

Foundation for Agrarian Studies



International Conference on Agrarian Change

November 6 to 9, 2025 | Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Day-wise Conference Proceedings Report of Day 4 – November 9, 2025

New Directions for Research



The final session of the International Conference on Agrarian Change 2025 consisted of an open session for a critical reappraisal of the conference and its outcomes. The floor was opened to delegates to present their views and suggestions. These fell broadly into two categories, the first comprising feedback and key learnings, and the second, avenues and ideas for collaborative research that the discussions threw up.



General Comments from the Floor

- The conference brought together highly experienced academics and young scholars for comprehensive discussions on agrarian change.
- FAS's effort in emphasising different approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, to present a coherent picture was appreciated.
- Dynamic young scholars have joined FAS with a wider group of young scholars increasingly familiar with its work and ethos.
- The conference discussed changes in agriculture in India, from the importance of “class” as a category in agrarian life, up to the many cutting-edge scientific practices in agriculture.
- The conference offered a platform for activists and academics to come together and learn from each other about the social, economic, and other aspects of agrarian changes.
- The international comparative studies gave insight into agricultural practices across the world (China, Vietnam, Brazil, Nigeria).
- In times when anti-scientific movements are spreading, and are even being pushed by governments, insisting on a scientific approach in matters such as food production and organisation, and socio-economic conditions in the countryside is important.
- Mainstream economics in Indian universities has shifted to disengaged impact evaluation, quantitative studies, and so on. FAS is attempting to counter these trends through such conferences.
- The absence of social scientists in scientific institutions is a matter of concern.



- Collaboration between universities, research organisations, and students needs to improve.
- Funds are scarce, and discussions are needed on sources for funding to conduct primary surveys.
- There were panels with a heavy emphasis on science and social science – there needs to be an integration of these to allow mutual criticism and engagement.
- FAS must also focus on upland/hill areas where agriculture is practised on “marginal” lands.
- We cannot make endless, complicated class hierarchies. There needs to be simpler ways of classifying classes.
- A more workshop-oriented approach could facilitate deeper conversations.
- FAS must engage in capacity-building among young scholars.

Topics for Future Research Collaborations



“FAS is countering the trend of teaching economics through disengaged quantitative data.”

–Sudha Narayanan

- **Smallholder agriculture.** This comprises a huge component of the productive apparatus. It is part-time, seasonal, and expanding in numerical terms. This has implications for productive capacity, upstream and downstream.
- **Characterising class.** Classes in the countryside must be classified. The rural economy has a big non-farm component. There is inter-regional variation among villages, and its integration with the wider economy must be examined.
- **Waste in the agricultural economy.** All economies produce waste, including the agrarian economy (water, fertilizer, greenhouse gases, energy, food, non-performing assets, etc). The issue of waste needs to be studied better.
- **People-centred sectional studies.** Research must focus on social differences among rural populations and conditions due to class relations within agriculture, caste–class relations, religion, gender (changes in gendered positions within agriculture), and age (needs of the elderly and youth).
- **The peasant family.** Changes in the composition of the peasant family as a possible area of research.
- **Climate change.** Studies highlighting the need to focus on the productive growth of agriculture in addressing environmental goals and standards.
- **Agriculture-industry linkages.** This is an important area for research. Agritech firms often start small, but their metric of success is to be acquired by a big corporate firm.



“We need to integrate both science and social science panels for mutual criticism.”

–Marcus Taylor

- **Agriculture and food supply chains.** Studying logistics, infrastructure, transport, shipping, and marketing in relation to the agrarian economy.
- **Tracking national and state budgets.** Where does the money allocated for agriculture and allied segments go?
- **Inequality.** Studies on village-level inequality, past and present are required.
- **Insights from sociology and history.** Studies drawn from other specialisations, like sociology and history, broaden the understanding of the agricultural economy. Such disciplines will employ new methodologies, like ethnographic research, oral history, archival history and so on.
- **Estimating the reliability of statistics.** There is an increasing incongruity between statistics and ground reality that must be addressed.
- **Microfinance.** The impact of microfinance and rural indebtedness, especially on women, should be studied.
- **New rural deprivations.** A focus on other facets of rural poverty, for example, in housing and higher education is needed.
- **Macro-economic policies.** With narrowing distinctions between rural and urban areas, an integrated approach to industrial and macro-economic policies and resource identification must be evolved.



“Discussions didn’t engage a lot with agriculture happening in “marginal” upland/hill areas, where ecological and structural constraints are more and industry is not easy.”

–Subhajt De

- **Land acquisition.** The confrontations between the state and farmers on land acquisition, particularly in the context of a growing market for land in regions like Bangalore’s hinterland, should be studied.
- **The new agrarian structure.** Cutting-edge technologies and other forms of new production forces in agriculture should be evaluated.
- **MSP and agriculture.** Government policies on MSP and differential impacts on consumers and producers need to be examined.
- **Electricity.** It is an important input to be studied in agriculture, for example, between metered and non-metered connections.
- **The informal seed sector** has scope for analysis.
- **Changing migration patterns** can be studied.
- **Allied sectors.** Studies on dairy, fisheries, and animal husbandry (milk and meat) should be conducted.
- **Education.** Studies on the dynamics of education in rural areas, the education status of Dalits and non-Dalits and how it affects upward mobility, ensuring quality of education can be done.
- **Schemes in rural India.** The impact and effectiveness of schemes like income transfer, free service schemes, and crop insurance in the rural sector should be analysed.
- **Decadal re-survey of villages.** FAS must do more re-surveys of villages to study longitudinal change.



“This conference was unique, in that the papers told the story of agrarian change.”

–Kalyani Raghunathan

- **Rural work.** Working conditions of the farming poor, farmer suicides, should be examined.
- **The role of decentralised institutions and local governments** has to be observed.
- **Risk and vulnerabilities in agriculture.** Studies that establish the specificities and patterns of risk should be considered.
- **Engagement with unions.** Learning from activists who work with scheme workers, construction workers, brick kiln workers, and semi-formal rural institutions
- **International collaborations.** Research engagement with institutions and scholars from Latin America, Africa, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh should be strengthened.