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July-September 2023

Empowering Small Farmer: Insights from SDF funded Livelihood Enhancement Project

A stakeholders' workshop titled "Small Scale Agro-business: Focused on Value Chain Development" under the SAARC Development Funded Livelihood Enhancement project of the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) was held on 26 September, 2023 at the SAC Conference room. With a focus on innovative approaches and sustainable practices, stakeholders from various sector convened to exchange knowledge and strategies for agricultural development.



The workshop, conducted in a hybrid format, witnessed active participation from both virtual and physical attendees. Dr. Md. Yunus Ali, the project Coordination for the Livelihood Enhancement project and Senior Programme Specialist (Livestock) at the SAC, set the tone with warm greetings and gratitude to all participants. Following the inaugural session, Dr. Nasreen Sultana, SPS (Horticulture) at SAC, conducted the technical session. Approximately 40 participants from various organizations, including the Department of Agriculture Extension, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Hortex Foundation, Universities, Private Sector Stakeholders', local and international Non-Government Organizations,

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and focal points of Implementing Agencies (IA) of the project, participated in the workshop. Three invited speakers presented in the technical session.

Distinguished speaker Professor Dr. Md. Gulzarul Aziz, from the Department of Food Processing and Rural Industries at Bangladesh Agriculture University, Mymensingh illuminated critical aspects of agro processing and value addition. Professor Aziz underscored the role of agro processing in improving the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in South Asia. His insights into technological advancements and market linkages provided valuable guidance for sustainable agro business models.



The second speaker, Dr. Md. Golam Ferdous Chowdhury, Senior Scientific Officer at the Post Harvest Technology Division of BARI, presented on “Introduction of Vacuum Frying Technology for Value Addition of Agricultural Produce”. Dr. Ferdous highlighted the benefits of vacuum frying and proposed measures to address challenges and seize opportunities in agro processing.

The third and the final speaker, Dr. Monirul Islam, Deputy Director of Rural Development Academy, Bogura, and Focal point of IA Bangladesh, shed insights into the achievements, challenges, and the way forward for Livelihood Enhancement Project. His presentation outlined the project’s impact on poverty reduction, oncome generation and capacity building for small farmers.

The workshop fostered engaging discussions on various topics, including flavoring techniques, oil quality and concerns, technological innovations, and women’s empowerment. Participants exchanged ideas and recommendations, emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration.



The workshop concluded with a focus on sustainability measures and future directions for agro-business development, Recommendations including the establishment of commercial production lines, replication of successful models, and partnership with public-private stakeholders. Dr. Md. Baktear Hossain, Director, SAC, expressed gratitude to all participants for their valuable contribution and active engagement. He emphasized the importance of workshop's role in fostering collaboration, learning, and innovation to achieve sustainable agricultural development goals.

C-SUCSeS Project

Advancing climate-smart agriculture in South Asia

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) jointly organized a four-day exclusive training from 25 – 28 July 2023 at Varanasi in India to build the capacity of member states in climate-smart agriculture. The training on “Climate Smart Agriculture in South Asia: Technologies, Policies, and Digital Innovation” was attended by as many as 28 agricultural scientists, researchers, policymakers, farmers, and innovators from SAARC Member States of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.



The training included discussions on building climate-resilient agriculture through adaptation and soil-centric mitigation strategies, practicing conservation agriculture practices, and optimizing these techniques for the farmers. The discussions on knowledge management and sharing, development of youth, and entrepreneurship with regard to climate-smart agriculture were also discussed in the training. The training was unique as SAC and IRRI partnered to integrate digital technologies with climate-smart technologies in transforming agriculture production and building climate-resilient farming communities. Interaction with progressive farmers was one of the important activities of the training and it was well received by the participants. Moreover, participants made a field visit to the Indian Institute of Vegetables Research and IRRI's Lab for hands-on experiences. A distinctive feature of this training was the participation of high-ups of both the organizations along with four award-winning farmers and three youth start-ups from different parts of India.





Livelihood Enhancement

Project Assessment of Project Outcomes

A delegation from the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), led by Dr. Md. Baktear Hossain, Director, SAC accompanied by the project coordinator Dr. Md. Younus Ali visited the project implementing site in Tamil Nadu of India during 23-24 July 2023 for assessment of the project outcomes.



The focus of their visit was the project implementing agency in India, the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) located in Kittampur, Chennai. During their visit, the SAC delegates had the opportunity to closely observe the activities and achievements on the Project in India. One of the notable aspects highlighted during the visit was the production of Moringa powder and tablets, as well as oil extraction of coconut, peanut and sesame. Moreover, the MSSRF has been instrumental in popularizing these products.





As part of the visit, the delegates also visited the commercial Moringa field in Kittampur, Chennai to witnessing firsthand the impact of the project on the ground. The visit underscored the potential of small scale agro-businesses to uplift the communities across the SAARC region.

SAC Team Visited National Buffalo Breeding Farm at Bagerhat

The SAC team comprising of Dr. Md. Baktear Hossain, Director, SAC and Dr. Younus Ali, Senior Programme Specialist (livestock) visited National Buffalo Breeding Farm, Bagerhat, on 1-3 September 2023 to assess the performance of Nili Ravi buffalo calves born through artificial insemination of pedigreed buffalo semen under the initiative on “High Yielding Dairy Breed Development in SAARC Countries”.



About 33 calves were born during the period of 2018 as a result of successful artificial insemination of she-buffaloes. Out of the 33 calves, twenty-eight are surviving. The birth weight of new borne calves' ranges from 25 to 41 kg; with an average body weight of 33.6 ± 1.63 kg. Out of those calves born, eighteen (18) were male and seventeen (17) were female, representing 50% male and 50% female. Considering the male calves only, the average birth weight was 36.28 kg, while it was 31.25 kg in case of female buffalo calves. All the calves born through artificial insemination sound healthy and growing well with the dietary schedule adopted by the management of the farm. The mature body weight of the buffalo was found around 400 kg. The male calves were sold out in the local areas that are using as breeding purpose. Only few calves were also sold at community level that buffalo's performance were found higher than farm level. It was reported that the milk production of first

generation of Nili Ravi Buffalo was found 5-8 litter, and second generation was 8-12 liter. The calf mortality was found 10% at farm level. In future, the management of farms is thinking to ensure green fodder availability to the entire stock for better health and reproductive performance of the buffaloes. In the discussion meeting with Director of DLS Khulna Division, it was shared with us that Murrah breed is well adapted in Bangladesh condition, so the Government of Bangladesh is thinking to introduce to develop high yielding dairy buffalo in Bangladesh.



SAARC Agriculture Centre will take initiative to provide the germplasm of Murrah Buffalo breed with the consideration of the Member States demand under the Materials transfer agreement of SAARC.

Livestock Expert of SAC Attended the Asia-Pacific Quadripartite One Health Workshop

Dr. Md. Younus Ali, Senior Programme Specialist (Livestock) joined the Asia-Pacific Quadripartite One Health Workshop held at hotel Bangkok Marriott Marquis on 5-8 September 2023, Thailand, jointly organized by the World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, World Organization for Animal Health, and UN Environment Programme, the workshop aimed to raise awareness about the One Health approach and review the progress and challenges in One Health coordination.



One Health is a holistic approach that addresses health threats at the human-animal-plant-environment interface to achieve public health, animal health, food security, ecosystem management and fair-trade facilitation. In light of increasing challenges, holistic and collaborative approaches, like One Health are crucial, integrating knowledge across disciplines and engaging stakeholders from all sectors.



Advancing Nutrition Security: Insight from the SAARC Agriculture Centre and Welthungerhilfe Regional Consultation Meeting

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) and Welthungerhilfe (WHH) collaborated to organize a Regional Consultation Meeting titled "Promoting Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture for Improving Nutrition Security and Health of Smallholders in South Asia" in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11-12 July 2023. This event brought together key stakeholders, including government officials, representatives from SAARC member states, and personnel from WHH and its collaborative partners, to collectively address the challenges faced by smallholder farmers in the region.



During the consultation meeting, insights were shared, shedding light on the specific challenges faced by each country. Bangladesh, India, and Nepal presented their country situations, highlighting issues such as poor coordination among stakeholders, limited food variety, micronutrient deficiencies, and the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These challenges necessitate a shift from mainstream agricultural practices, such as monoculture and mechanization, to diversified, localized, and farmer-led strategies.

Furthermore, the economic significance of agriculture cannot be understated. In Nepal, for example, agriculture accounts for 24.12% of the GDP and provides employment opportunities for a significant portion of the labor market. This underscores the crucial role agriculture plays in ensuring economic stability and livelihoods. By investing in nutrition-sensitive agriculture, governments can not only improve food security but also contribute to the overall economic development.

The regional consultation meeting showcased the Nutrition Smart Community project, which operates in vulnerable villages across Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. This comprehensive initiative integrates agriculture, natural resource management, institution building, nutrition education, and access to government food and nutrition programs. By adopting this integrated approach, stakeholders can achieve nutrition security and improve the health of smallholders in the region.



SAC Hosts Coordination Meeting for Small Farmer’s Livelihood Enhancement Project

On 21 September 2023, the SDF funded Livelihood Enhancement project organized its 3rd quarterly Coordination Meeting of 2023 in virtual mode. Dr. Md. Younus Ali, the project coordinator and the Senior Programme Specialist (Livestock) section at SAC chaired the meeting, while Dr. Md. Baktear Hossain, the director, SAC, attended as the Chief Guest. Country Focal Persons from the Implementing Agencies of the Project joined virtually and presented the progress, challenges and way forward for the project in their respective countries.



Livestock Expert of SAC Attended at Biosecurity Meeting at China

Dr. Md. Younus Ali, the livestock expert at SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), participated in the 8th Standing Group Expert-African Swine Flu for Asia and the Pacific which was held on 27-28 July 2023 in Qingdao, China organized by FAO and WOHA. The meeting convened to address the critical issues of ‘biosecurity reinforcement’ aiming to discuss and explore potential national and regional reinforcement against African Swine Flu (ASF). With a primary focus on exploring avenues for enhancing national and regional biosecurity measures, experts gathered to deliberate on strategies to combat ASF effectively. The discussions encompassed various efforts undertaken at the country level to improve biosecurity and minimize the impact of ASF.

In his presentation Dr. Ali provided insights into the biosecurity measures implemented within the SAARC region to prevent the spread of ASF. His contribution highlighted the proactive steps taken to safeguard the South Asian region from this agricultural threat.

Eighth Meeting of the Standing Group of Experts on African Swine Fever for Asia

Qingdao P.R.China, 27-28 July 2023



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