

# **Contemporary Agriculture**



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# Contents

	Pg. No.
<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
<b>1. Introduction to Agriculture, Definition, History, Evolution and Importance</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Modern Agricultural Practices</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3. Types of Agriculture, Subsistence Farming and Commercial Agriculture</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4. Organic Farming and Urban Farming</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>5. Soil Science, its Composition, Types, Fertility and Health management</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6. Soil Conservation Techniques</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>7. Crop Production: Major Field Crops (Cereals and Pulses)</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>8. Crop Rotation and Polyculture</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>9. Pest and Disease Management in Agriculture Crops</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>10. Harvesting And Post-Harvest Management In Field Crops</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>11. Animal Husbandry and Livestock Management</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>12. Poultry Farming, Dairy Farming and Aquaculture</b>	<b>131</b>

<b>13. Agricultural Technology, Innovations and Mechanization in Agriculture</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>14. Biotechnology in Agriculture and Sustainable Farming</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>15. Agroforestry and Permaculture, Principles and Designs</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>16. Water Management in Agriculture and Irrigation Techniques</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>17. Water Conservation Methods and Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>18. Agricultural Economic Policy for Marketing and Pricing</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>19. Government Policies and Subsidies and International Trade in Agricultural Products</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>20. Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Impact</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>21. Role of Agriculture in Climate Change Mitigation</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>22. Food Security and Nutrition and Global Food Security Issues</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>23. Nutritional Value of Agricultural Product and Role of Agriculture in Public Health</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>24. Agricultural Extension Services for Farmers</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>25. Future of Agriculture, Challenges and Opportunities</b>	<b>293</b>

# Preface

Agriculture stands as one of humanity's oldest and most critical endeavors, shaping civilizations, economies and cultures for millennia. In the 21st century, this ancient practice faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities, making the study of contemporary agriculture both timely and essential.

This book, *Contemporary Agriculture*, aims to explore the dynamic evolution of agricultural systems, technologies, policies and practices in response to the pressing demands of a rapidly changing world. From the adoption of precision farming and biotechnology to addressing climate change, resource scarcity and global food security, agriculture today is at the nexus of science, sustainability and societal needs.

The content is designed to serve a broad audience, including students, researchers, policymakers and practitioners. It provides a comprehensive overview of critical topics such as sustainable farming practices, the integration of digital technologies, the role of agribusiness and the socioeconomic impacts of agricultural transitions. By highlighting both challenges and innovations, this book encourages readers to think critically about the future of agriculture and its role in ensuring a resilient and equitable global food system.

As you turn these pages, you will encounter diverse perspectives and insights, reflecting the interconnected nature of agriculture in the modern era. Whether you are a seasoned expert or a curious learner, it is our hope that this book inspires deeper understanding, constructive dialogue and meaningful action in shaping the future of agriculture.

We extend our gratitude to the contributors, experts and stakeholders who have shared their knowledge and experiences to enrich this work. We also acknowledge the farmers, scientists and innovators whose relentless efforts drive the progress of agriculture worldwide.

Let this book be a resource and a guide as we navigate the complexities and possibilities of contemporary agriculture.

***Editors***

## **Chapter 17**

# **Water Conservation Methods and Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources**

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## **Abstract**

Water conservation has become a critical aspect of ensuring sustainable agriculture and preserving natural ecosystems, particularly in light of the growing pressures of climate change on global water resources. As climate patterns shift, the availability and distribution of water are increasingly unpredictable, exacerbating the challenges of water scarcity, droughts and floods. This chapter explores the significance of water conservation methods in agriculture and urban settings, outlines the various techniques employed to conserve water and discusses the impact of climate change on water resources. Special emphasis is placed on innovative solutions and adaptive



strategies for both mitigating the effects of climate change and improving water management for a sustainable future.

**Keywords:** *Water conservation, climate change, water resources, agriculture, sustainable water management, drought, water scarcity, irrigation techniques, conservation methods, environmental impact.*

### **Introduction:**

Water is an essential resource that sustains life, supports agriculture and drives industries. However, the global availability of water is becoming increasingly uncertain due to growing demand, unsustainable water use and the profound impacts of climate change. Climate change is causing more frequent and intense droughts, floods and shifting precipitation patterns, significantly altering the distribution and availability of freshwater resources. As a result, it has become more critical than ever to adopt water conservation methods to safeguard water availability for future generations.

This chapter discusses the various water conservation techniques used in different sectors, such as agriculture, industry and urban areas and examines how climate change is influencing global water resources. It also explores the need for sustainable water management practices and the potential for new technologies to address water scarcity.

### **Water Conservation Methods:**

Water is one of the most vital resources for sustaining life on Earth, yet it is becoming increasingly scarce due to factors such as population growth, climate change and unsustainable usage patterns. Water conservation is critical for ensuring that future generations will have access to this essential resource. Whether for agricultural, industrial or domestic use, implementing effective water conservation methods is crucial for preserving water resources, improving water use efficiency and ensuring sustainability. This section delves into the various water conservation methods that can be applied across different sectors, such as agriculture, urban environments and industrial processes. We will explore both traditional and modern techniques that promote the responsible use and management of water.

### **Water Conservation in Agriculture:**

Agriculture is the largest consumer of water, accounting for approximately 70% of global freshwater use. Efficient water management in agriculture is essential for maintaining food production, especially in regions experiencing

water scarcity. Here are several key methods used in agricultural water conservation:

### **1. Efficient Irrigation Systems:**

Irrigation is the process of artificially applying water to soil to assist in the growth of crops. It plays a pivotal role in agricultural productivity, especially in regions with unreliable rainfall. Efficient irrigation systems focus on delivering water directly to the root zones of plants, minimizing wastage and improving crop yields. The following types of irrigation techniques are commonly employed:

- **Drip Irrigation:** Drip irrigation is one of the most water-efficient systems available. It delivers water directly to the plant's root zone through a network of tubes and emitters. This minimizes evaporation and runoff, ensuring that water is used efficiently. Drip irrigation is particularly beneficial for crops that require frequent but small amounts of water, such as vegetables, fruits and flowers.
- **Sprinkler Irrigation:** In sprinkler irrigation, water is distributed over the field in the form of small droplets through a system of pipes and sprinkler heads. This method is widely used for field crops, lawns and garden landscapes. Sprinklers can be adjusted to different flow rates, ensuring uniform water distribution. Though less efficient than drip irrigation, it still significantly reduces water wastage when compared to traditional flood irrigation.
- **Subsurface Irrigation:** This method involves the placement of pipes or tubing below the surface of the soil, allowing water to be delivered directly to the root zone. It minimizes water loss through evaporation and runoff and is particularly useful in areas with sandy or poorly draining soils.
- **Furrow Irrigation:** In furrow irrigation, water is directed into channels or furrows between crop rows. It is a widely used technique for row crops such as cotton, maize and vegetables. Though not as efficient as drip or sprinkler irrigation, it is more water-efficient than flood irrigation.

### **2. Rainwater Harvesting:**

Rainwater harvesting is the practice of collecting and storing rainwater for future use. This method can significantly reduce dependence on traditional

water sources, such as rivers and groundwater, especially in areas with unpredictable rainfall patterns. Rainwater can be collected from rooftops, paved surfaces and other catchment areas, and then stored in tanks, ponds or reservoirs. It is an effective way to conserve water for irrigation, household use or industrial purposes.

In agriculture, rainwater harvesting can be used to supplement irrigation systems, particularly during dry periods. It can also be used to recharge groundwater aquifers, improving long-term water availability in rural areas.

### **3. Soil Moisture Management:**

Maintaining soil moisture is essential for crop growth and water conservation. Several techniques can be employed to improve soil moisture retention:

- **Mulching:** Mulching involves covering the soil surface with organic or synthetic materials to reduce evaporation and protect the soil from erosion. Mulches can be made from straw, grass clippings, leaves or plastic sheeting. Mulching is especially effective for conserving water in vegetable gardens, fruit orchards and vineyard systems.
- **Cover Crops:** Planting cover crops, such as legumes, grasses or clover, helps to improve soil structure, increase organic matter and reduce evaporation. These crops also help retain moisture in the soil, reducing the need for irrigation. In addition, cover crops can suppress weeds and prevent soil erosion.
- **Conservation Tillage:** Conservation tillage is a method of minimizing soil disturbance by leaving crop residues on the field. This improves soil structure, increases water retention and reduces the need for irrigation. It is an effective method for conserving both soil moisture and soil fertility.

### **4. Drought-Resistant Crops:**

The development and planting of drought-resistant crop varieties are essential in regions prone to water scarcity. These crops are genetically modified or bred to withstand dry conditions, requiring less water than traditional varieties. Examples include drought-tolerant varieties of maize, wheat and rice. These crops can thrive in areas with low rainfall, reducing the need for irrigation.

## **Water Conservation in Urban Areas:**

Urban areas are major consumers of water and population growth, urbanization and industrialization are placing increasing pressure on existing water resources. Here are some of the key water conservation methods employed in urban areas:

### **1. Water-Efficient Fixtures:**

One of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to reduce water consumption in households and businesses is by installing water-efficient fixtures. These fixtures include:

- **Low-Flow Faucets and Showerheads:** Low-flow faucets and showerheads reduce water usage by limiting the flow rate while maintaining adequate water pressure for daily activities. These fixtures are designed to use less water without sacrificing performance.
- **Water-Efficient Toilets:** Toilets are one of the largest water consumers in urban homes and buildings. Water-efficient toilets, which use less water per flush (typically 1.28 gallons or less), can significantly reduce water usage. Dual-flush toilets, which offer a choice between a low-volume flush for liquid waste and a higher-volume flush for solid waste, are also popular in water-saving initiatives.

### **2. Greywater Recycling:**

Greywater is the relatively clean wastewater generated from household activities such as bathing, washing dishes and laundry. Greywater recycling systems collect and treat this water for reuse in non-potable applications, such as landscape irrigation and flushing toilets. Recycling greywater can reduce the demand for fresh water, decrease sewage treatment costs and conserve water resources.

### **3. Rainwater Harvesting in Urban Areas:**

Urban rainwater harvesting involves capturing rainwater from rooftops, parking lots and other impervious surfaces. The water is filtered, stored and used for non-potable purposes, such as irrigation, landscape maintenance and industrial processes. In large cities, rainwater harvesting can reduce the strain on municipal water systems, particularly during periods of high demand or water shortages.

#### **4. Water-Smart Landscaping (Xeriscaping):**

Water-smart landscaping, also known as xeriscaping, is a method of designing outdoor spaces with water-efficient plants and irrigation techniques. This approach reduces the need for supplemental watering by using native, drought-tolerant plants that require less water. Xeriscaping also emphasizes soil management, efficient irrigation and minimizing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which can pollute water resources.

#### **5. Leak Detection and Repair:**

A significant portion of water loss in urban areas is due to leaks in pipes and distribution systems. Regular maintenance, leak detection and prompt repairs can significantly reduce water wastage. Advanced technologies, such as smart meters and sensors, can help detect leaks early, allowing for timely repairs and minimizing water loss.

#### **Water Conservation in Industry:**

Industries are significant consumers of water, especially in water-intensive sectors such as manufacturing, mining, food processing and textiles. Effective water conservation practices in industrial settings can lead to substantial savings and reduce the strain on local water resources. Here are some water conservation methods employed in industrial processes:

##### **1. Closed-Loop Water Systems:**

In a closed-loop water system, water is used, treated and reused within the same facility, reducing the need for fresh water. This system minimizes water consumption and prevents the discharge of wastewater into the environment. Closed-loop systems are common in industries like textiles, paper manufacturing and power generation.

##### **2. Water Recycling and Reuse:**

Many industries recycle and reuse water from their operations for non-potable purposes, such as cooling, cleaning or irrigation. This reduces the demand for fresh water and helps companies save on water costs. For example, the food and beverage industry often uses recycled water for cleaning equipment and cooling systems.

##### **3. Water-Efficient Technologies:**

Adopting advanced technologies, such as membrane filtration, reverse osmosis and water-efficient cooling systems, can significantly reduce water