THE ECONOMIC TIMES | News

English Edition ▾ | 11 June, 2026, 01:47 PM IST | **Today's ePaper**

El Niño needs monitoring, but India better prepared than earlier: Bayer's Simon Wiebusch

By Ashish Pandey, ET Online Last Updated: Jun 05, 2026, 10:05:00 AM IST

Synopsis
Farmers are increasingly recognising climate volatility as a long-term reality, driving greater adoption of climate-smart practices, says Simon Wiebusch.


Simon Wiebusch, CEO of Bayer's Crop Science Division for India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

Weather variability remains one of the biggest challenges facing **Indian agriculture**, with small and marginal farmers particularly vulnerable due to their limited ability to absorb production and income shocks. The prospect of **El Niño** conditions and below-normal rainfall, especially in rainfed regions, warrants close monitoring, says **Simon Wiebusch**, CEO of **Bayer**'s Crop Science Division for India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Indian agriculture, however, is better equipped to deal with climate-related risks than it was a decade ago, says Wiebusch in an interview with *The Economic Times Digital*. The farmers are increasingly acknowledging climate volatility as a long-term challenge, leading to greater adoption of climate-smart farming practices, efficient water management, and technologies designed to mitigate risk, he says.

According to him, the priority now is preparedness, ensuring timely access to quality inputs, agronomic advice, **weather intelligence**, and the sustainable solutions.

Notably, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has revised its Southwest Monsoon rainfall forecast to 90% of the long-period average (LPA), amid concerns over a developing El Niño. The weather phenomenon has an estimated 80% chance of emerging between June and August and is expected to persist through November.

Overall agri ecosystem

Addressing recent geopolitical tensions and supply-chain disruptions, Wiebusch underscores the need for resilient agricultural value chains. "Smallholder farmers are often the most exposed and vulnerable to volatility in input availability, logistics, and commodity pricing. In response, the industry is accelerating diversification, regional manufacturing, and supply-chain resilience strategies. India is becoming increasingly strategic in this transition, both as a manufacturing and innovation hub. Strengthening local capabilities and diversified supply networks will be critical not only for farmer resilience but also for long-term global food security," he says.

Wiebusch says that while India has made significant strides in agriculture, sustaining faster growth will require effective execution at scale. With farmers under pressure to produce more, using fewer resources amid growing climate uncertainty, he believes the next opportunity lies in accelerating the adoption of science-based solutions through farmer-centric ecosystems that combine high-performing seeds, crop protection, mechanisation, digital advisory, financing and market access. "With our digital platforms like FarmRise, which recently crossed 5 million registered farmers in India, we are trying to help bridge this gap by improving access to timely agronomic intelligence and farmer services at scale," he adds.

Digital agriculture scope

Wiebusch says India has the potential to become one of the world's most scalable digital agriculture markets because of rapid smartphone penetration, strong agri-tech innovation, and increasing digitization across rural ecosystems. However, technology adoption will depend on delivering clearer outcomes for our farmers - improving productivity, optimizing input use, reducing risk, and strengthening profitability, he adds.

"The future of Indian agriculture will increasingly be "phygital"—combining on-ground agronomy expertise with AI-enabled and data-driven solutions," says Wiebusch.

On regenerative agriculture, Wiebusch says large-scale adoption in India will depend on its economic viability for farmers. Sustainable practices gain traction when they improve productivity, optimise input use, reduce risks, and enhance long-term resilience.

*(You can now subscribe to our **Economic Times WhatsApp channel**)*

(Originally published on Jun 04, 2026)