# Khyber Pakhtunkhwa launches mountain agriculture policy to tackle climate change challenges



The mountainous regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan are facing escalating agricultural challenges attributed to the ongoing impacts of climate change. In recent years, the area has witnessed declining crop yields, degradation of fruit orchards, and rising concerns over food security, signalling a growing crisis in the province’s agrarian sectors.

Each year, disruptions caused by climate variability have led to the displacement of communities, jeopardised livelihoods, and steadily diminishing agricultural productivity. These combined factors are increasingly placing the province on the brink of a food security emergency, with risks projected to intensify if unaddressed.

In response to these mounting difficulties, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has initiated a significant policy directive aimed at revitalising agriculture in the province’s mountainous zones. According to official documents obtained by The News on Sunday, the Chief Minister’s Secretariat has appointed the Agriculture Department to prepare a final draft of the Mountain Agriculture Policy for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 45 days.

The preliminary materials associated with this initiative include a concept paper identifying key thematic areas such as soil quality, land use, and climate and environmental factors specific to mountainous terrain. Furthermore, the policy framework proposes strategic interventions focusing on value chain development, improved access to markets, promotion of modern agricultural technologies, research enhancement, and extension services in remote areas. It also recognises the important role of women and community mobilisation in fostering rural economic growth.

Outlined goals within the proposed policy emphasise improving food security, generating employment opportunities, and ensuring effective management of natural resources. Proposals include establishing a Mountain Agriculture Development Board, community seed banks, and initiatives targeting water and soil conservation.

While this policy blueprint offers a promising approach to addressing agricultural decline in the highlands, experts note that it currently remains in the conceptual stage without full implementation.

Speaking to The News on Sunday, Professor Dr Mohammad Nafees of the Environmental Sciences Department at the University of Peshawar highlighted that Pakistan’s efforts to tackle climate change encompass both mitigation and adaptation strategies. He remarked, “Fortunately, these efforts have moved beyond mere talk. A national climate change policy is in place, with action plans developed at both federal and provincial levels to support implementation.”

Dr Nafees explained that Pakistan is currently working on its National Adaptation Plan, a framework designed in the aftermath of the devastating 2022 floods to address climate vulnerabilities. However, he noted that full operationalisation has been hindered by technical difficulties and institutional fragmentation.

“One of the key obstacles is the complex web of stakeholders at both national and provincial levels,” Dr Nafees said. “With climate change affecting environment, agriculture, energy, industry and disaster management, it’s difficult to clearly define roles and responsibilities.”

Among the core agencies involved are the Environmental Protection Department, responsible for emission reduction and environmental regulation, and the Agriculture Department, which plays a critical role in climate adaptation. Agriculture remains a key sector, contributing around 20 to 25 percent of Pakistan’s GDP. Additionally, the Forestry Department participates in both mitigation efforts, through carbon sequestration, and adaptation activities such as ecosystem restoration. The Pakistan Meteorological Department and the National Disaster Management Authority provide vital climate data and coordinate disaster response.

Dr Nafees underlined that overlapping mandates and fragmented institutional arrangements complicate the implementation of a unified climate policy. He emphasised the need for clear, coordinated legal and departmental frameworks to align the roles of all stakeholders and streamline decision-making across diverse sectors and provinces.

In the provincial context, Barrister Dr Saif, advisor to the Chief Minister on information and public relations, described Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as one of the most vulnerable regions globally to climate-induced disasters. He pointed to the increasing incidence of floods, droughts, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF), and heatwaves affecting the province.

Dr Saif highlighted the proactive role of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in coordinating both structural and non-structural mitigation measures alongside relevant line departments. He detailed several initiatives, including the installation of seven telemetry stations across key rivers and nullahs such as Kalpani (Mardan), Swat, Panjkora (Dir), Budni (Peshawar), and Kabul River. These stations facilitate early warning systems for at-risk communities, complemented by SMS alert services to deliver timely notifications.

The PDMA is also promoting community-based disaster risk management and has developed standard operating procedures for efficient response efforts. Warehouses have been established in Jalozai and six vulnerable districts—Kohistan, Chitral, Torghar, Shangla, Battagram, and Hangu—to ensure swift distribution of non-food emergency supplies.

Ongoing initiatives mentioned by Dr Saif include the formulation of a Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Risk Management Plan, installation of a Hydro-Meteorological Guidance System to provide very early warnings, and conducting a Multi-Hazard Vulnerability Risk Assessment across the province. Additional warehouses are planned for remote districts to boost logistical capacity through allocations under the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

“These efforts reflect the province’s strategic approach to minimising disaster risks and building long-term resilience,” Dr Saif said.

The News International is reporting on the emerging agricultural and environmental challenges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, alongside the government’s developing policy responses and institutional efforts aimed at addressing the serious consequences of climate change on the province’s mountainous regions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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