

# The Tribune

## Change agricultural practices

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*By Danielle Nierenberg & Ronit Ridberg*

One of the biggest challenges facing farmers worldwide is how to grow food in increasingly extreme climatic conditions (news reports, “It’s pouring trouble for farmers” and “To cover losses, grow basmati, farmers told”, July 13).

As part of our research for Worldwatch Institute’s State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet, we have met with small-scale farmers, farmer’s groups and non-governmental organisations throughout Africa who are working creatively on agricultural innovations to mitigate the effects of flooding as well as drought.

One practice that has been successful in Sebakwe, Zimbabwe, is the return to planting traditional crops. These indigenous crops are more adapted to local conditions than commercial crops, and hence less vulnerable to extreme weather. For rice farmers in Senegal, heavy rains spur such intense weed growth that birds inundate the fields and decimate the crop. Organisations like the Africa Rice Centre, based in Benin, are working diligently to create solutions to this problem, without reliance on avicides to kill the birds.

The Indian government’s support of farmers through crop insurance is important. But as rains intensify over time (and periods of drought increase in other parts of the world), it is increasingly critical to commit resources to research new agricultural practices. Food security and farmers’ incomes are not the only thing at stake. Since agriculture is both a driver and impacted by climate change, finding ways to build resilience to climate change will be more important than ever before.

DANIELLE NIERENBERG, Co-project Director of the Worldwatch Institute’s Nourishing the Planet project,  
RONIT RIDBERG, Research Intern, Washington, DC, USA