculture. The conference will explore the future of food and nutrition security and the measures to safeguard it, particularly in the global South in the context of climate change.



CO-CONVENORS

The International Conference on Agrarian Change will take stock of current thinking and scholarship on agrarian change. The co-convenors for the technical sessions on each of the four themes around which the discussions will focus are:



V. K. Ramachandran

Vice Chairperson,
Kerala State Planning Board,
Thiruvananthapuram

Convenor for the Conference, and co-convenor for all themes



Venkatesh Athreya

Former Head of the
Department of Economics,
Bharatidasan University, Tiruchirappalli

Productive Forces and Relations of Production in the Countryside



Madhura Swaminathan

Professor and Head,
Economic Analysis Unit,
Indian Statistical Institute, Bengaluru

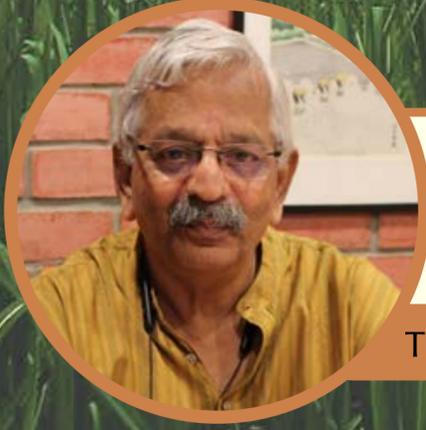
Poverty and Standards of Living in Rural Areas



R. Ramakumar

Professor,
School of Development Studies,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

The Role of Modern Science and Technology in Advancing Agriculture



T. Jayaraman

Senior Fellow, Climate Change,
M S Swaminathan Research Foundation,
Chennai

The Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture and Rural Development

SCHEDULE

DAY 01, NOVEMBER 6, 2025

Tea: 1530-1630

Inaugural Session: 1630-1730, Vizhinjam Hall

Plenary Session: Some International Perspectives: 1730-1900, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: Madhura Swaminathan

Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted:

The Role of Modern Science and Technology in Advancing Agriculture

Tang Lixia, He Zijuan, Yuan Baibing*:

*Achievements and Experiences in China's Poverty Reduction Governance
Since the Reform and Opening-Up*

Cao Duc Phat:

Income from Rice in Asia

Dinner: 2000

*presenter(s) will join online

SCHEDULE

DAY 2, NOVEMBER 07, 2025

Plenary 1: 0900-1045, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: V. K. Ramachandran

Luciano Rezende Moreira:

*Productive Forces and Agrarian Relations in Brazil:
The Struggle for a National- Developmental Project*

Ashok Dhawale:

The Peasant Movement in India in Neoliberal Times

Venkatesh Athreya:

On the Question of Productive Forces in the Capitalist Mode of Production

Jens Lerche:

*Productive Forces and Agrarian Relations in the Countryside,
with a Specific Focus on Socio-Economic Classes in the Countryside in India*

V. K. Ramachandran:

Socio-Economic Classes in the Indian Countryside

1045-1115: Tea Break

Plenary 2: 1115-1300, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: S. Mahendra Dev

Madhura Swaminathan, Arindam Das, C. A. Sethu and Daya Susan Thomas:

*Poverty and Living Standards in Rural India:
An Overview based on National and Village-Level Data*

Yoshifumi Usami and Arindam Das:

Trends in Rural Wages and Earnings

Brinda Karat:

Socio-Economic Conditions of Scheduled Tribes in India

Arjun Jayadev, Avinash M. Tripathi and M. K. Shravan:

Rural Growth and Distribution: Two Narratives from the PLFS 2017-2023

Gopal Guru:

Maharashtra's Changing Agrarian Scenario and Widening Inequality

1300-1415: Lunch Break

SCHEDULE

Session 1A: 1415-1600, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: T. M. Thomas Isaac

Barbara Harriss-White:

Post-Colonial Capital in Indian Agriculture

Satendra Kumar:

Contemporary Farmers' Movements:

Changing Agrarian Relations in Western Uttar Pradesh, India

Deepak Johnson and V. Surjit:

The Profitability Crisis in Indian Agriculture:

An Analysis of the Trends on Costs of Cultivation and Farm Incomes

Surajit Mazumdar:

Corporate Intervention in Indian Agriculture

Session 1B: 1415-1600, Bay Hall

Chair: T. N. Prakash Kammardi

K. K. Narayanan:

Harnessing Technology for Sustainable Agriculture:

Kerala's Path to Food Security and Climate Resilience

Niveta Jain*:

Green House Gases Emission from Agriculture: A Critical Perspective

Sreeja Jaiswal*:

Critique of Global Mitigation Pathways: Overlooking Food Security Implication

Sandipan Baksi, Dona Safui, and T. P. Harshan:

"Alternative" Approaches towards Sustainable Agriculture: An Epistemological Critique

Session 1C: 1415-1600, Waves Hall

Chair: A. V. Jose

A. Vijayaraghavan and Vikram Singh:

Agrarian Crisis and the Changing Nature of Rural Productive Classes in India

K. N. Ganesh:

Land Reform and the Socio-Economic Transformation of Kerala

Balasingham Skanthakumar:

Measuring Rural Poverty in Sri Lanka

R. Vijay and Nisha Patel:

Poverty and Living Conditions Among Peasants and Workers

*presenter(s) will join online

SCHEDULE

Tea Break: 1600-1630

Session 2A: The Land Question: 1630-1815, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: M. Thangaraj

Discussant: Mihika Chatterjee

Ameet Kumar:

Problematising Land Reform in Jammu and Kashmir, India

Mrityunjay Pandey, Nisha Patel, and R. Vijay:

*Analysis of Changes in Extent and Composition of Land Tenancy in India:
An Exploratory Analysis*

Archana Tamang:

Agrarian Relations in Sikkim

Gobinda Padhan and Chitrasen Bhue:

Caste Stratification, Land Inequality and Landlessness in Post-Reform Rural India

Karthik Rao Cavale:

*Caste Coalitions and Land Redistribution:
Explaining Regional Variation in Tamil Nadu*

Peddi Dayakar:

*Sustaining Soil, Securing Yields:
A Longitudinal Study of Land Degradation and Productivity in India*

Session 2B: Commercialisation of Farming: 1630-1800, Bay Hall

Chair: Shinu Varkey

Discussant: V. Surjit

Akshay Subhashrao Deshmukh and Parmod Kumar:

Determinates of Farmers Participation in the Grape value chain through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in India: A New Institutional Economics Approach

Kunal Munjal:

*Political Economy of Sugarcane Commercialisation in Uttar Pradesh (2000-2024)
Production Boom, Corporatisation of Industry, State Regulation, and Differential Outcomes*

Rachit Tiwari:

Paradoxical Rendering & the Appropriation of Community - Managed, zero-budgeted, and Sustainable Agroecological Transition in Andhra Pradesh

Sejuti Das Gupta, Ishita Mehrota, Chadrani Dutta and Aparajay Kumar:

Agrarian Transformation in India: New Realities and Subjectivities in High Value Crops

Ambika Subash:

From Enclosure to Illegality: Biotechnology in India's Cotton Capitalism

SCHEDULE

Session 2C: Trajectories of Agrarian Change: 1630-1800, Waves Hall

Chair and Discussant: Jens Lerche

Jacob Joshy:

The Uneven Patterns of Capital Intensification in Indian Agriculture

Avinash and Saqib Khan:

Agrarian Change in Tribal States: A Study on Jharkhand and Tripura

Gaurav Bansal:

Studying the Rural Beyond the Village: Political Economy of the Small Towns and its Implications for Capital Accumulation and Agrarian Distress in Rural Punjab, India

Aman Bardia:

Caste, Capital, and Contestation: Uneven Agrarian Development in Gujarat

Baldev Singh Shergill and Ramandeep Kaur:

*The Dynamics of Wealth Inequality in Rural Punjab:
A Comparative Study of Two Villages*

Session 2D: The World of Rural Workers: 1630-1800, Aqua Hall

Chair: V. Sridhar

Discussant: Vinoj Abraham

Soham Bhattacharya:

*Exploring “De-peasantisation” to “Re-peasantisation”:
Revisiting the Agrarian Question of Labour in India*

Prachi Bansal:

Stitching Together the Story: Labour Use in Indian Cotton Farming

Mrityunjay Rao and Jyoti Yadav:

Labouring Lives in Rural Brick Kilns in India: Caste, Class, and Gender in Perspective

Sreenivasulu Yamanapalli:

Understanding Agrarian Transformation: Longitudinal Evidence from Dalit Landless Agricultural Labourers and Landed Households in a South Indian Village

Nageshwar Bansode:

Mapping Marginality: Caste and Access to Public Amenities Among Dalits in Maharashtra

Dinner: 2000

*presenter(s) will join online

SCHEDULE

DAY 3, NOVEMBER 08, 2025

Plenary 3: 0900-1045, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: T. Jayaraman

R. Ramakumar:

The Role of Science and Technology in Agriculture: A Review of the Debates

K. C. Bansal:

Transgenic and CRISPR technologies in Agriculture

Kathleen Hefferon:

Modern Science and Technology in Agriculture

Stanford Blade:

Transforming Agriculture through Innovation: Emerging Trends in Crop Science

T. Jayaraman, Sandeep Mahato,

Charu Chandra Devashali, and Goutham Radhakrishnan:

Climate Change and Indian Agriculture:

Adaptation Roles, Trade-offs, and Differentiated Vulnerabilities

1045-1115: Tea Break

Session 3A: 1115-1300, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: C. Rammanohar Reddy

B. V. Raghavulu:

Linking Caste Struggle to the Class Struggle

Judith Heyer:

Poverty and Standards of Living among Dalits in Coimbatore/Tiruppur Villages, 1981/2 to 2024/5

Parvathi Menon:

Kilvenmani and Thanjavur in the 1960s

Venkatesh Athreya and P. Shanmugham:

The Victorious Struggle of the People of Vachathi

SCHEDULE

Session 3B: 1115-1300, Bay Hall

Chair: C. Veeramani

Sudipta Bhattacharyya and Tanusree Debanath:

*Broken Floor: MSP Failure in an Exclusionary and Differentiated Agrarian Structure –
A Tale of Two Villages in West Bengal*

Vijesh V. Krishna:

Joint Liability Groups: Kudumbashree and Efforts in the Other of India

T. K. Kishore Kumar:

*The Experience of ULCCS Cooperatives in the Non-Agriculture Sector:
Lessons for Inclusive Development*

Rita Ghedini and Simona Caselli:

Agri-food Sector in Legacoop

Session 3C: 1115-1300, Waves Hall

Chair: Jiju P. Alex

Niyati Singaraju:

Digital Transformation in Agri-food Systems: Opportunities and Challenges

Sai Chandan Kotu, Nagesh Maurya, Sandipan Baksi,

Tapas S. Modak, and Rithika Pulagiri:

*Diffusion and Scaling up of Drones in Agriculture:
A case of Nalgonda District in Telangana*

Gopinath R.:

Addressing Water Problem to Increase Paddy Yield in Cauvery Delta Zone

C. A. Sethu and Tapas S. Modak:

*The Political Economy of Canal Irrigation:
Class, Space, and Water Control in a Delta Village*

1300-1415: Lunch Break

SCHEDULE

Session 4A: 1415-1600, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: Balwinder Singh Tiwana

Venkatesh Athreya:

Rural Manual Workers in Tamil Nadu: Results from a Survey

Arindam Banerjee and Anirban Das Gupta:

*Reimagining the Agrarian Question in India:
Can Productive Forces Develop Sustainability?*

Mihika Chatterjee:

Land in India's Post-Pandemic Accumulation Regime

Session 4B: 1415-1600, Bay Hall

Chair: Ritu Dewan

Himanshu:

Work and Well-being in Rural India: Some Puzzles

Mariam Dhawale:

Microfinance, Women, and Poverty

Ruchira Bhattacharya:

*Poverty Alleviation Trajectory of Southeast Asia and Pacific
in the Context of Rural Development- A Review*

Jiju P. Alex:

Strategies of Poverty Reduction in Kerala

Session 4C: 1415-1600, Waves Hall

Chair: Jayan Jose Thomas

Brinda Viswanathan and Surabhi M.:

Nutrition Security in India: Recent Evidence from Household Consumption

Sudha Narayanan:

Food Subsidy Debates in India: A Review of Evidence

Shamsher Singh:

Longitudinal Insights into Housing Conditions and Basic Amenities in Rural Uttar Pradesh

Biswajit Dhar*:

Agricultural Subsidies in India and Abroad

Tea Break: 1600-1630

SCHEDULE

Session 5A: Agriculture and Gender: 1630-1745, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: Mini Sukumar

Discussant: Govinda Choudhury

Alankrita Yadav:

Feminization of Agriculture and Gendered Time Use: Evidence from Eastern Uttar Pradesh

Soham Bhattacharya and Nancy Agarwal:

Exploring Time-Induced-Income-Poverty for Women in Indian Agriculture: 2019-2024

Shakuntala Ghadai:

*The Impact of Climate Shock on Household Food Security:
Gendered Dimensions of Coping Strategies*

Session 5B: Through the Lens of Political Economy: 1630-1800, Bay Hall

Chair: TBD

Discussant: TBD

Deepa Kurup:

*Social Programmes and Class Struggle: A Comparative Political Economy Approach to
Studying Transformative Processes in Rural India*

Balwinder Singh Tiwana, Paramjit Singh, and Mukesh Kumar:

*Class Dynamics of Accumulation and Livelihood Strategy of Peasantry in Rural India:
Empirical Evidence from Haryana*

Aishwarya Prakash:

*The Unequal Promises of Collectivisation:
Re-Examining Inclusion in Farmer Producer Companies*

Anjana Kesav and Sachin Varghese Titty:

Beyond Poverty: Examining the Structural Roots of Agrarian Vulnerability in India

Ashwin Subramanian:

*Basmati tales: Contract Farming, Changing Caste-and-Kin Ties and
Agrarian Questions of Capital in a Central Indian Hinterland*

SCHEDULE

Session 5C: Agrarian Identities and Imaginaries: 1630-1745, Waves Hall

Chair: Gopinath Ravindran

Discussant: Ranjini Basu

Praveen Verma:

Rethinking Agrarian Identity:

Colonial Legacies, Legal Discourses, and the Farmers' Movement in Post-Colonial India

Sakshi Gupta:

Shaping Food Futures through Narratives:

The Sociotechnical Imaginaries of Alternative Proteins in Japan

Athmanathan Indrajith:

Effects of British Policies on Agriculture: The Case of 19th Century Madras Presidency

Session 5D: The Reach of Policy: 1630-1800, Aqua Hall

Chair: Pallavi Chavan

Discussant: Kiran Kumar Kakarlapudi

Ashish Chouhan:

Determinants of Adoption of Crop Insurance in the Soybean Producing Regions of Madhya Pradesh: Empirical Insights Using a Double Hurdle Approach

Anjaly Unnikrishnan:

Agrometeorological Advisories and Crop Productivity:

Evidence from Chitradurga District, Karnataka

Peeyush Priya, Aparajay Kumar Singh* and T. Jayaraman:

Differentiated Impact of Carbon Pricing on Indian Agriculture: An Ex-Ante Study

Priya Kumari:

Credit for Whom? Enhancing Kisan Credit Card's Lending Limits in India's Unequal Rural Credit Landscape

Rakesh Gomaji Nannewar, Anjaly Unnikrishnan,

Kruthika S., Charumati Kasiraju, and Tejal Kanitkar:

From Advice to Action: Assessing the Effectiveness and Equity of Agrometeorological Advisory Services in Southern India

Cultural Programme: 1830-2030, Vizhinjam Hall

Dinner: 2000

SCHEDULE

DAY 4, NOVEMBER 09, 2025

Session 6A: 0915-1100, Vizhinjam Hall

Chair: TBD

Michael Roberts*:

Agrarian Change - the Lessons of India and China

Jayan Jose Thomas:

Aspirations and Realities in Rural India: Jobs, Incomes, and Inequalities, 1983-2023

P. C. Mohanan:

Data Systems for Measuring Rural and Agrarian Changes in India

Surajit Das:

Direction of Fiscal Policy for Human Development

Session 6B: 0915-1100, Bay Hall

Chair: R. Nagaraj

Bheemeshwar Reddy:

Work, Welfare, and Insecurity: Ageing and Economic Survival in India

Sona Mitra*:

Increase in Women's Self-employment in Rural Areas

Madhura Swaminathan and Arindam Das:

Women's Contribution to Agriculture

Session 6C: 0915-1100, Waves Hall

Chair: TBD

Marcus Taylor:

Playing with Time: The Temporalities of Agrarian Change under Climatic Instability

Rita Ghedini:

The Challenge of Adaptation

Pratap Singh Birthal*:

Climate Change and Agriculture in India: Impacts and Projections

K. S. Kavi Kumar and Anubhab Pattanayak*:

Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation: Indian Agriculture

1100-1130: Tea Break

1130-1300: Vizhinjam Hall

New directions for research

*presenter(s) will join online

CULTURAL EVENT

QUIXOTE A Kathakali Performance by Margi

NOVEMBER 08, 2025
18:30 - 20:30

Margi, Thiruvananthapuram, embarked on this experiment in intercultural theatre thanks to the efforts of *Casa de la India*, Spain, to celebrate the spirit of *Don Quixote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes through Kathakali. This production is an attempt to understand art, theatre, and the workings of the artistic imagination by adapting a European literary work into a rich theatre tradition, one that established itself in the cultural imagination of Kerala in the 17th century.

The *Aattakatha* (the play-text for production) for the Kathakali *Quixote* was written and choreographed by Dr. P. Venugopalan, distilling the essence and spirit of Cervantes' classic novel written in Spanish. The Indo-Spanish theatre version of *Quixote* added elements from Spanish theatre to Kathakali. It was directed by Ignatio Garcia, a renowned Spanish theatre director, and presented in Spanish-speaking countries across the world. The present production of *Quixote* adheres to the Kathakali tradition, but also employs some elements from the Spanish theatre tradition.

THE STORY IN BRIEF

Having immersed himself in the chivalric romances in circulation in the sixteenth century, Alonso Quixano, a member of the lowest nobility, begins to see himself as a chivalric knight-in-arms who must set right the wrongs of the world. He takes upon himself the task of fighting what he thinks are the demons of the world, acquiring a rustic fellow by name Sancho Panza as companion on his adventures, only to come full circle back to the reality of his existence and being. The important thematic dimensions of the play – illusion versus reality, heroism versus comedy, and Quixote's pursuit of a dream of romance – are richly rendered in the structure of this Kathakali play.

QUIXOTE

A Kathakali Performance by Margi

SCENE-WISE DESCRIPTION

Scene 1

The scene opens in the village of La Mancha with Alonso Quixano, a well-meaning character whose head is full of romantic and chivalric notions from the chivalric stories he has read. As a result, he now inhabits a world of airy nothingness that he populates with evil magicians, knights-in-arms, and beautiful damsels waiting to be rescued. This is a world where chivalry is dead and knights have forgotten their honour resulting in the erosion of social commitment and values. He believes that he as a redeemer knight must reinstate all that has been lost. Quixano announces that he is the knight Don Quixote of La Mancha. His skinny horse becomes the noble and ever-dependent steed Rocinante, and a poor tavern maid becomes his beloved, who he names Dulcinea. We see him preparing to set out in search of adventures, battles, and chivalric deeds. He dreams of the accompanying glory. The actor here makes a brisk presentation of the hero donning the knight's armour, spear, and sword. The audience will for the first time see Don Quixote on stage, in all his comic regalia, even though in his own eyes Quixote is a great hero.

Scene 2

The image that Quixote has of himself materialises in the production as the Kathi vesham (a particular make-up style featuring a green base with prominent red lines on the cheeks, used for characters who have both heroic and evil qualities.) He appears in all regal splendour (thiranokku). This scene establishes Quixote as a figure in the real world and in his delirious world of fantasy.

Scene 3

This scene focuses on an incident in Quixote's first adventure. As he rides his horse, he sees a landlord beating a young servant boy named Andrés who is tied to a tree. Seeing this, Quixote, in great anger, commands the landlord to set the boy free. The landlord tells him that the boy stole a sheep from the fold and is being punished. The boy however insists that he is being beaten because he asked for his wages. Quixote commands the landlord to pay Andrés his wages. The landlord pretends to obey him, promising that he will go home and make the payment. Quixote believes that the landlord will keep the promise, which has been given, after all, to a knight, and consoles the boy. He continues his journey foolishly believing that his power and command has helped the poor boy. As soon as Quixote is out of sight, we see the landlord aggressively resuming the beating.

Scene 4

Riding back from his first journey, after many misadventures, Quixote decides that, as a knight, he needs the services of a squire. He entices Sancho Panza, a simple farm worker, to join him as his squire. Sancho refuses to accompany this strange knight on his adventures because Sancho is a family man burdened with cares and worries. Quixote graciously promises him the absolute right to rule over an island that he intends to conquer. Sancho, who is a village simpleton, believes this, and begins to fantasise about his rule over Quixote's dream island. He accompanies Knight Quixote on an ass, his only prized possession. (Sancho's character and appearance in this play is strikingly similar to that of the clown (vidushaka) in Kutiyattam. Quixote's second adventurous journey begins here. The drama of illusion and reality emerges when Quixano confronts "Quixote" and recognises himself in the knight as if in a mirror image.

Scene 5

Don Quixote's epic battle with the windmills is presented in this scene conforming to the theatrical conventions used in Kathakali. In this scene two Redbeards (chuvanna thadi) appear as demons (rakshasa) representing the windmills. After a characteristic entry (thiranokku) marked by great ferocity and rage they stand tall with their hands raised and in circular motion. Quixote sees them and tells Sancho that they are demons with magical powers who harm poor travellers, and that he must fight them. Sancho identifies them as windmills and tries to dissuade his master from this foolishness. But Quixote seethes with anger and challenges the demons to a battle. Sancho is certain that his master is mad and leaves

him to his fate. Quixote breaks his spear attacking the windmills, falls down from his horse and is bruised badly. Sancho comes running and helps Quixote to his feet and consoles him. Quixote boasts that knights do not show pain or cry even when they are fatally injured.

Quixote conjures up an image of the lovely Dulcinea in his mind and is lost in a world of dreams. Here enters a very beautiful Dulcinea (in the attire of a lovely Kathakali heroine). This is followed by an erotic address (sringarappadam) by Quixote to Dulcinea. He sees her as the greatest beauty in the world. She in turn praises him for his unmatched valour and courage. She asks him for an embrace, but when he approaches this insubstantial figure, he discovers Sancho in his arms instead. Quixote is embarrassed.

Scene 6

The village priest of La Mancha entrusts Sansón Carrasco, who is a new graduate from the university, to cure Quixote of his madness. Carrasco appears disguised as the Knight of the Mirrors, a character in green colouring (pacha), which in Kathakali denotes a peaceful person. He crosses Quixote's path in the forest.

The scene opens with the Knight of the Mirrors who is lying down in a forest singing mournfully about his beloved Casildea, who constantly sends him off on knightly adventures. Quixote enters with Sancho and sees the stranger lying down. Quixote asks him to reveal his identity and name the person addressed in the song. Quixote listens to the story of how Casildea sends her knight all over the world to overpower and defeat all knights. To his surprise, he hears that of all the knights overpowered by the Knight of the Mirrors, the most powerful was Don Quixote of La Mancha. Quixote reveals himself in all his knightliness and challenges him to a duel. The Knight of the Mirrors puts forward the condition that the loser in the duel will have to forfeit his knighthood. In the duel that ensues, the Knight of Mirrors trips and falls and Quixote wins the duel by fluke. When the mask is partially removed, Sancho recognizes the face of the fallen Knight and shouts that it is their fellow countryman Carrasco. But the foolish Quixote refuses to accept this, as he continues to believe that all that has transpired is the work of evil magicians. The scene ends with Quixote dragging Sancho along in search of more adventures. Carrasco also leaves, hoping for another chance to cure Quixote of his delusion.

Scene 7

In the course of their journey on the royal road, Quixote and Sancho see two cages tied together to a cart pulled by donkeys. Quixote believes that the cart is pulling slaves and so confronts the cart driver about this. The cart driver replies that the cages have two African lions gifted by the Governor of Orion to the King and requests that he should be allowed to pass. Quixote demands that he be allowed to fight the lions. Sancho tries to dissuade his master but fails. The cart driver also warns him that the lions are starved and that if they are let out, they will eat everyone around them. Quixote is unmoved and commands that the lions be let out. With no other option before him, the cart driver decides to open the cage. In great fear Sancho turns to the "idle spectators" in the audience to run for their lives, and runs away. The cage is opened and Quixote is ready to charge. The sleeping lion wakes and stretches itself, reveals its paws, canines, yawns and goes back to sleep. But Quixote thirsts to display his valour and asks the cart driver to goad the lion into a battle. The clever cart driver now proclaims that Quixote has won the battle and that the defeated lion has gone back to the cage to sleep off its defeat. Quixote commands the cart driver to tell the world how he defeated the lion. He rewards the cart driver and resumes his adventures with Sancho.

Scene 8

Carrasco reappears again as the Knight of the White Moon by the sea shore in Barcelona. He challenges Quixote, and says that the loser will have to quit all claims to knighthood and return home. Sancho, who has prepared the horse, forgets to fasten the saddle. The duel begins. Quixote falls off the horse and admits defeat. The Knight of the White Moon reminds Quixote of the condition that he will lay off his misadventures as a knight. Quixote, who is wounded in battle and extremely fatigued, now decides to return to La Mancha. In a very poignant moment, Quixote leans on Sancho and the two walk painfully back to their village.

Scene 9

Alonso Quixano is lying on his deathbed in his original form as in Scene 1. Sancho, Carrasco, and all other characters stand around him in sorrow as his end approaches. Quixote's final speech is suffused with guilt and the desire to seek atonement. He regrets the time wasted in reading cheap chivalric romances. He repents that he did not read books that illuminated the mind. Quixano shares the content of his last will. Death comes and he sees the great book in its cosmic form and the divine light from it filling him. He feels that he is bathed in its resplendence and attains a state of self-awareness. The play concludes with a subtle enactment of the last moments of Quixano.

QUIXOTE

A Kathakali Performance by Margi

CAST

Alonso Quixano	Kalamandalam Balakrishnan
Don Quixote	Kalamandalam Krishnakumar
Landlord, Cart driver & Priest	Kalamandalam Athul
Andrés	Kalamandalam Jyothish
Sancho Panza	Margi Vijayakumar
Dulcinea	Kalamandalam Vishnumon
Windmills (Rakshasas)	Kalamandalam Rajasekharan Sadanam Vishnuprasad
Carrasco (Knight of the Mirrors and Knight of the White Moon)	Kalamandalam Balasubramanian
Lion	Kalamandalam Parthasarathy
Music	Pathiyoor Sankarankutty Kalamandalam Baiju Kalanilayam Vishnu Kalamandalam Krishnadas Margi Ratnakaran Margi Sreekumar Kalanilayam Vishnu
Chenda Maddalam Chutti	
Stage and Costume	Koliyakkode Venugopal Margi Joby Margi Aniruddhan Margi Vinod
Libretto (Aattakatha) and Choreography	Dr. P. Venugopalan

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The **Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS)** is an independent research organisation established in 2003 to foster multidisciplinary enquiry in the field of agrarian studies. It engages in rigorous scientific study of the socio-economic conditions of contemporary rural society, and the interplay of agricultural science and technology and society. Such studies can lead to evidence-based policy aimed towards progressive transformation of rural India. Through its research, the Foundation aims to build a lasting body of knowledge that provides a detailed and objective picture of the Indian countryside at the turn of the 21st century.

The Foundation works with a wide array of people interested in the agrarian question, including those associated with academic and policy institutions, scholars from public and private research institutions, members of grassroot organisations working on the countryside, and other professionals and scholars. The Foundation collaborates with young researchers and students, senior scholars, leading academic institutions across the globe, donor agencies, and governmental and intergovernmental organisations interested in different socio- economic aspects of rural life in India.

In a society where hundreds of millions continue to live in conditions of starvation, income deprivation, illiteracy, educational deprivation; are vulnerable to avoidable disease; and face different forms of oppression – of class, caste, and gender – progressive social transformation is a monumental task. This remains equally, if not more, valid in much of the less-developed world.

The Foundation was established with the understanding that the agrarian question is central to the transformation of Indian society, and is driven by the need to study and address rural change through evidence-based research.

From the time of its inception, FAS was guided by three core principles: addressing a social and academic felt-need, covering research in areas that are not extensively studied by others, and ensuring its agenda remains independent and not donor-driven even as a donor-supported organisation. These principles have been the bedrock of the Foundation's work.

FAS, in practice, extends as a network of young researchers and senior scholars. The Foundation also realises that the findings and results of research must reach policy makers and change-makers working at the grassroot level. It, therefore, works in close association and consultation with those involved in the task of bringing about social change.

The Foundation has, in the past two decades, sought to study the changing countryside and its changing society. In order to do this, since 2005, it has developed a large and growing archive of primary data through the ongoing Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI) that employs the method of village studies to collect a unique combination of quantitative and qualitative data on myriad aspects of the rural economy in India. This priceless archive of the Indian countryside has led to substantial research outputs. The archive has shaped the research of numerous young and senior scholars over the years.



ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Some of the major themes that have been studied by the Foundation in the recent past include socio-economic characteristics of Dalit households in the rural India, the state of the small farm economy in India, women's work in rural economies, village panchayat level databases and their potential use in local-level administration, and trends in employment and wage rates in rural India.

Findings from the Foundation's studies have been regularly published as two book series – Socio-Economic Surveys and Agrarian Studies – with a total of 12 books published in two decades. This is in addition to the bi-annual peer-reviewed journal of the Foundation, the *Review of Agrarian Studies*. While the journal, now in its 14th year, has a focus on India, it has earned international repute in its domain and has featured articles from across all major continents.

The Foundation also hosts the Library of Agrarian Studies (LAS), a reference library with a catalogue of more than 12,000 publications with a primary focus on agrarian studies.

Two decades of its work has positioned FAS as a leading research network and a commentator on agricultural and rural development policy. Our scholars today work on food policy, agricultural prices, farm incomes, wages and employment in the countryside, climate change and agriculture, labour and time use surveys, comparative international farming practices, women in agriculture, rice cultivation, animal resources in the countryside, and the adoption of agricultural science and technology, among other things.

The work of the Foundation is supported by CSR and donor agencies that are interested in promoting research to reduce social and economic inequalities, especially in the countryside.



SOCIAL MEDIA TOOL KIT

Event: International Conference on Agrarian Change 2025

Organised by: Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS)

Event Dates: November 06 - 09, 2025

Venue: Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram,
Kerala, India

About the Conference

Eleven years ago, the Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS) hosted a landmark international conference on agrarian issues. Since then, major national and global transformations have reshaped the agrarian (rural) economies of India and other developing countries.

The upcoming FAS International Conference on Agrarian Change will bring together leading scholars and practitioners from around the world to take stock of new research and debates on rural transformation, class relations, agricultural productivity, and the changing dynamics of the countryside.

About the Foundation for Agrarian Studies

The Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS) is an independent research organisation established in 2003 to foster multidisciplinary enquiry in the field of agrarian studies. It engages in rigorous scientific study of the socio-economic conditions of contemporary rural society, and the interplay of agricultural science and technology and society. Such studies can lead to evidence-based policy aimed towards progressive transformation of rural India. Through its research, the Foundation aims to build a lasting body of knowledge that provides a detailed and objective picture of the Indian countryside at the turn of the 21st century.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOL KIT

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Join the conversation and help amplify the discussions around agrarian change. We encourage you to tag the Foundation's social media accounts and share updates and posts from the same. Use our official hashtag and tag us in your posts.

Official hashtag: #AgrarianChange2025

Secondary hashtags: #FASConference #AgrarianStudies #AgrarianStudies

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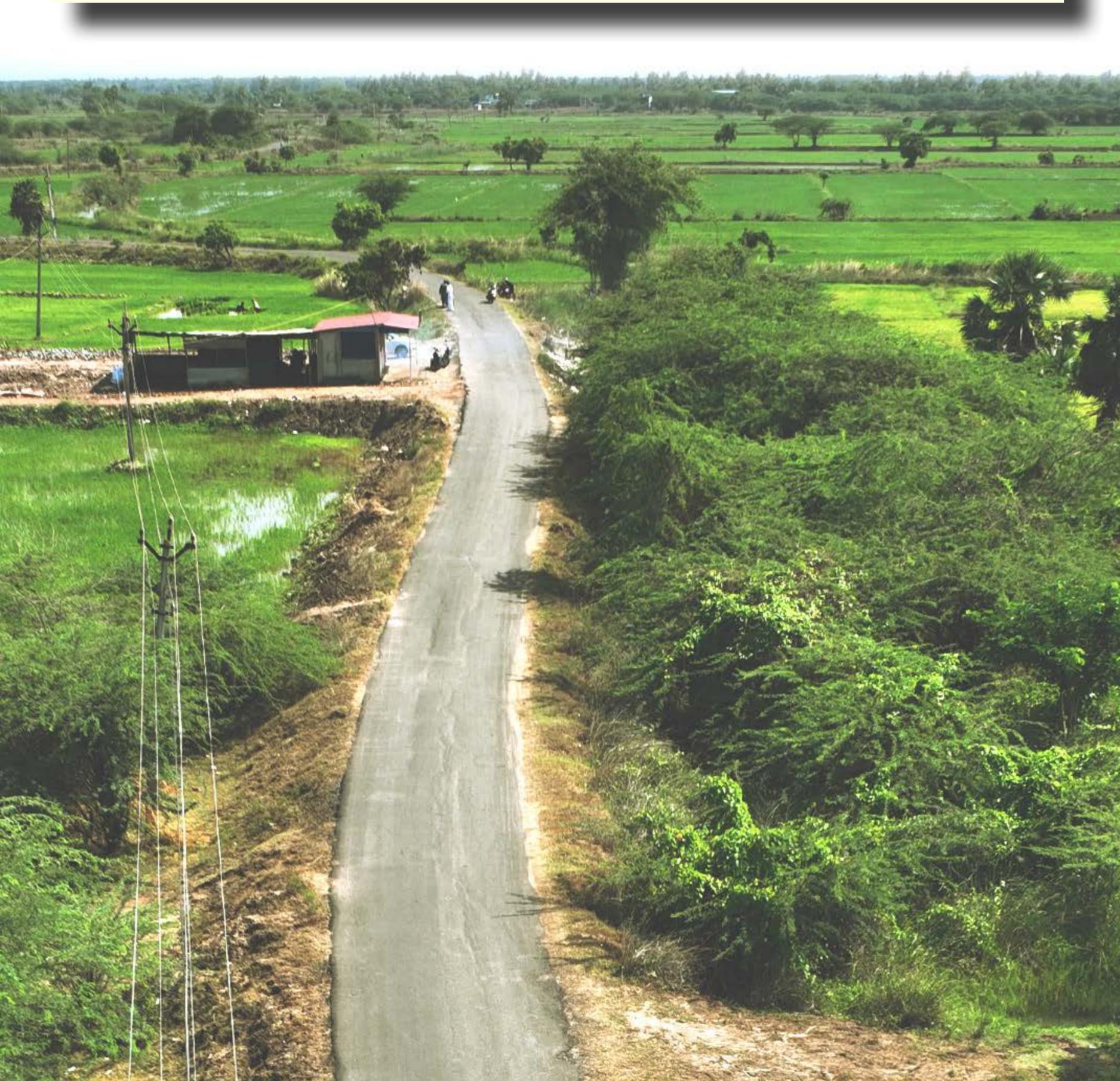
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Sample Post

Excited to attend the FAS International Conference on Agrarian Change in Thiruvananthapuram! Looking forward to engaging with scholars and change makers from around the world on the transformation of rural economies and societies.
#AgrarianChange2025 #FASConference #AgrarianStudies

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