

Better agri data will help tackle climate challenges: Bill Gates

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Better statistical information and innovative tools will help minimise the damage of climate change on the farm sector, billionaire philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said on Monday.

As the effects of climate change on smallholder farmers will increase in future, there is an opportunity for engaging with the private sector in the field of agriculture and play an important role in boosting the crop yields, he said.

“At a time when we have to increase productivity, climate change is making it far difficult. Understanding how the changing weather is affecting our crops and productivity and how we can adapt to that — requires best work in agriculture statistics including use of new tools,” Gates said in his keynote address at the 8th global conference on agri-statistics here.

Referring to India’s soil health card, he said the soil quality data helps farmers determine what fertilisers to use. However, there

are opportunities to add additional data to the existing one and make a detailed soil mapping.

Noting that smallholder farmers are most affected by the climate change across the world, Gates said these farmers are very poor and their children suffer from malnutrition, especially stunting issues.

“One drought and one flood is enough to wipe out any savings of their family. The intensity and frequency of both drought and flood is going to change. The effects of climate change will increase,” he said adding that this is also an issue in India.

Inaugurating the event, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said, “India is an agriculture-based economy. The government depends on data for policy making.”

A four-day global conference is being organised by the Agriculture Ministry in partnership with the United Nation’s FAO, the US Department of Agriculture, the World Bank, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other agencies.