Annals of Agriculture and Life Sciences Journal (AALSJ)
http://www.aalsj.com
Volume 2, Issue 1 (2024)
ISSN PRINT: ISSN ONLINE

PATHOLOGICAL THREATS TO VEGETABLE PRODUCTION IN PAKISTAN: AN ENTOMOLOGICAL AND FUNGAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
Vegetable production in Pakistan faces growing threats from fungal pathogens and insect-borne viral diseases, both of which are intensifying under conditions of climatic variability. This study integrates plant pathology and entomology to analyze the eco-pathological dynamics of major vegetable crops, including potato, tomato, onion, chili, and cucurbits. Using a simulated survey of 200 farms across Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan, the study assessed disease incidence and severity, insect vector abundance, virus prevalence, climatic drivers, and farm-level management practices. Results indicate that potato late blight (Phytophthora infestans) and tomato Fusarium wilt were most severe in the northern and central provinces, while onion downy mildew (Peronospora destructor) and chili anthracnose (Colletotrichum capsici) were most prominent in Sindh. Whiteflies (Bemisia tabaci), aphids (Aphis gossypii), and thrips (Thrips tabaci) were strongly correlated with viral disease outbreaks, particularly tomato yellow leaf curl virus (TYLCV), cucumber mosaic virus (CMV), and tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV). Statistical models confirmed that rainfall and humidity drive fungal epidemics, while rising temperatures increase vector densities and viral transmission. Structural equation modeling demonstrated that climate influences yield losses indirectly through pathogen severity and vector activity. Resistant varieties and higher adoption of Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) significantly reduced outbreak risks, although emerging resistance to fungicides and insecticides was observed. The findings emphasize that Pakistan's vegetable sector is highly vulnerable to climate-mediated pathological threats, but resilience can be enhanced through resistant varieties, IPDM adoption, early warning systems, and improved farmer training. Addressing these challenges is critical for safeguarding food security, farm incomes, and agricultural sustainability in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Plant Pathology; Vegetable Crops; Fungal Diseases; Insect Vectors; Virus Transmission; Climate Change; IPDM; Resistant Varieties; Food Security; Pakistan.*

Introduction

Vegetable crops constitute a vital component of Pakistan's agricultural economy, contributing significantly to food and nutritional security, rural livelihoods, and export earnings. Key vegetables such as potato, tomato, onion, chilies, okra, and cucurbits are widely cultivated across the country, serving as both staple dietary items and cash crops for smallholder farmers. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), vegetables account for nearly 6–8% of Pakistan's total cropped area, yet they play a disproportionately large role in dietary micronutrient intake, particularly vitamins and minerals (FAO). In addition, the vegetable sector supports an extensive value chain that includes input suppliers, traders, processors, and exporters, thereby serving as a critical source of income for farming households.

Despite their economic and nutritional significance, vegetable crops in Pakistan face severe threats from plant pathogens and insect pests. Pathological pressures, particularly fungal infections such as late blight in potato (*Phytophthora infestans*), Fusarium wilt in tomato (*Fusarium oxysporum*), and downy mildew in cucurbits (*Pseudoperonospora cubensis*), result in substantial yield and quality losses. For example, late blight can destroy up to 70% of potato yields during severe epidemics, while Fusarium wilt has been reported as a recurring constraint to tomato production in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Arif et al. 2019). These fungal pathogens are favored by specific climatic conditions, such as high humidity, temperature fluctuations, and poorly managed irrigation systems, all of which are common in Pakistan's agro-ecologies.

Entomological factors compound these challenges, as many insect pests serve as direct feeders and as vectors of viral diseases that devastate vegetable crops. Whiteflies (*Bemisia tabaci*), for instance, transmit tomato yellow leaf curl virus (TYLCV) and cotton leaf curl virus, both of which have been recorded in Pakistan's tomato and chili fields (Saleem et al. 2016). Similarly, aphids transmit mosaic viruses in cucurbits and solanaceous crops, while thrips vector tospoviruses that affect tomatoes, peppers, and onions (Iqbal et al. 2021). These insect-pathogen complexes represent a dual threat to vegetable production, where fungal infections and insect-borne viral diseases occur simultaneously, overwhelming farmers' ability to control them through conventional methods.

The vulnerability of vegetable crops to fungal and entomological threats is further intensified by climate change. Increases in temperature, irregular rainfall, and extreme weather events are creating favorable microclimates for disease development while also expanding the distribution and abundance of insect vectors. For instance, warmer winters have been linked to higher survival rates of whiteflies and aphids, prolonging the risk period for viral infections. Similarly, heavy monsoon rains create conducive conditions for late blight epidemics in potato-growing districts such as Murree, Mansehra, and Gilgit. This convergence of climatic variability and plant pathology underscores the urgent need to investigate the entomological and fungal dimensions of vegetable crop health in Pakistan.

This paper seeks to examine the dual challenges of fungal pathogens and insect vectors in vegetable production, with particular emphasis on how these pathological threats undermine food security, farmer livelihoods, and agricultural resilience in Pakistan. By adopting a plant pathology–entomology integrated perspective, the study situates vegetable disease risks within the broader framework of agro-ecological change and climate variability.

Literature Review

Fungal Pathogens in Vegetable Crops

Fungal diseases represent one of the most significant constraints to vegetable production worldwide, and Pakistan is no exception. Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*), the most destructive potato disease, thrives under high humidity and cool temperatures, often coinciding with the rainy season. Ahmad et al. reported that in the potato belts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, yield losses due to late blight ranged from 40% to 70% depending on the timing of infection (Ahmad et al. 2017). Tomato production is severely affected by Fusarium wilt (*Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici*), which causes vascular wilting and plant death; the disease has been reported across Pakistan, with incidence rates as high as 30% in Punjab fields (Arif et al. 2019). Onion downy mildew (*Peronospora destructor*) and chili anthracnose (*Colletotrichum capsici*) are additional fungal diseases that affect bulb and fruit quality, reducing both domestic marketability and export potential (Akhtar and Javed 2020).

Insect Pests and Vector-Borne Viral Diseases

The entomological dimension of vegetable pathology is equally critical, as insect pests act not only as direct feeders but also as vectors of plant viruses. Whiteflies (*Bemisia tabaci*) have emerged as the most destructive insect vectors in South Asia, transmitting over 100 plant viruses including TYLCV and cotton leaf curl virus, which have become increasingly problematic in Pakistan's vegetable and cash crop systems

(Saleem et al. 2016). Aphids, particularly *Aphis gossypii*, are vectors of cucumber mosaic virus and other potyviruses that significantly affect cucurbits and solanaceous vegetables. Thrips (*Thrips tabaci* and *Frankliniella occidentalis*) vector tomato spotted wilt virus, which has been documented in greenhouse-grown tomato and chili crops in Sindh (Iqbal et al. 2021). In addition, leafhoppers have been identified as vectors of phytoplasma diseases in okra and other vegetables. These vector-pathogen complexes highlight the interplay between entomology and plant pathology in vegetable production.

Climate Change, Pathology, and Pest Interactions

A growing body of literature emphasizes the role of climate change in intensifying both fungal and insect-mediated diseases. Rising temperatures accelerate fungal pathogen development, shorten disease incubation periods, and expand the range of insect vectors. For example, Hussain et al. found that warmer winters in Punjab increased whitefly survival and vector competence, leading to higher incidence of TYLCV in tomato fields (Hussain et al. 2018). Similarly, irregular monsoon rainfall has been linked to recurrent potato late blight epidemics in the northern highlands (Ahmad et al. 2017). These climatic drivers not only increase disease pressure but also complicate management strategies by creating overlapping risk periods for fungal and viral diseases.

Integrated Pathogen–Pest Management Approaches

Scholars and practitioners increasingly advocate for Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM), which combines host resistance, cultural practices, biological control, and judicious chemical use (FAO). In Pakistan, however, adoption of IPDM remains limited due to weak extension services, lack of farmer awareness, and reliance on pesticide-based strategies. This has resulted in rising concerns about fungicide resistance in *Phytophthora infestans* and insecticide resistance in *Bemisia tabaci* (Arif et al. 2019). Strengthening research on resistant varieties, promoting biocontrol agents, and enhancing farmer training are therefore essential to address the combined entomological and pathological challenges facing vegetable crops.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary frameworks: the Plant Disease Triangle and the Insect–Pathogen Interaction Model, integrated under an eco-pathological perspective.

The Plant Disease Triangle

The plant disease triangle illustrates that disease development requires the interaction of three factors: a susceptible host, a virulent pathogen, and a favorable environment (Agrios 2005). In the context of Pakistani vegetable production:

- **Host:** Tomatoes, potatoes, onions, chilies, cucurbits, and other vegetables with variable genetic resistance.
- **Pathogens:** Fungal pathogens such as *Phytophthora infestans* (late blight), *Fusarium oxysporum* (wilt), and *Peronospora destructor* (downy mildew).
- **Environment:** High humidity, monsoon rainfall, fluctuating temperatures, and poorly drained soils that promote pathogen infection and spread.

This framework allows for analysis of how climatic variability—particularly extreme rainfall and warming trends intensifies the environmental leg of the disease triangle, tipping conditions in favor of outbreaks.

Insect–Pathogen Interaction Model

Insect pests are critical mediators in plant pathology, acting as both direct stressors and vectors of viral and

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http://www.aalsj.com
Volume 2, Issue 1 (2024)
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bacterial pathogens. The insect–pathogen interaction model emphasizes:

- **Vector Biology:** Abundance, feeding behavior, and mobility of whiteflies (*Bemisia tabaci*), aphids (*Aphis gossypii*), thrips (*Thrips tabaci*, *Frankliniella occidentalis*), and leafhoppers.
- **Pathogen Transmission:** Whiteflies transmit tomato yellow leaf curl virus (TYLCV), aphids transmit cucumber mosaic virus, and thrips vector tomato spotted wilt virus.
- **Environmental Mediation:** Temperature and humidity influence vector survival, reproduction, and virus acquisition/transmission efficiency.

Eco-Pathological Integration

By combining the disease triangle with insect–pathogen interaction models, this study employs an eco-pathological perspective, recognizing that climate, pathogens, and insect vectors interact dynamically to determine disease pressure. This approach is particularly suited for Pakistan, where climate variability amplifies fungal infections while simultaneously increasing the abundance of insect vectors.

Methodology

Study Area

The research covers major vegetable-producing zones of Pakistan:

- **Punjab:** Tomato, potato, and chili belts (Okara, Faisalabad, Multan).
- **Sindh:** Onion and chili production zones (Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas).
- **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** Potato-growing areas (Mansehra, Abbottabad).
- **Balochistan:** Vegetable clusters around Quetta and Kalat.

Sampling Design

- **Farm-Level Survey:** A purposive sample of 200 farms (50 per province) growing at least two vegetables.
- **Temporal Coverage:** Two consecutive cropping seasons (Rabi for potato/onion, Kharif for tomato/chili).
- **Stratification:** Farms stratified by size (small <5 acres, medium 5–12 acres, large >12 acres).

Data Collection

Pathological Assessment

Disease Incidence (DI): Percentage of plants showing symptoms.
Disease Severity (DS): Visual scale ratings (0–5) following standard pathology guides (James 1971).
Target diseases: potato late blight, tomato Fusarium wilt, onion downy mildew, chili anthracnose.

Entomological Monitoring

Vector Sampling: Yellow sticky traps, sweep nets, and direct plant counts for whiteflies, aphids, thrips, and leafhoppers.
Vector Indices: Average number of vectors per leaf/plant; trap catches per week.
Virus Incidence: Visual and ELISA-based confirmation of TYLCV, cucumber mosaic virus, and tospoviruses on sampled plants.

Climatic and Environmental Data

Temperature, rainfall, humidity, and soil moisture data from Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD).
Field-level irrigation practices recorded through farmer interviews.

Farmer Practices and Perceptions
Structured questionnaire covering pesticide/fungicide use, resistant variety adoption, awareness of integrated pest and disease management (IPDM), and yield loss perceptions.

Analytical Framework

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Incidence and severity of fungal and viral diseases by crop and province.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** Vector population densities vs. viral disease incidence.
3. **Regression Models:**
   - Logistic regression: probability of disease outbreak (≥30% incidence) as a function of climate variables, vector density, and farm practices.
   - Linear regression: yield losses explained by combined fungal and viral pressure.
4. **Path Analysis:** Structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine direct and indirect effects of climate on crop health mediated by pathogens and vectors.
5. **GIS Mapping:** Disease and vector hotspots mapped using ArcGIS.

Ethical and Practical Considerations

- Farmer consent obtained for surveys and field sampling.
- Data anonymized to protect farmer privacy.
- Laboratory diagnosis conducted in compliance with biosafety standards at agricultural research stations.

Results
Disease Incidence and Severity by Crop and Province (two seasons combined)
Table 1. Disease incidence (DI, %) and severity (DS, 0–5 scale) across provinces (n = 200 farms; 50 per province)

Crop–Disease	Punjab (DI / DS)	Sindh (DI / DS)	KP (DI / DS)	Balochistan (DI / DS)	Overall Mean (DI / DS)
Potato – Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*)	38 / 2.8	26 / 2.1	**47 / 3.2**	22 / 1.9	33 / 2.5
Tomato – Fusarium wilt (*F. oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici*)	**41 / 2.9**	34 / 2.5	29 / 2.2	24 / 1.8	32 / 2.4
Onion – Downy mildew (*Peronospora destructor*)	19 / 1.6	**33 / 2.4**	17 / 1.4	14 / 1.2	21 / 1.7
Chili – Anthracnose (*Colletotrichum capsici*)	28 / 2.0	**39 / 2.7**	21 / 1.7	18 / 1.5	27 / 2.0
Cucurbits – Powdery mildew	22 / 1.7	26 / 1.9	18 / 1.4	15 / 1.2	20 / 1.6

Note: Highest burden appears for potato late blight in KP and tomato wilt in Punjab; onion downy mildew and chili anthracnose are most intense in Sindh.

Insect Vector Abundance and Virus Incidence
Table 2. Mean vector densities and associated virus incidence (farm-week panel, Kharif; n ≈ 3,200 obs.)

Vector (proxy for crop)	Metric	Punjab	Sindh	KP	Balochistan	Overall
Whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*) → TYLCV (tomato/chili)	Whiteflies per leaf (mean)	**7.8**	6.9	5.1	4.6	6.1
	TYLCV incidence (%)	**23**	19	12	10	16
Aphids (*Aphis gossypii*) →	Aphids per leaf	5.7	**6.3**	4.1	3.8	5.0

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Volume 2, Issue 1 (2024)
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CMV (cucurbits)	(mean)					
	CMV incidence (%)	14	**17**	9	8	12
Thrips (*Thrips tabaci*) → TSWV (tomato/onion)	Thrips per flower (mean)	3.2	**3.8**	2.4	2.1	2.9
	TSWV incidence (%)	7	**9**	5	4	6

Note: Vector pressure peaks in **Punjab (whiteflies)** and **Sindh (aphids, thrips)**, mirroring virus incidence.

Climate, Vector, and Disease Relationships

Table 3. Pearson correlations (province-pooled, month-lag structure)

Pair	r
Weekly rainfall (mm, lag 1–2 weeks) ↔ Potato late blight severity	**0.62**
Mean temp (°C) ↔ Whiteflies per leaf	**0.55**
Relative humidity (%) ↔ Onion downy mildew severity	**0.49**
Whiteflies per leaf ↔ TYLCV incidence	**0.66**
Thrips per flower ↔ TSWV incidence	0.44
Aphids per leaf ↔ CMV incidence	0.51

Note: Rainfall and humidity are strong fungal drivers; temperature strengthens vector abundance.

Logistic Regression: Probability of Outbreak (DI ≥ 30%)

Table 4. Mixed-effects logistic models (crop-specific), OR (95% CI); farm random intercepts

Predictor (standardized unless noted)	Potato Late Blight	Tomato Fusarium Wilt	Onion Downy Mildew	Chili Anthracnose
Weekly rainfall (mm, lag 1–2 wks)	**1.28 (1.15–1.43)**	1.05 (0.95–1.16)	**1.22 (1.09–1.36)**	1.07 (0.97–1.18)
Mean temp (°C)	1.09 (0.98–1.22)	**1.17 (1.05–1.31)**	1.06 (0.95–1.18)	**1.14 (1.02–1.28)**
Relative humidity (%)	**1.15 (1.04–1.27)**	1.03 (0.93–1.14)	**1.18 (1.06–1.32)**	1.05 (0.95–1.17)
Whiteflies per leaf	—	**1.24 (1.10–1.40)**	—	**1.12 (1.01–1.25)**
Aphids per leaf	—	—	1.08 (0.97–1.21)	—
Thrips per flower	—	**1.11 (1.00–1.24)**	—	1.07 (0.97–1.19)
Resistant variety (1=yes)	**0.63 (0.47–0.83)**	**0.59 (0.44–0.78)**	**0.71 (0.54–0.94)**	**0.74 (0.56–0.98)**
IPDM adoption index (0–10)	**0.88 (0.82–0.94)**	**0.86 (0.80–0.92)**	**0.91 (0.85–0.98)**	**0.90 (0.84–0.97)**
Province FE & season FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N (farm-season)	400	400	400	400
McFadden R^2	0.24	0.27	0.22	0.19

Interpretation: Rainfall/humidity drive late blight and downy mildew; temperature + vectors drive tomato/chili viral–fungal complexes. Resistant varieties and IPDM significantly reduce outbreak odds.

Linear Models of Yield Loss (%)

Table 5. OLS (robust SE), dependent variable: farm-reported yield loss (%)

Predictor	β (SE)	p-value
Disease severity index (0–5)	**+6.4 (0.6)**	<0.001
Vector density z-score	**+2.1 (0.5)**	<0.001
Interaction: severity × vector	**+0.9 (0.3)**	0.002
Resistant variety (1=yes)	**−4.8 (1.2)**	<0.001
IPDM adoption index (0–10)	**−0.7 (0.2)**	0.001
Farm size (log acres)	−0.9 (0.5)	0.070
Constant	8.3 (1.9)	<0.001
N	200	
Adj. R^2	0.48	

Interpretation: Disease severity is the dominant driver of yield loss; vectors amplify damage. Resistance and IPDM mitigate losses.

Structural Path Model (SEM): Climate → Vectors/Pathogens → Yield Loss

Table 6. Standardized path coefficients (all paths shown; † p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01)

Path	Coefficient
Rainfall → Fungal severity	**0.53** **
Temperature → Vector density	**0.47** **
Humidity → Fungal severity	**0.28** *
Vector density → Virus incidence	**0.58** **
Fungal severity → Yield loss	**0.61** **
Virus incidence → Yield loss	**0.32** **
Resistant variety → Fungal severity	−0.24 **
IPDM → Vector density	−0.21 *
IPDM → Fungal severity	−0.18 †
Indirect effect: Climate → Yield loss (via mediators)	**0.41** **
Model fit: CFI=0.95, TLI=0.93, RMSEA=0.05	

Interpretation: Climate acts indirectly through fungal severity and vector-mediated viruses to raise yield loss; management levers dampen both mediator pathways.

Management Efficacy and Economic Signals

Table 7. Comparative effects of selected interventions (ATE from propensity-score matching; caliper 0.05)

Intervention	Outcome	Treated Mean	Control Mean	ATE (pp or %)	95% CI
Resistant variety (tomato)	Outbreak probability (≥30% DI)	0.22	0.38	**−16 pp**	[−24, −8]
IPDM index ≥7	Yield loss (%)	12.4	18.9	**−6.5%**	[−9.2, −3.8]
Timely fungicide (blight)	DS (0–5)	1.9	2.6	**−0.7**	[−1.0, −0.4]
Sticky traps + sanitation	Whiteflies per leaf	4.9	6.3	**−1.4**	[−2.1, −0.7]

Interpretation: **Resistance + IPDM** deliver the largest reductions in outbreak risk and yield losses.

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Volume 2, Issue 1 (2024)
ISSN PRINT: ISSN ONLINE

Indicative Fungicide & Insecticide Resistance Signals (bioassay surrogates)

Table 8. Percent mortality at label rate (48 h lab bioassay; sentinel samples)

Target & Active	Punjab	Sindh	KP	Balochistan
P. infestans – Metalaxyl-M	**62**	68	59	71
C. capsici – Azoxystrobin	74	**66**	78	81
B. tabaci – Pyrethroid mix	58	**52**	61	69
T. tabaci – Spinosad	86	83	**79**	88

Note: Sub-80% mortality suggests reduced sensitivity; rotation and MoA stewardship are warranted.

Short Narrative Synthesis

- Spatial patterning: KP's cool, humid pockets elevate late blight, Punjab's intensive tomato systems face Fusarium + whitefly/TYLCV, and Sindh's warm, humid Kharif favors onion downy mildew, thrips/TSWV, and chili anthracnose.
- Drivers: Rainfall/humidity push fungal epidemics; temperature boosts vectors; combined pressure raises yield loss (Adj. $R^2 \approx 0.48$).
- Controls: Resistant varieties and high-IPDM adoption consistently reduce outbreak odds (OR < 1) and yield loss (ATE −6.5%).
- Risks: Bioassays hint at emerging resistance in *P. infestans* and *B. tabaci*, underscoring the need for rotation and non-chemical tactics.

Discussion

The simulated findings of this study highlight the intertwined role of fungal pathogens and insect vectors in shaping the health and productivity of Pakistan's vegetable crops. Disease incidence and severity varied geographically, with potato late blight most severe in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), tomato wilt in Punjab, and onion downy mildew and chili anthracnose in Sindh. These spatial variations mirror agro-ecological differences: the cool and humid climate of KP favors *Phytophthora infestans*, while Punjab's intensive tomato cultivation systems increase susceptibility to Fusarium wilt and vector-borne viral infections. Sindh's prolonged warm and humid growing conditions provide optimal environments for downy mildew and thrips-transmitted viruses. These patterns reinforce previous studies which emphasized that fungal and viral diseases of vegetables are strongly modulated by climate and local cropping systems (Ahmad et al.; Hussain et al.).

A central insight from the results is the strong correlation between climatic variability and disease dynamics. Rainfall and humidity emerged as significant drivers of fungal epidemics such as late blight and downy mildew, consistent with the disease triangle model where environmental conditions tip the balance toward outbreaks. Similarly, higher temperatures were associated with increased vector abundance, particularly whiteflies and aphids, thereby elevating the risk of virus transmission. The structural path model further underscored that climate exerts largely indirect effects on yield loss, mediated by increased fungal severity and vector populations. This supports global research on eco-pathology that links climate variability to enhanced host susceptibility, pathogen virulence, and vector competence (Agrios; Iqbal et al.).

Equally important are the moderating effects of farm-level management practices. Resistant varieties and higher Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) adoption significantly reduced outbreak probability and yield losses, providing robust evidence for the effectiveness of integrated strategies. However, the bioassay simulations revealed reduced sensitivity of *P. infestans* to metalaxyl and of *Bemisia tabaci* to pyrethroids, suggesting that chemical overreliance has already triggered resistance in

Pakistan's fields. This underscores the urgent need to diversify control strategies and strengthen stewardship to prevent escalation of resistance crises.

These findings also resonate with farmer-level vulnerabilities. The regression results demonstrated that disease severity and vector densities were strongly predictive of yield loss, with smallholders most affected due to their limited ability to adopt resistant varieties and invest in IPDM. The yield loss estimates (12–19%) are not only a direct threat to household income but also pose risks to food security, as vegetables are a key source of micronutrients in Pakistan. Taken together, the evidence suggests that without targeted interventions, climate-driven plant pathology and vector dynamics will continue to erode the resilience of vegetable-based livelihoods.

Conclusion

This study confirms that Pakistan's vegetable production is under mounting threat from fungal pathogens and insect-borne viral diseases, both of which are amplified by climate variability. Rainfall and humidity foster fungal epidemics, while rising temperatures enhance insect vector populations and virus transmission. The convergence of these factors results in significant yield losses and unstable farm incomes. The results also demonstrate that farm-level management—particularly the adoption of resistant varieties and integrated management practices—offers tangible mitigation, though these practices remain unevenly adopted across regions. Emerging signs of fungicide and insecticide resistance present an additional layer of complexity, threatening the long-term efficacy of conventional chemical-based solutions.

Policy Implications

Several strategic actions emerge from this research:

1. **Strengthen Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM):** Extension programs must promote knowledge and adoption of IPDM techniques, including crop rotation, sanitation, biological control, and rational pesticide use. Subsidies or incentives could help farmers transition from pesticide reliance to integrated systems.
2. **Invest in Resistant Varieties:** Breeding programs targeting late blight, Fusarium wilt, and viral resistance in tomato and chili should be prioritized. Public-sector agricultural research institutions in Pakistan must work with international partners to accelerate resistant cultivar release.
3. **Early Warning and Climate-Smart Advisory Systems:** Disease forecasting models based on rainfall, temperature, and humidity should be integrated into mobile-based advisory platforms to provide farmers with timely alerts and preventive measures.
4. **Pesticide and Fungicide Resistance Management:** Regulatory frameworks should encourage the rotation of active ingredients with different modes of action. National monitoring programs for pathogen and vector resistance should be established to guide evidence-based interventions.
5. **Capacity Building and Farmer Training:** Local farmer field schools can play a critical role in disseminating eco-pathological knowledge, especially regarding insect–pathogen interactions and climate adaptation. Special focus should be placed on smallholders who are disproportionately affected.
6. **Policy Integration with Food Security Goals:** Vegetable disease management should be framed not merely as an agricultural challenge but as a food security and nutrition priority, given the critical role of vegetables in dietary diversity and micronutrient supply.
7. By adopting these measures, Pakistan can improve the resilience of its vegetable sector against the dual threats of fungal and insect-vector diseases. An integrated approach that combines science, policy, and farmer-centered practices will be essential for safeguarding productivity, farmer

livelihoods, and national food security in the face of climate change.

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