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Prioritising development planning in the Indian semi-arid Deccan using sustainable livelihood security index approach

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This paper presents the status of sustainable livelihood security index (SLSI) of Karnataka, the most drought prone state in the Southern part of India. Computation of ecological security index, economic efficiency index and social equity index, and finally SLSI were carried out at the district level for the entire state, using empirical data. The selected indicators were first normalised, and then using estimated weights, indices were computed. The results indicate that the state has a very low SLSI with only 27.6% of total geographical area (TGA) and 21.7% of population being placed in the 'sustainable' and 'highly sustainable' categories (covering 10 districts) while only 34% of the TGA covering six districts falls in the 'moderately sustainable' category. The remaining area, confined mostly to the northern parts of the state, comprising 14 districts (51.8% of the state's TGA) is categorised as 'less sustainable' and 'very less sustainable' exposing 44.4% (27.14 million) of state's population to the perils of uncertain rainfall, high soil erosion rates, high social inequality and poor resource use efficiency. There is an urgent need to reorient development programmes and prioritise development investments in these vulnerable districts so that they are provided resources and opportunities to improve their ecological (more forest cover and less soil erosion), economic (higher agricultural productivity) and social (improved health and education facilities and rural infrastructure) status and achieve sustainable levels of livelihood.