

Cover photo: Rosa Can works as a farmer in Guatemala, one of the countries in the world hardest hit by the effects of climate change. Photographer: Claudio Vasquez Bianchi

Climate crisis hits smallholder farmers hard – but they lack support

The Farmer's Barometer, which is being conducted for the first time this year, 2021, examines how smallholder farmers' local organisations in developing countries view climate change and their members' ability to deal with them. 38 organisations participated in the study. Together they organize 3.4 million smallholder farmers in 20 countries.

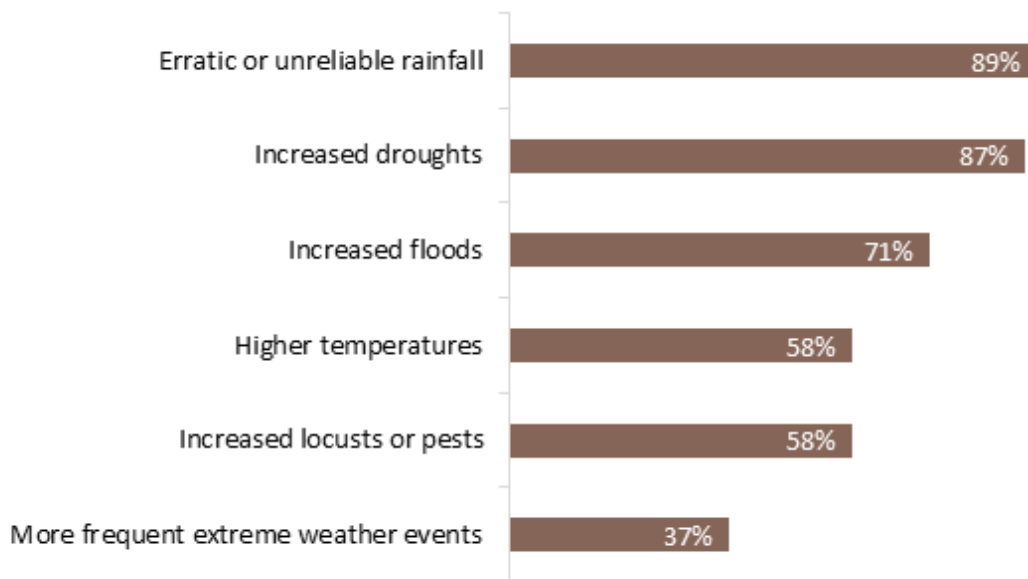
Even less income and harder to pay for school and health care. Smallholder farmers in developing countries are badly affected by the climate crisis, but they receive little or no support from their governments to deal with the effects of the crisis. The most difficult is the situation for women. This is shown by Vi We Effect and Vi Agroforestry's new global survey "The Farmer Barometer".

All 38 organisations that responded say they have experienced changes in the climate in the last 15 years. They say it has become increasingly difficult to predict when the vital rains, the basis of agriculture, will come or how intense they will be. When the rains do not come as they should, farmers experience ever longer periods of drought and increased flooding.

Climate change is a very serious problem for smallholder farmers. All farmers' organisations that responded to the survey testify to reduced harvests and poorer quality of the harvest. The effect, in turn, is that farmers' already very limited incomes decrease further as harvests dwindle. Almost all (33 out of 38 organizations) say that their members have, or have had, a shortage of food, even though they themselves are farmers. Many also respond that their members are forced to leave the family to work elsewhere, and that they also find it more difficult to pay for schooling and medical care.

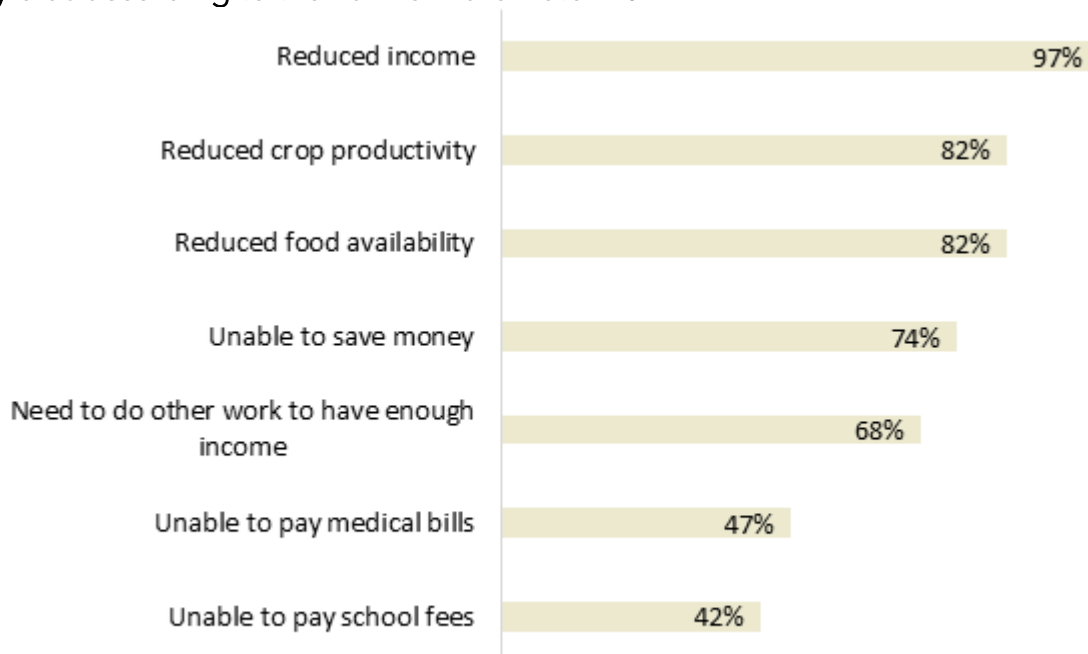
The barometer shows that smallholder farmers – and the farmers' organisations that support them – lack sufficient knowledge and capacity to deal with the effects of climate change. In particular, women's ability to deal with the effects of climate change is adversely affected by limited rights around owning and using land. Furthermore, the majority of the organisations (25 out of 38) stated that they or their members do not receive any climate support from the government of their respective countries.

Figure 1: Changes in the climate in the last 15 years according to the Farmer Barometer 2021



Source: The Farmer Barometer, a survey conducted by Vi Agroforestry and We Effect.

Figure 2: Consequences of changes in the climate and subsequent reduced yields according to the Farmer Barometer 2021



Source: The Farmer Barometer, a survey conducted by Vi Agroforestry and We Effect.

The organisations identified measures to mitigate and address the effects of climate change, such as moving from conventional agriculture to agroforestry and other sustainable farming practices. Such methods can protect the soil in the event of flooding, create better cultivation opportunities despite long periods of drought and increase the yield from farms so that incomes increase.

Another important measure highlighted was to support farmers to start and run so-called savings and loan groups, where a number of farmers who are denied credit from ordinary banks can save and lend money to each other. The groups can increase farmers' access to capital, as well as support them to broaden their incomes by, for example, investing in new projects outside agriculture. This is a particularly important source of capital for women, who have the most difficulty in borrowing money from regular banks.

This is how the Farmer Barometer 2021 was conducted

During May and June 2021, We Effect and Vi Agroforestry sent out a survey to member-based farmers' organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America that cooperate with We Effect and Vi forest respectively. Together, the 38 organisations bring together 3.4 million smallholder farmers in a total of 20 countries.