



Need for Cooperatives in Tackling Climate Change

*This editorial is based on "[Greening India through cooperatives](#)" which was published in *The Hindu Business Line* on 06/06/2022. It talks about the significant role that is being played and could be played by the various cooperatives in the near future in mitigating climate change impacts.*

For Prelims: Cooperatives, Fundamental Rights, DPSP, Climate Change, Environment, Mitigation, Water Conservation, Waste Management, SDGs

For Mains: Significance of cooperatives in mitigating Climate change through sustainable use of resources.

With the rise in global temperature and extra people-contradictions all over the globe, there is a need to find innovative solutions to mitigate the major impact of climate change. Here, the cooperative societies with their unique solutions at the local level could provide alternative solutions to mitigate the risk of climate change. There is a need to support their role by the government with adequate funding and policy support.

What are Co-operatives?

- [Co-operatives](#) are people-centered enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realize their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.
- Cooperatives bring people together in a **democratic and equal way**. Whether the members are the customers, employees, users or residents, cooperatives are **democratically managed by the 'one member, one vote'** rule.
 - Members share equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital they put into the enterprise.

What are the Initiatives taken by the Government to Support Cooperatives in India?

- In the Indian context cooperatives are incorporated under [Article 19](#) of the Indian constitution as **"Unions and associations"**. Further **Article 43B** was added in the [Directive principle of state policy \(DPSP\), Part IV](#) regarding the promotion of cooperative societies.
- The [Constitution \(97th Amendment\) Act, 2011](#) added a new **Part IXB** right after **Part IXA (Municipals)** regarding the cooperatives working in India.
- Recently, a separate '[Ministry of Co-operation](#)' has been created by the Central Government for realizing the vision of '**Sahkar se Samridhi**' (Prosperity through Cooperation) and to give a **new push to the cooperative movement**.

How are Cooperatives Significant in Mitigating Climate Change?

- **Collective & Innovative Solutions:** Cooperatives collectively provide solutions to the **looming impact of rising temperature, loss of jobs, depletion of water resources**, degradation of land and forest resources and accumulation of wastes leading to health hazards.
- **Implementation through Consensus:** The explicit adoption of eco-social agendas by cooperatives is **viability and vitality**, providing a basis for **positive differentiation** and stronger ties to important constituencies, stakeholders, and strategic allies.
- **Emission Neutral Work:** Cooperatives **contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources** in several ways.
- **Add Innovation to Mission:** Cooperatives have the potential of **solving real-world problems** with their **innovative skills** like alternative sources of clean water for communities and helping to accomplish **sustainable goals** of energy access, energy efficiency, and reduced emissions.

Are There any Real-Life Examples?

- **Dhundi village in the Kheda** district of Gujarat had formed the **world's first solar irrigation** cooperative as **Dhundi Saur Urja Utpadak Sahakari Mandali (DSUUSM)** in 2016.
 - The members of this cooperative society are often called **solar entrepreneurs** who are harvesting solar energy.
 - This has enabled them to reap a better harvest and they are connected to the grid for additional income.
- **Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative** (India), the **umbrella co-operative**, is **turning wasteland back into the forest** in three north-central States of India, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- [Self Employed Women's Association's \(SEWA's\)](#) interventions regarding the **environment, climate, water, clean energy, and spreading awareness** are apt in the current times and support our national goals (sustainable development goals) to be achieved by 2030.
- There are also examples from leading **cooperatives giants** like **AMUL**, [IFFCO](#) and [NAFED](#) etc, diversified into **organic farming** by supporting the cooperatives for production certification, **adherence to food safety** and linking to the **market-driven value chains**.
 - The initiatives of this kind have made cooperatives oriented towards natural and organic farming and are all set to cater to the demand for organic produce.

What are the Challenges faced by the Cooperatives?

- **Neglected by the Policy Makers:** The role of cooperatives has been overlooked by policymakers at various levels **due to their lack of visibility**.
- **Lack of Awareness:** There is a lack of awareness about business strategies and knowledge about how the market works.
- **Lack of Funding and Capabilities:** Whether public or private sector, both are not showing any amount of confidence in this sector, as there is **little or no financial support for cooperatives**, so this harms their potential.
- **Poor Management:** In some cooperatives, due to the **lack of understanding of the market** and **poor level of skill set** of workers, many cooperatives underperform and are not able to provide the desired results.

What can be the Way Forward?

- **Dual Status for Cooperatives:** Their role should be accomplished and further support should be provided by various **stakeholders** including **government, corporates etc**, by bringing their most significant **competitive advantage** to the table, namely their **dual status as associations and enterprises** (as they are businesses which are run by local communities for example members of a village).
- **Economic, Social and Societal Role:** The complementarity of their **triple roles**, the economic, social, and societal role that is by making profits and sustaining a business they are supporting the economy, and by creating wealth they also give back to the society and fulfilling their social role.
- **Need for Enhanced Capabilities:** The **cooperative members** need to understand the

pervasive impact of climate change and environmental degradation (know-how of climate change developments).

- **Awareness and Action:** Reaching out to cooperatives for **raising awareness** about **environmental problems, training on adaptation and mitigation**, forging **alliances to work together**, and **investing in cooperative enterprises and innovations** are required to have a green agenda for a sustainable future.
- **Role of Government:** The government needs to work upon **enhancing their capabilities** by providing them with proper **guidance and support** from **market and business communities** so that they can get the desired level of **skill set** and knowledge of running an enterprise and can further utilize these capabilities to solve environmental problems.

Drishti Mains Question

“Cooperative sector has immense potential in mitigating the impacts of climate change; however, it has not been optimally realized so far.” In the light of the statement suggest measures to fully utilize the sector’s potential to reduce the impact of climate change.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Which of the following best describes/describes the aim of the ‘Green India Mission’ of the Government of India? (2016)

1. Incorporating environmental benefits and costs into the Union and State Budgets thereby implementing the ‘green accounting.
2. Launching the second green revolution to enhance agricultural output to ensure food security for one and all in the future.
3. Restoring and enhancing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)