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Issue Highlights

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31st Anniversary of the SAARC Charter Day on 8 December 2015 and International Year of Soils

SAARC Charter Day is being celebrated to express solidarity and spread the mission and vision of the SAARC Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on 8 December 1985. Every year, SAARC member countries commemorate the SAARC Charter Day with due solemnity, spirit of friendship and mutual cooperation to raise the public awareness about the Government's commitment of the member states towards the SAARC process. It is also celebrated to give emphasis on the major activities under taken by the association.

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), as a regional centre is used to commemorate SAARC Charter Day annually to mark its dedication for the aspirations of SAARC. Further, the year 2015 has been designated as the International Year of Soils (IYS) by the 68 UN General Assembly. SAC in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Agricultural Research Systems, National Agricultural Extension Systems, National Agricultural Education Systems and International Organizations (FAO, CIRDAP, CIMMYT and IRRI) of Bangladesh jointly organized a series of programs on Soils in adherence of SAARC Charter day and IYS on 8 December 2015.

The Charter Day programs were inspired with amazing and important several activities like flags hoisting, symbolic release of pigeons and balloons, two technical seminars, essay competition, illumination, release of the books published by SAC, display of the Centre's products and services.



Hoisting of flags and symbolic releasing of pigeons in the first day by dignitaries

Hoisting of flags and symbolic release of pigeons considered as the important ceremonial activities were performed by the dignitaries in the presence of many invited guests. After morning ceremonial activities, the seminar on **“Soil and Soul”** was commenced at 10:00 am in BARC auditorium with the participation of group of scientists where four technical papers under important themes of the current soil related issues were presented. The following four technical papers were presented in seminar.

- Remediation and Adaptation for Sustainable Land Use in Bangladesh-Dr. M. Jahiruddin, Professor, Department of Soil Science, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh
- Soil Resources of Bangladesh: Potentials and Challenges-Dr. Md. Moqbul Hossain, Principal Scientific Officer, Soil Resource Development Institute, Dhaka
- Carbon Sequestration and Climate Change-Dr. Sohela Akhter, Soil Science Division, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, Gazipur
- Soil Organic Matter Dynamics and Modeling Sustainable Soil environment- Dr. Ibrahim Md. Saiyed, Director Research, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dhaka.

SAC organized an important seminar at evening on 8 December in presence of the living legend Prof. M S Swaminathan. The Honorable Minister of



Dr. M.S. Swaminathan delivering his speech

Agriculture, Matia Chowdhury, MP, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was graced this occasion as the Chief Guest. Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture participated as a special guest while

Mr. S M Anisul Haque, Director General of SAARC and BIMSTEC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Guest of honor. Executive Chairman Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council was the Chairperson of this session and Director, Dr. S M Bokhtiar SAARC Agriculture Centre welcomed all dignitaries and all participants. The special speech was made by Mr. Mike Robson, FAO Representative, Bangladesh. The key speech at the seminar was delivered by Professor MS Swaminathan, Emeritus Chairman of MS Swaminathan Foundation, India.



Dignitaries and paper presenters at the dais

Professor M S Swaminathan, Emeritus Chairman, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, India and Living Legend of Agricultural Science in the World presented keynote paper on **Achieving Zero Hunger Targets in SAARC Countries** in the seminar. He reiterated that SAARC region is registering satisfactory economic growth in spite of hunger and malnutrition particularly among women and children are widespread in subcontinent which is often referred to as “SAARC enigma”. This mystery of prevailing hunger in the region is caused by three factors viz inadequate consumption of food, protein deficiency and hidden hunger caused by the deficiency of micronutrients like iron, iodine, zinc, vitamin A, vitamin B12 etc. In addition, to achieve the zero hunger challenge, we will have to give concurrent attention to all the three forms of hunger, particularly under-nutrition leading to calorie deprivation. So, Agriculture is one of the most important professions in the SAARC countries in order to achieve zero hunger in economical and effective manner under prevailing nutritional maladies.

For this purpose, SAARC member countries can reorient the existing farming systems by including the dimension of nutrition. Such Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) should be supported by Genetic Garden of Biofortified Plants and Community Hunger Fighters, well versed in the causes and cures for the high malnutrition burden. Provision of nutrition for every human being is a fundamental requirement for a productive and healthy life. The SAARC region should show the way by integrating agriculture with nutrition and health.



Mr. Mike Robson, FAO Representative in Bangladesh

Another presentation was made by Mr. Mike Robson, FAO Representative in Bangladesh on **“Achieving SDG in Bangladesh”**

Hon. Minister, Matia Choudhury, MP emphasized in her speech that SAARC is unique concept of regional cooperation and has come a long way to promote peace, stability, amity and progress in the region

through strict adherence of regional bonding for



Hon. Minister, Matia Choudhury, MP expressing her views

making good neighborly relations and meaningful cooperation among the member states. She also pointed out that South Asia renew their commitment to further consolidate the spirit for regional cooperation and promote a South Asian identity in front of the whole world. Moreover, SAARC provides a platform to its member states to share their common problems in order to find common solution for them. Further, she extended her warm felicitations to the Governments and people of SAARC member states and requested all to realize the objectives to enshrined in the SAARC Charter for mutual beneficial, desirable and necessary action to promote the welfare for improving the quality of life of the people of this region.

Secretary, Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, Ministry of Agriculture stated that SAARC is committed to



Secretary, Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh in his speech

promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia. SAARC is also dedicated to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region by providing innovative technology in case of agriculture and also rural development for

reducing poverty in rural areas of this region. The celebration of the Charter day reminds us three decades of existence of SAARC through the gains and opportunities in terms of regional cooperation. Further we should be optimistic in charting out a forward-looking strategy of the association to ensure effective cooperation at all levels.

Dr. S. M. Anisul Haque emphasized to create awareness among the general mass of this region as



Dr. S. M. Anisul Haque
DG (SAARC&BIMSTEC)

inspired by the common objectives of all South Asian States to provide all individuals with the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potential as enshrined in the SAARC Charter, and inspire them to take part in the SAARC activities and strengthened cooperation among the member countries as well as other countries and international organizations.



Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Chairman, BARC

Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC), pointed out in his speech that the Charter of SAARC is constantly reminding us of our endeavors and commitment to assist the member states to address

issues of food security through agricultural development, poverty alleviation, empowerment of women, and human resource development, mentioned. Further he added that climate change issue which make a great impact on agriculture for food production and natural disasters in our region remains as one of the major constrains. He also gave his warm welcome to the dignitaries on the dais and conveyed his gratitude for continues support and help for Agricultural Research and Development in Bangladesh.



Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar, Director, SAC

The Director, Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar of S A C expounded the importance of the Charter Day of SAARC

as well as the functions of the SAC. He highlighted that SAARC has accomplished, achieved and realized a number of goals and objectives, as envisioned by the Member States since the formation of SAARC in 1985. This being said, today our eight Member States of SAARC could celebrate and revel the 31 year long journey of SAARC at this Charter Day. Our journey of South Asian cooperation began on December 8, 1985. During this period, the membership of SAARC has increased from seven to eight, we now have nine

Observers, and we have a large body of work devoted to sectorial cooperation mentioned in his speech. In the seminar he extended his cordial felicitation to Honourable Minister, eminent scientists, dignitaries and participating guest on the seminar. He made special thanks to Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of foreign affairs for their continuous support now and in future for SAC.

SAC has organized an Essay Competition on **“Soil and Soul-Means and End for Sustainable Agriculture”** among students of Agricultural Universities and scientist from NARS institute to celebrate IYS 2015 in Bangladesh in different categories with the objective of “How the best soil scientists and students communicate in the simple language the importance of soil for enhancing greater awareness and appreciation by general readers.” The selected Essay is compiled into a Book.

The following contestants ensure their positions in different categories.

Category-1 First position

Sujat Ahmed, Student

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University

Second position

Dipta Chakrabarty

Student, Sylhet Agricultural University

Third position

Affifan Nozmu

Student of 3rd year, Department of Soil Water & Environment, Dhaka University

Category-2 First position

Imran Ahammad Siddique

MS in Soil Science
Bangladesh Agricultural University

Second position

Most. Nasrin Begum

PhD fellow, Shere-e Bangla Agricultural University

Third position

Ripon Hossain

MS in Soil Science, Bangladesh Agricultural University

Category-3 First position

Dr. Mofizur Rahman Jahangir

Associate Professor
Dept. of Soil Science, Bangladesh Agricultural University

Second position

Dr. Mohammad Zabed Hossain

Professor, Dept. of Botany, Dhaka University

Third position

Mahbubur Rahman Khan

Scientific Officer, Soil Science Division
Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture

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Distinguished GB members and guests of the inaugural session



9th GB Meeting of SAARC Agriculture Centre

The 9th Meeting of the Governing Board (GB) of SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) was held on 18-20 October 2015 in Dhaka. The inaugural session was graced by Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) as Chief Guest; Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) as Special Guest and Mr. S.M. Anisul Haque, Director-General (SAARC & BIMSTEC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Government of Bangladesh spoke as the Guest of Honour in the Meeting. Mr. MJH Javed, Director, SAARC Secretariat addressed as the representative of the Secretary General of SAARC, Nepal. The Meeting was presided over by Dr. Md. Kabir Ikramul Haque, Member of SAC Governing Board from Bangladesh and Member-Director (Fisheries) of BARC. Dr. S M Bokhtiar, Director, SAC delivered the welcome address. Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar, Director, SAC welcomed all guest and highlighted a brief description of important programs of SAC and its recent activities. He expressed his hope that the GB Members would provide valuable guidance for implementing SAC programs in the coming years.

Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, extended warm welcome

on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh to all the distinguished members of the SAC Governing Board who came from the SAARC member countries to attend this important Meeting. He briefly mentioned that it has always been the vision of our leaders in the SAARC member states to bring about and expedite the development of the region as well as achieve collective self reliance by promoting mutual cooperation in useful leverage for planners for generating empirical solutions and policy to agriculture. They had Regional Centres like SAC focusing on specialized subject areas are one way of enhancing this cooperation. SAC could play a key role in regional cooperation in agriculture that could be options, etc. Mr. Ghosh offered the support from Bangladesh to the regional agriculture research & development in South Asia. He appreciated SAC and professionals of Member States for their contribution in agricultural development in the region.

Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, expressed his satisfaction on the progress of SAC as ex-Director of SAC and its renewed importance in the region. He mentioned the benefits of the regional adaptive trials on vegetable, oilseed, rice, cluster bean and pulses which the Centre has been initiated. Highlighting the importance of food security and poverty alleviation in the region, he mentioned the role of SAC as vital in the Region.

Members of the Governing Board of SAC in the Meeting



Mr. S.M. Anisul Haque focused the importance of SAC as agriculture is an important agenda of the SAARC Member States. However, he urged that SAC not be complacent, rather look forward to take up greater challenges to develop agriculture sector in the region. He emphasized that GB Members to critically review and provide direction to SAC for better future.

Mr. MJH Javed in his inaugural remarks, conveyed the greetings of His Excellency Secretary General, SAARC Secretariat for the 9th GB Meeting. He briefly touched on the recent decisions of the SAARC higher bodies on the reorganization of the SAARC regional institutions. Mr. Javed wished that GB members will extend all possible support and guidance to take forward SAC and its program in future.

Dr. Md. Kabir Ikramul Haque, Chairperson of the inaugural session extended his warm welcome to the distinguished guests. He underlined the significant contribution and initiatives made by SAC. Some of the activities like adaptive trials, regional consultation like mite management, Geo Information, buffalo development, climate change issue and GMO were mentioned. He restated the role of 9th GB Meeting in formulating programs for addressing emerging challenges in the agriculture and allied disciplines in South Asia. He wished that the meeting critically will be reviewed and forward looking plans for SAC.

The GB Members from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India,



Nepal, Sri Lanka and Director (SAARC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoB were present in the Meeting. Country Representative from Pakistan High Commission and Maldives High Commission in Dhaka were attended in this occasion as GB Members; H.E. High Commission from Sri Lanka in Bangladesh Ms Yasoja Gunasekera; Ms. Samina Mehtab, Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan and Mr. Yonten Gyamtsho, Counsellor (Trade), Embassy of Bhutan were attended at the occasion. The Institutional heads and professionals of the National Agricultural Research System of Bangladesh, Ministry, Universities, International Organizations, Extension Agencies, NGO and private sector's representatives also attended in the inaugural session.

Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar, Director, SAC presented the Report to the GB which comprises of review of the activities and progress of implementation during 2015. A good number of need based programs were recommended for 2016 during the Meeting.

Regional Consultation Meeting on Potential and Prospect of Floriculture Sector to Improve Livelihood of the Farmers in SAARC Members Countries



Participants of the consultation meeting in together

Floriculture is considered one of the emerging industry for economic growth and rural agriculture development. Its role has been substantial, in the change needed to improve returns from agriculture and transform the lives of farmers. It is reported that penetration of floriculture into the farming system in many Asian countries has slowly converted subsistence cropping into profitable and viable farming enterprises. The focus on the consultation meeting was a lucrative agribusiness venture in the world particularly in the developing country in floriculture sector. Based on the emerging issues of livelihood security of farmers amongst the South Asian region, the meeting was detained with the objectives- to review the status of floriculture sector with suitable collaboration on aspects such as sharing of information, human resource development and identify the opportunities for trade and establish proper marketing channels.

SAARC Agriculture Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh in collaboration with Horticulture Research and Development Institute (HORDI), Sri Lanka was organized a consultation meeting on “Potential and Prospect of Floriculture Sector to Improve Livelihood of the Farmers in SAARC Members Countries” in Kandy, Sri Lanka during 05-07 October 2015. The meeting was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Dr. Rohan Wijekoon, Director-General, Department of

Agriculture, Sri Lanka. Mr. Rizvi Zaheed, MD, Heyles Agri. Holdings, Sri Lanka made keynote presentation on **“Collaborative Partnerships to Improve Livelihoods in the Floriculture Sector”**. Dr. Hemal Fonseka, Director, HORDI and Governing Board Member of SAC for Sri Lanka welcomed all delegates and gave brief introduction about the meeting. Ms. Nasrin Akter, Senior Program Specialist (Horticulture), SAC welcomed all the participants and introduced with SAC activities at a glance. The consultation meeting was blessed by the august presence of high officials from Department of Agriculture, focal points experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Around 40 professionals/ scientist from National Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Systems of SAARC member countries participated in the consultation meeting.

Ten (10) technical papers were presented during the three days consultation meeting in different technical sessions. Considering country status report a good number recommendations has been made through brain storming session in different thematic areas on Policy, Marketing, Research and Extension issues.



Distinguished guest of the programme

Research issues

- Sufficient fund should be allocated for research in floriculture especially for training and visits of the scientists among SAARC countries
- Emphasis should be given on varietal development, evaluation and protected cultivation
- More focus can be given on floricultural research at post graduate level in the university.
- Sharing of appropriate technologies on GAP, post harvest management and value addition
- Adaptive trials for varietal testing among SAARC countries-SAC initiative

• SAC may develop a research project on floriculture development and submit to SDF

Policy issues

- Government rules & regulations for exchanging germplasm among SAARC member countries should be easier
- Develop of supporting infrastructure
- To take initiative tax-concession export of flowers & restriction of import of flowers

- Facilitating available quality planting materials through micro propagation
- Providing credit facilities at lower interest
- Exclusive perishables cargo facilities for floriculture products
- Training in quarantine & post harvest technologies
- Establishment of bio-safety facilities
- To ensure genetic authenticity system for legal protection for new varieties
- SAC will take initiative to publish a book on successful floriculture technologies
- To establish national/regional/global collaboration to improve the floriculture sector

Marketing

- Establishment/linking to one common flower auction centre for SAAR region
- Networking marketing information-SAC initiative
- Promote public & private partnership for export industry
- Organizing stakeholders meeting for SAARC floriculture forum for SAARC countries

Extension

- SAC may take initiative for arranging training for trainers and visit for the farmers/ extension service providers among the SAARC member countries
- Establishment of model nurseries at farmer's field
- Create competition among the farmers which may help improve production skill and technical capacity
- Maintenance and supply of certified quality planting material to flower growers.
- Coordination for capacity building
- Media campaigning, mobile, early warning system and use of ICT that encouraging all stakeholders for developing floriculture sector
- Empowerment of women for floriculture development and marketing specially farmers' organizations



A partial view of the meeting with participants

Review Meeting on SAARC Vegetables Adaptive Trials



Distinguished guests in the dais

A meeting on “**Regional Review Meeting on SAARC Vegetables Adaptive Trials Network**” was organized at SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Dhaka, Bangladesh during 14-15 December 2015. The review meeting was attended by the focal persons from the SAARC member countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Vegetables Adaptive Trials were conducted in last three consecutive years from 2012-2014 and data were analyzed to identify the adaptability situation of the collected varieties/lines in SAARC member countries. The inaugural ceremony of the review meeting was graced by the Chief Guest Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh while Dr. Md. Rafiqul Islam Mondal, Director General, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute was present as the Chairperson. Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar, Director, SAC delivered a welcome remarks. Dr. Bokhtiar in his remarks highlighted the importance of vegetables in agriculture, nutritional security and livelihood security of resource poor farmers. Mr. Shyamal Kanti Ghosh reiterated the importance of vegetable research in SAARC member countries and laid emphasis on need for improving productivity and production of vegetables. He appreciated the initiative of SAC for evaluating vegetable varieties in different SAARC member countries. This would synthesize synergy and collective wisdom for socio-economic upliftment of small and marginal farmers in the region. Ms. Nasrin Akter, SPS (Horticulture), SAC made a comprehensive presentation about the modalities

and outcomes of vegetable adaptive trials. Dr. Md. Rafiqul Islam Mondal emphasised vegetable research for nutritional security and need regional cooperation for varietal improvement. He thanked all distinguished participants in the regional review meeting. The focal persons from SAARC member countries presented their adaptive trials reports in the

two different technical sessions. Finally a group of general recommendations were made through extensive discussion for further initiatives:

Recommendations

- Trials should be continued on the selected varieties by the meeting for the next two years
- Seeds should be supplied before optimum sowing/planting time individual country
- Emphasis on visit and monitoring of research program
- Training may be done for effective research activities.
- For successful completion of the trial, some fund for miscellaneous cost should be provided and placed in due time.
- Varieties of each country may be reviewed and better variety/lines may be included for further trial. Specific stress tolerant (Temperature, drought, saline, pest and diseases) variety or line should be included for further trial
- Before sending the seeds, first check germination percentage
- Need more seeds to have more locations
- Include one mega variety of each vegetable from each country
- Ensure participation of India and Afghanistan
- Common Data recording sheet and trial layout should also be made available with the seed samples
- Provide enough time for the collaborators to get prepare presentations and reports
- Coordinator at SAC should analyze country data for Regional adaptability
- Compilation of a annual SAC publication using data of individual country and Regional adaptability



Group picture by all participants of the program

- Visit to other leading vegetable Research Institutes in SA under the program of visit to Premier Research Institutes of SAC
- The Annual Review Meeting should held on a date agreed at this meeting to avoid short noticed event
- Assistance of AVRDC should seek by SAC to improve the methodology and other technical matters related to SVATNet as well as seek for variety
- Exchange of vegetable breeders to strengthen Vegetable breeding programs of SA countries
- Conduct of training programs at IIVR, Varanasi on breeding, year round vegetable production and production of safe vegetables
- South Asia is the origin of many vegetables having high diversity of crops, therefore we have opportunity to increase more germplasm or crop
- High yielding, diseases, pest and stress tolerant varieties of vegetables may be introduced among the SAARC countries, varietal characters should be mentioned when supplied seeds
- Different improved production technologies of vegetables may be exchanged among the countries
- May find the agribusiness opportunity among the countries
- Considering the yield and yield contributing characters, reaction against YVMV, no lines were found high yielder as well as resistant to yellow vein mosaic virus
- Overall yield of all of the lines were low because of heavily infection of yellow vein mosaic virus
- This trial may be repeated with more and new lines
- Overall yield of all of the lines were low because of heavily infection of yellow vein mosaic virus
- Seed supplying countries are requested to provide the information on tolerance and susceptibility of major diseases of the variety for taking previous measure
- Annual regional level analysis and publication workshop or meeting to be conducted by SAC
- Trials for other crop may be included like Chilli, Onion, (short duration variety), Pea (Powdery mildew resistant), Gourds (bitter gourd, snake gourd, pointed gourd)
- Strengthen Institutional linkages for technology and germplasm transfer (sharing)



Ms. Nasrin Akter, SPS (Horticulture), SAC made a comprehensive presentation

SAARC Regional Training on Successful Climate Smart Resilient Agricultural Technologies

A training on **'SAARC Regional Training on successful climate smart resilient agricultural technologies'** was

jointly organized by SAARC Agriculture Centre, SAARC Forestry Centre, International Food Policy Research Institute, Natural Recourse Management Division of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and Central Agroforestry Research Institute-Jhansi. The training was conducted in National Agricultural Science Complex (NSC) in New Delhi during 25-31st October 2015.

Participants from all SAARC Member States (2 Bangladesh, 2 Bhutan, 2 India, 1 Maldives, 1 Nepal, 1 Pakistan, 2 Sri Lanka, and 2 Cambodia) participated the training. Resource persons from ICAR Institutions, World Agroforestry Centre, and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) imparted the lectures and organized field visits.

Majority of the SAARC nations population living in rural areas and also depends on agriculture for their livelihood, while operating in 0.1 ha per capita of agriculture land and highly dependent on climate factors. The resource poor farmers are extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts. Moreover, the South Asian countries lack of technologies, technical knowhow and capacities, institutions and financial resources for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Consequences of climate change are likely to be more severe for developing countries because of their heavy dependence on agriculture and ecosystems, rapid population growth, and low health levels. Therefore, the training was organized with objectives mention at bellow:

Objectives

- To develop a critical mass of master trainers on Climate Smart Resilient Agricultural technologies in SAARC countries
- To develop training manual or a resource book on

- CSRA Technologies for general use in the region
- To set up a network of CSRAT trainers and promote exchange of information, ideas and knowledge

Dr. Niaz Pasha Awarded

Dr. Md. Niazuddin Pasha, Senior Technical officer, SAARC Agriculture Centre was honored by 'Pakhhik Krishi Projukti' a fortnightly Agri-technology based



News paper for his outstanding contribution to the development of agricultural research and extension activities. He devoted to demonstrations, publication and communication for development of agricultural sector.

Honorable Minister for Information, Govt. of Bangladesh Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu as Chief Guest handedover the crest to Dr. Niaz Pasha at the 6th year celebration program of the News paper. Among other Professors Dr. Md. Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka; Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC); Mr. Md. Hamidur Rahman, Director General, Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and Kbd Md. Abdur Rahman, Editor, 'Pakhhik Krishi Projukti' spoke at the occasion. Professor Dr. Nitish Chandra Debnath, Ex-VC, Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University presided over the occasion at Giasuddin Milki Auditorium, Department of Agricultural Extension, Dhaka on 26 November, 2015.

Bangladesh Agricultural University Journalist Association; Bango Bandhu Professional Parishod and Itna Uazilla Somity, Kishoregonj also made a reception for his worship to Agriculture and society. Since last three decade he has been writing for agriculture and farmers.

Assessment of Common Crop Varieties and their Demand & Supply for the SAARC Seed Bank



All participants assembled in the photo session

In view of the need to make a regional synthesis on common crop varieties and prepare for the SAARC Seed Bank, an expert consultation meeting “Inception Meeting for assessment of common crop varieties and their demand & supply for the SAARC Seed Bank” was held in Trivandrum, Kerala, India during 28-30th December 2015.

The Meeting was inaugurated by the Professor (Dr.) P. Rajendran, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University. Other guests in the inauguration were Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Director, Directorate of Seed Research, ICAR; Dr. Ajith P, Director, Department of Agriculture, Kerala, Dr. John Kurian, Director (Research), Kerala Agriculture University, and Dr. K Prathapan, Director, Kerala State Horticulture Mission. Background of the Inception Meeting:

To operationalize the SAARC Seed Bank there is a region need to assess demand and supply of common varieties of quality seed for maximum production from the farmers field. It is noble expectation that the establishment of a Regional Seed Bank will contribute to the objective of harmonized seed testing and certification, supply quality seed and facilitate seed trade within the region.

This requires both demand and supply side issues were addressed. Disease quickly and easily wipes out crops thus seed bank can help as a reservoir. The seed demand and supply ratio has big gap amongst the SAARC countries. Total requirement of seed of SAARC Countries is around 12.75 million tones where as the supply is 2.49 million tons. The seed replacement rates of SAARC Countries are around 20% and it varies from country to country. The average seed replacement rate of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are 10,

18, 9, 21, 10, 3, 19 and 19%, respectively. Seed bank can help to increase seed replacement rate, varietal development, quality seed supply, seed availability at adverse environment situation at domestic requirement, popularizing the common varieties between SAARC

member Countries. Considering the diversity of the region and the crops grown, it was discussed to identify common varieties of prioritized crops (rice, wheat, maize, pulses & oilseeds) based on a set of criteria like number of countries it is grown in, extent of cultivable area, and generation. Seed stock kept safe to ensure that should genetic drift or disease affect a population, a varied gene pool is kept safe for use in future breeding programs. Thereafter, establish the demand and supply situation of the common varieties and set specific strategies for seed sector development. For that why the meeting was arranged.

The specific objectives of the meeting were

- To identify common varieties of prioritized crops grown in SAARC Countries;
- To assess the demand and supply situation of the common varieties;
- To analyse and propose strategies for seed replacement, seed testing, common variety release, and seed reserve.

Recommendations from the Meeting:

- The Focal Point Experts of the Member States will submit the list of popular varieties with pedigree and source for identifying the common varieties.
- Climate resilient crop varieties (biotic and abiotic stress tolerant) will be identified and shared among the Member States. (Prepare a sharing list – stress vs. varieties, and fast track release)
- All MSs (Focal Points) will send 2-3 Mega variety (Released-with multiple biotic/abiotic stress tolerance) to Directorate of Seed Research (DoSR) Mau, UP, India who will prepare trial kits and send to MSs for multi-location trials (The protocol will be developed by DoSR and SAC). SAC explore to provide seed handling fund to DoSR and also explore for small grants for experimentation.



A view of the meeting

- To facilitate sharing of potential crop varieties, there should be free exchange and sharing of information on crop varieties (SSB may initiate a information systems of crop varieties)
- Seed trade protocols needs to be made more efficient (SSB)
- Participatory seed production systems and conventional seed systems may be mainstreamed to support the seed systems
- Harmonize the procedural aspects of seed sector – production systems, release, certification, and exchange
- SAC may coordinate and facilitate access to Blue Book and other regulatory guidelines in India
- All MSs will designate the Reference Laboratory for seed testing.
- A comprehensive proposal will be prepared by SAC on the Regional Release variety

Visit



Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar handed over a memento to Dr. Yi Zhang

Dr. Yi Zhang, Associate Professor, Department of Animal Genetics, Breeding and Reproduction, China Agricultural University visited SAC on 13 December 2015. Dr. Yi Zhang was team member of the projects on “Genomic Characterization of Asian Water Buffaloes”. It had a fruitful talk and discussion with Dr. Zhang about the involvement with the genomic project

Dr. Md. Nure Alam Siddiky, Senior Program Officer (Livestock) of SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) visited Nepal from 22-55 December 2015 to inaugurate and monitor the synchronized artificial insemination activities in buffaloes with frozen semen of Nili Ravi. The insemination program was jointly organized by National Animal Science Research Institute (NASRI) and Department of Livestock Services, Nepal. It is mentioned that this progeny tested Nili Ravi frozen semen of Buffalo was donated by Pakistan in persuance and initiatives of SAC. The insemination program was held in national buffalo farm, Pokhra, Nepal. The initiatives was highly appreciated by the authority of Nepal. This buffalo semen can be utilized for the genetic improvement of local indigenous buffaloes.

During his tour Dr. Siddiky visited and had a formal meeting with Executive Director, Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), Director General of Department of Livestock Services, Executive Director of Nepal Dairy Development Corporation, Regional Support Unit (RSU) of Emergency Centre for Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (RSU-ECTAD) and Director, NASRI.





Memento handed over by the Honorable Minister to Prof. M S Swaminathan



Honorable Minister Matia Chowdhury, MP distributed awards amid victors



A partial view of the audience



Release of Soil book



Eminent guest in the dinner

Around four hundred participants including High Officials of various Ministries, Government, Non-Government and Private organizations, Scientists from National Agricultural Research Institutions (NARS) and Extension Service Providers of different Departments, Educationist from different Universities, Excellencies representing SAARC Member Countries, Journalists and Media Personnel, Development partners attended in this important event.

The Observance of the SAARC Charter Day ended followed by Dinner. Excellencies, Secretary, other Senior officials from Ministry, all NARS Director Generals, Executive Chairman and Ex-Executive Chairman of BARC, policy makers, scientists, Extension service providers, UN-agencies, International Organizations, Donors, CGIAR, SAARC people attended the dinner. Dr. Kazi M. Badruddozza, Emeritus Scientist, NARS also present at the Dinner