



UNCCD Drought Tool Box

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- The United **Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** is currently testing a drought toolbox which uses a total of 15 to 30 different parameters to assess drought risk and vulnerability of a geographical region.
- UN convention was given the task of developing such a tool by countries during the previous Conference of Parties (CoP) meeting at the Ordos in China in 2017.
- The UNCCD has been working with other UN organisations including World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and experts to design the toolbox.
- Drought toolbox is an online web platform, a one-stop shop for all drought-preparedness measures with a link to the various relevant tools in other organisations.
- The tools are categorised in line with **three pillars of drought preparedness:**
 - Monitoring, early warning and forecasting tools used by decision makers.
 - Vulnerability assessment tools for identifying hotspots.
 - Risk mitigation tools with key “policy” and “technical” measures.
- The current procedure for declaring drought is very complex in most countries. This tool can be used by countries to assess and evaluate drought vulnerability in their regions. This can help countries improve their preparedness for dealing with drought.

Drought Declaration in India

- Drought is generally considered as a deficiency in rainfall /precipitation over an extended period, usually a season or more, resulting in a water shortage causing adverse impacts on vegetation, animals, and/or people.
- There is no single, legally accepted definition of drought in India. Some states resort to their own definitions of drought. **State Government is the final authority** when it comes to declaring a region as drought affected. Government of India has published two important documents in respect of managing a drought.

- The **first step** is to look at two mandatory indicators:
 - Rainfall deviation and dry spell.** Depending on the extent of the deviation, and whether or not there is a dry spell, the manual specifies various situations that may or may not be considered a drought trigger.
- The **second step** is to look at four impact indicators — **agriculture, vegetation indices based on remote sensing, soil moisture, and hydrology**. Each impact can be assessed on the basis of various indices.
 - **The intensity of drought:** The States may consider **any three of the four types** of the Impact Indicators (one from each) for assessment of drought, the intensity of the calamity and make a judgement.
 - If all three chosen indicators are in the 'severe' category, it amounts to severe drought; and if two of the three chosen impact indicators are in the 'moderate' or 'severe' class, it amounts to moderate drought.
- The **third step** comes in after both previous triggers have been set off. In that event, "States will conduct sample survey for ground in order to make a final determination of drought. The finding of field verification exercise will be the final basis for judging the intensity of drought as 'severe' or 'moderate'.
- Once a drought is determined, the state government needs to issue a notification specifying the geographical extent. The notification is valid for six months unless de-notified earlier.