

Nikhil Basavappa

Department of Economics, Columbia University

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Education

Columbia University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Expected June 2026
Ph.D. Candidate in Economics

Boston College 2017
B.A. in Economics and English, *Cum Laude*

Research Interests

Development Economics, Environmental Economics, Agricultural Economics

Research and Teaching Experience

Research Assistantships

Research Assistant to Professor Joseph Stiglitz, Columbia University 2023–present

Research Assistant to Professor Amit Khandelwal, Columbia University Spring 2022

Teaching Assistantships

Teaching Assistant, Perspectives on Economic Studies (PhD) Spring 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025
Professors Suresh Naidu and Joseph Stiglitz, Columbia University

Teaching Assistant, Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate) Fall 2024
Professor Qi Ge, Columbia University

Teaching Assistant, Principles of Economics (Undergraduate) Fall 2021, 2022
Professor Prajit Dutta, Columbia University

Other Work Experience

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA 2017–2020
Senior Research Support Associate, Department of Economics

MFS Investment Management, Boston, MA Summer 2016
Summer Intern, Compliance Department

Awards

Program for Economic Research (Columbia), Summer Research Program Award 2023, 2024, 2025

Wueller Fellowship for Best Teaching Fellow (Winner) Fall 2022
Principles of Economics

Wueller Fellowship for Best Teaching Fellow (Runner Up) Fall 2023
Intermediate Microeconomics

Working Papers

Climate Maladaptation and the Commons: Groundwater Management in India (Job Market Paper)

with Ricardo Pommer Muñoz

Earlier version presented at [NetMob Conference, World Bank \(2024\)](#); upcoming at [APPAM Fall Research Conference \(2025\)](#)

Abstract: Groundwater enables agricultural activity in areas with low and variable rainfall. However, agricultural expansion has led to highly stressed aquifers throughout India. We show how a popular policy intervention, increasing irrigation efficiency, can lead to welfare losses. Marginal productivity gains can widen the gap between private and socially optimal extraction when stock externalities are strong. We leverage a multi-state groundwater management scheme that improved irrigation efficiency as well as variation in externality due to physical aquifer properties. Although the policy appears to have a null effect on aggregate, this hides significant heterogeneity: consistent with our theory, high-externality areas increase extraction both in absolute terms and relative to low-externality areas. This increase in extraction is accompanied by more multi-cropping, as well as more volatile evapotranspiration. Finally, these areas that have further depleted their groundwater reserves are less able to use groundwater to smooth over drought periods. In all, we show that although efficiency improvements can increase welfare during high rainfall periods these areas are effectively maladapting by increasing total water need and becoming more vulnerable to climate variability.

Frictions in Information Diffusion Among Smallholder Farmers

with Raissa Fabregas and Jack Willis

Abstract: Smallholder farmers vary substantially in their agricultural know-how, even within the same village. Do farmers value the information of others and, if so, what prevents its diffusion? We measure knowledge of, and WTP for, such information, and test interventions to encourage its diffusion and identify the corresponding frictions.

Policy Writing

[Harnessing the potential of community-driven groundwater management in the Global South: Experiences and recommendations](#)

with Nitin Bassi, Anik Bhaduri, Soorya K K, Ekansha Khanduja, Ricardo Pommer Muñoz, and Yashita Singhi

Affiliations and Other Activities

Fellow, Center for Development Economics and Policy (CDEP),	2025–present
Representative, Association of Graduate Economics Students (AGES)	2020–2024
Vice President	2021–2022
Co-President	2022–2023
Undergraduate Economics Mentor	2021–2023

Skills

Programming: Stata, R, Python

Languages: English (native)