

Title: Water-energy-climate ‘nexus’: truthiness and knowledge gaps

Speaker: Soumya Balasubramanya, World Bank

Area: Economics

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Abstract:

With rising physical and economic scarcity of water, increasing or sustaining agricultural production while limiting or reducing consumptive water use is an urgent challenge. In this talk, we will examine the case of four countries—India, China, western United States, and Israel—where there is a long history of irrigated agriculture with significant public and private investments to understand why this goal is difficult to achieve. We will also take a deep(ish) dive into examining a case study from India on an emerging class of ‘positive incentives’ solutions to reduce agricultural water use, reflecting on why these may have limited efficacy and unintended consequences. We will conclude with a reflection on solar-PV irrigation in South Asia, highlighting misconceptions and risks that need urgent examination for policy.

Speaker Profile:



I conduct rigorous research on poverty and development challenges in Asia and Africa, at the nexus of water, food, health and energy; using methods of program evaluation, micro-econometrics and non-market valuation. Gender, equity and environmental considerations are important components of my work.

My research contributes to advancing knowledge on understanding ‘fractal’ vulnerabilities faced by the poor.

My work has been used by development finance institutions and recipient governments to inform policy, and to adaptively course-correct ongoing investments and programs.

Additionally, I contribute to building research capacity in low, middle and high income countries, by mentoring and advising early-career persons interested in using economics to explore issues at the nexus of poverty, water, food, health, energy and environment.

I am currently affiliated with the World Bank and can be reached at sbalasubramanya[at]worldbank[dot]org. Between 2011-2021, I was affiliated with the CGIAR.

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