

[Food](#)

Rising population can increase emergence of infectious diseases: Study

Projected growth in global population will push for more food production, which will make the agriculture sector use more chemicals and resort to genetic modification of crops

By [DTE Staff](#)

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Photo: Getty Images

Use of chemicals in farming and genetic modification of crops will increase the rate of emergence of infectious diseases in the world, according to [a new research by University of Notre Dame](#) in Indiana, US.

The study establishes a link between the “projected agricultural expansion and intensification will influence human infectious diseases and how human infectious diseases might likewise affect food production and distribution”.

Since the world population is projected to increase by 11 billion by

2100, it will push agriculture and animal husbandry sector to produce more. And, this will increase the use of chemicals, which will make the rate of emergence of infections in humans to go up, highlighted the research.

“There are many modern examples where high human contact with farm animals are a likely cause of new human diseases that have become global pandemics” such as avian and swine flu and mad cow diseases, Jason Rohr, lead author of the study and professor of biological sciences at the university [was quoted as saying in reports](#).

"If we start exploring how increasing population and agriculture will affect human diseases, we can prepare for and mitigate these effects. We need to anticipate some of the problems that may arise from an explosion of human population in the developing world," he added.

The researchers said the synthesis of the literature suggested that since 1940, agricultural drivers were associated with almost 50 per cent of zoonotic infectious diseases that emerged in humans. If the use of pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics as growth promoters are not controlled the situation will worsen, they added.

A [similar study in 2017](#) by non-profit Centre for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy had predicted that the use of antibiotics will increase by 82 per cent in India by 2030. Antibiotic powders and tablets are fed to animals to increase livestock production and nutritional level.

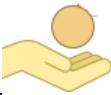
Regular use of antibiotics in animal feed promotes growth, giving them higher value, but this practice is contributing to building drug resistance in bacteria and affects health of the end-consumer, added the study.

The Indiana researchers also suggested few solutions to tackle the situation. Improving hygiene at farm level and reducing overuse of antibiotics to promote the growth of farm animals could prove helpful, they recommend.

In the case of poultry farming, they suggested that too many chickens should not be packed in one cage. Also, people should be made aware of this link to create health awareness.

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