



# SAARC AGRINews



## Regional expert consultation on “Pulses Value Chain Development for achieving Food and Nutrition Security in South Asia”

SAARC Regional Consultation Meeting on Pulses Value Chain Development for achieving Food and Nutrition Security in South Asia was successfully accomplished in ICRISAT, Hyderabad during 17-19 April 2019. **Pulse value chain experts from six Member States from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka of SAARC had been actively participated in the meeting. During the meeting there were discussions for better utilization of the ‘Seeds without Borders’ initiative to strengthen pulses value chains in the region for food and nutrition security.**

The Seeds without Borders initiative, a five-year-old multi party agreement between India, Bangladesh, Nepal in 2014 then later Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, was expanded to include Bhutan last year and now covers five of the eight Member States of SAARC. The initiative facilitates inter-regional transfer of plant material. To support pulses value chains in SAARC, a work plan is essential to utilize the agreement, echoed representatives from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh at a Regional Consultation meeting.

“Given problems of the region, mainly increasing population and natural disasters, it is binding on SAARC to promote cooperation. SAARC is also committed to promoting research and reliable technology for enhancing productivity in agriculture,” Dr. Pradyumna Raj Pandey, Senior Program Specialist (Crop) from SAARC’s Agriculture Centre (SAC) in Bangladesh, said.



Member States Participant with ICRISAT Director General

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## Objectives:

- To analyze the current status of pulses production and value chain development activities under the dimensions of food and nutrition framework in South Asia.
- To develop synergies with existing initiatives in South Asia for food and nutrition security with varietals exchange mechanism for contributing the SDGs in South Asia.
- To facilitate research and trade Promotion activities in SAARC Member States.

## Recommendations:

- Strong partnership and exchange of technologies and other development activities with ICRISAT and other interested CG centers would be a milestone for the holistic development of South Asia.

- Institutional Development: Grain legumes activities and various research and other development activities in collaboration with National and International Institute (ICRISAT, ICARDA) through SAC would be effective.

- National coordinated trials to evaluate notified varieties received from the region and international research centre will be strengthened. Focus will be placed on important crops like lentil, kidney beans and mung beans. Other minor grain legumes will also be evaluated on a smaller scale.

- High priority will be given to transfer new technologies to farmers through field demonstrations and other research-communication strategies for faster and wider adoption.

## SAARC Regional Consultation on “Fish Culture in Cages and Pens in Reservoirs, Lakes, Rivers and Marine Waters for Aquaculture Diversification in South Asia”

SAARC Agriculture centre (SAC) organized a SAARC Regional Consultation on ‘Fish Culture in Cages and Pens in Reservoirs, Lakes, Rivers and Marine Waters for Aquaculture Diversification in South Asia’ in Pokhara, Nepal during 17-19 April 2019. The program was jointly organized by the SAC, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, DLS/CFPCC, Nepal; Directorate of Livestock and Fisheries Development, MLMAC, Gandaki Pradesh, Nepal. Dr. Shiba Shankar Giri, Senior Program Specialist (Fisheries), SAC, Dhaka was the Program Coordinator and led the SAARC delegation to Nepal. Mr. Baikuntha Adhikari, Chief Fisheries Development Officer, CFPCC, Nepal was the local coordinator of the consultation meeting. The consultation meeting was graced by the Hon’ble Lakh Bahadur Thapa Magar Minister for Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Gandaki Pradesh, Nepal; His Excellency Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial,

Secretary General of SAARC; Mr. Prakash Mathema, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development; Dr. Tek Bahadur Gurung, Executive Director, Nepal Agricultural Research Council; and Dr. Bimal Kumar Nirmal, Director General, Department of Livestock Services. The consultation meeting was attended by more than 40 participants from different institutions and organizations of Nepal and SAARC member countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In successive technical sessions, seven country status paper and six oral presentations were made on the topic of the consultation meeting. This was followed by separate working group discussion and policy recommendation for the SAARC Region drafted.



Secretary General of the SAARC graced as the Chief Guest

## Objectives

- a) Identification of drivers of diversified aquaculture.
- b) Review the research and development needs for sustainable aquaculture development in the SAARC region.
- c) Coordination of the regional research, extension and training activities to assist the development of sustainable diversified aquaculture in South Asia.

## Recommendations

### Policy issues

- While considering the use of non-native species, the guidelines of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries should be followed
- Diversification of culture systems, e.g. recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), integrated multitrophic aquaculture (IMTA) and offshore

aquaculture should ensure biosecurity in the culture of exotic species, eliminate seasonality, preferably located close to markets, reduce water use and with effluent treatment

- While choosing the sites, the foreseeable environmental stresses should be considered
- Grant supports required at National and SAARC regional level to initiate and diversify cage and pen culture
- Development and implementation of aquaculture insurance program that provides coverage the losses due to natural perils
- Networking and collaboration on capacity building between institutions among regional, international and donor countries
- Exchange of potential germplasm among member states to augment aquaculture diversification



- Encouraging entrepreneurial participation in the value chain of cage and pen culture to ensure sustainability

- Advocacy at various levels is felt necessary for the due recognition of aquaculture and fisheries sector-Policy

## Trade issues

- Development of SAARC regional BMP, standards for fish and fish products, farm-based Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) food safety systems and mechanisms to enable product traceability

## Social issues

- Research and development, appropriate to the diversification of aquaculture in the region, to address food and nutrition security, sustainability, livelihood and social issues; public and private investments

- Strengthening community participation through knowledge and capacity building in culture based fisheries and natural water aquaculture management



SAARC Regional Consultation on "Fish culture in Cages and Pens in Reservoirs, Lakes, Rivers and Marine Waters for Aquaculture Diversification in South Asia". 17–19th April. Jointly organized by, SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Dhaka, Bangladesh, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, DLS/CFPCC, Nepal & Directorate of Livestock and Fisheries Development, MLMAC, Gandaki Pradesh, Nepal .

## Expert Consultation Meeting on “Identification of Best Practices in Livestock Feed and Fodder Production and Management”

SAARC Expert Consultation Meeting on “Identification of Best Practices in Livestock Feed and Fodder Production and Management” was successfully conducted at ICAR- National Institute of Animal Nutrition and Physiology, Bengaluru, India during 21st to 23rd May, 2019. The programme was jointly organized by the SAARC Agriculture Centre, Dhaka and ICAR-National Institute of Animal Nutrition and Physiology, Bengaluru. Dr. Ashis Kumar Samanta, Senior Programme Specialist – Livestock, SAC, Dhaka was the programme Coordinator and lead the SAARC delegation to Bengaluru, India.

Dr. J. K. Jena, Deputy Director General (Fisheries and Animal Sciences), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi graced the inaugural session as Chief Guest. He urged for more cooperation among SAARC Member States and opined to increase the number of nominees (at least two) from each country.

Dr. Raghavendra Bhatta, Director of the host institute spoke on overview of the expert consultation meeting vis a vis its objectives. Dr. A.K. Samanta, team leader of livestock programme, SAC, Dhaka presented the genesis of the meeting, livestock activities of SAC and expectations from the focal persons. The session was attended by more than 150 participants comprising of scientists, research scholars, students, Joint Director and Heads of neighbouring ICAR institutes, representatives from National Dairy Development Board and feed industry, and academia from poultry industries.



Member States participant with the Chief Guest

## Objectives:

- Review and documentation of existing feed and fodder production and management system in the SAARC region;
- Identification of best practice for cost effective feed and fodder production and management;
- Discuss and prioritize issues and gaps for policy, research and technology transfer for feed and fodder production and management

## Recommendations:

- Regional and national feed and fodder inventory is crucial for sustainable livestock development in order to secure food and livelihood security among small and marginal livestock farmers

□ Best practices are highly context specific and choosing the right intervention and adapting to local conditions is the key to success

□ Best practices in feed production and management include ration balancing program, area specific mineral mixtures, crop residue improvement, complete feed blocks, year round green fodder production, fodder conservation and improved fodder production

□ Some of the suggested best practices that need immediate attention are drum silage, plastic bag silage, TMR self-mixed/ small mixer wagons, quality checks of feeds and silage through portable kits and restructuring national herd commensurate with the resource availability

## Regional Training on “Building Resilient Agriculture: Solution Packages for Farming Communities” in SAARC Member States

Climate change is affecting the livelihoods and food security of farming communities all over the world. In the face of these increasing risks and vulnerabilities, developing agricultural solutions focusing on building the resilience of such communities is imperative. But throughout the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) and South Asia, access to technical knowledge and skills with regards to sustainable production systems and the use of climate-resilient practices is still inadequate.

Given the lack of communities’ access to these solutions and need for regional-level capacity development, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Bangladesh, conducted a four-day regional training on “Building resilient agriculture: Solution packages for farming communities” from South Asian and HKH countries, which concluded on 30 May 2019.

The training, conducted in Kathmandu and Dhulikhel, Nepal, chiefly featured discussions around climate-resilient, sustainable farming practices and farming policy.

The training was inaugurated on 27 May at ICIMOD’s headquarters by Ishrat Jahan, Director of Agriculture and Rural Development, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu. The opening remarks were delivered by Pradyumna Raj Pandey, Senior Programme Specialist (Crops) – SAC, and Farid Ahmad, Head of Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit – ICIMOD. The workshop was attended by senior government officials representing national agriculture research, development, and extension centres from eight SAARC/HKH countries. Over the course of the training, the participants visited, among other sites, Dabur’s Ashok Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Center in Banepa and two ICIMOD pilot villages in Kalchhebesi and Baluwa





Training manual released by the Director ARD

## Objectives:

The overall objective is to orient participants on contemporary issues on climate change, inclusive value chain, adaptation and resilience in agriculture sector. The specific objectives include the following:

- The participants will be familiar with the current state of agriculture and food security, key drivers of success for agriculture transformation, climate change and its impacts, adaptation and resilience concept and frameworks. They will also get an updates on global, regional and national level climate change statistics and approaches to adapt these changes towards resilience (e.g. introduction to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), associated agreement such as Paris accord, and national level approaches such as NAP, NAPA, LAPA, climate smart village (CSV);
- Equip participants with skills to achieve economy of scale, strengthen market linkages, and develop inclusive value chain and community enterprises.
- Facilitate to incorporate climate resilient agriculture practices and approaches, such as climate services (flood and drought forecast, agro advisory, weather information), water and land management techniques into the regular training activities of the training centres.

## Recommendations:

- Need to accounting for food security at the starting point when analyzing the efficacy of resilient farming solutions.
- Based on the learning's at Dabur Nepal's site, it is suggested that Nepal and other HKH countries need to start protecting their ecosystems and develop value chains around ecosystem services.
- Need to build market linkages on behalf of farmers and more training programmes should be organized in future for SAARC and HKH countries.



Group photo of the Member States participants

## SAARC Regional Expert Consultation on “Youth and Women in Agriculture: For Economic Development and Key to Food Security in Future”



Member States participant With the Chief Guest

SAARC Agriculture centre (SAC) organized a SAARC Regional Consultation on **“Youth and Women in Agriculture: For Economic Development and Key to Food Security in Future”** in Kathmandu, Nepal on 9-11 June 2019. The program was jointly organized by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Nepal, Asian Farmers’ Association (AFA) and ActionAid Bangladesh. Dr. Md. Younus Ali, Senior Technical Officer, SAC, Dhaka was the Program Coordinator and led the SAARC delegation to Nepal. Mr. Bhoj Raj Sapkota Crop Development Officer, MoA&LD, Nepal was the local coordinator of the consultation meeting.

The consultation meeting was graced by the Hon’ble Mr. Chakrapani Khanal 'Baldev' Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Nepal; Dr. Yubak Dhoj G.C., Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Nepal. Ms. Ishrat Jahan, Director ARD & SDF, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, Nepal ; Ma. Estrella Penunia, Secretary General, AFA; and Ms. Shameem Sheik Dastagir, Manager, ActionAid International. Dr. Yam Bahadur Thapa, Former Member of National Planning Council was as a key note speaker of the program.

The consultation meeting was attended by more than 50 participants from different institutions and organizations of Nepal, Philippines and SAARC member countries, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In successive technical sessions, seven country status paper and seven oral presentations were made on the topic of the consultation meeting. This was followed by separate working group discussion and policy recommendation for the SAARC Region drafted.

### Objectives

1. To analyze the status and trend of youth and women in promoting sustainable, climate resilient agriculture systems and enterprises development in South Asia
2. To identify the challenges in implementing youth and women in Agriculture in South Asia
3. To determine the key factors to attract the youth to engage in agriculture in South Asia.
4. To encourage in creating network of women & youth farmer in South Asia



## Recommendations:

The major recommendations come out of the regional consultation meeting described below.

1. Though some policy steps are in progress for recognition of women as farmer in different countries in South Asia but the forum still recommended the governments of South Asia needs to declare it formally;
2. Need to be arranged the multi-Stakeholder consultation focusing on women and youth farmers in South Asia;
3. Formation of a committee in country level to promote women and youth agricultural entrepreneurs and developing Trade Agreements within SAARC countries to support youth and women agricultural entrepreneurs;
4. Farmers have less access to local, national and regional market. As a result they are not getting fair price of their produce during pick harvesting period. To avoid such situation the participants recommended the SAC and its member states should take steps to introduce delay sale loan for women and men farmer only.
5. Unpaid care work is a major challenge for women farmers of South Asia. It prevents women farmers being empower economically from agriculture. The recommendation come from the forum that SAC and SAARC Member states should take policy initiatives to recognize, redistribute and reduce burden of unpaid care work from women farmers.

6. Development of ICT platforms in country and regional level for data collection, analysis and dissemination among farmers of South Asia.
7. SAARC Member Countries and SAC should increase budget for research and extension linkage and building knowledge banks on climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture.
8. Identifying, design and implement the new programs for women on agricultural entrepreneurs. Respective Ministry of the Member countries can take imitative to formulate the program;
9. SAC and SAARC Members States should set up the door step trainings on food processing and packaging engaging the Department of Agriculture Extension of each countries;
10. trengthen climate resilient farming practices and bring in technologies so that youth and women farmer could use it and adapt with climate change shocks.
11. Build links and coordination among the Government organization, Framer Organization, and Non- governmental Organization;
12. Develop Market information centre through conducting market research in countries and regional level;
13. SAC should take steps to develop "Mission for Youth in Agriculture" and "Regional Platform for Youth in Agriculture".
14. SAC and Member States should facilitate Farmers and Producers Organizations development in countries and regional level.



Honorable Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development of Nepal on the Dias

## SAARC Regional Expert Consultation Meeting on “The Progress and Prospects of Agricultural Biotechnology and Bio-safety in South Asia”

The SAARC Regional expert consultation meeting on “The Progress and Prospects of Agricultural Biotechnology and Bio-safety in South Asia” was organized in Dhaka by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Dhaka, Bangladesh in collaboration with South Asia Bio-safety Program (SABP), Bangladesh and International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Research Foundation, Washington, USA during 18th to 20th June 2019.

In the inaugural session on 18th June 2019, Mr. Kamalaranjan Das, Additional Secretary (Research Wing), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, while Dr M. Shahidur Rahman Bhuiyan, Senior Food Security and Agricultural Policy Advisor, USAID was as the Special Guest. Dr. Pradyumna Raj Pandey, Senior Program Specialist, SAARC Agriculture Centre and Programme Coordinator delivered his welcome speech to the international and national participants for the Regional Expert Consultation Meeting. During his welcome address, he briefed about the SAARC activities, objectives of the meeting, expectation from country nominated focal persons. The keynote lecture was delivered by Dr. Andrew F Roberts, Deputy Executive Director, ILSI Research Foundation, USA, to set the tone for the policy dialogue for the event by introducing the importance of harmonization within South Asia Countries. The Chief Guest of the inaugural session Mr. Das mentioned that the Government of Bangladesh recognizes the potential of agriculture biotechnology, formulated the National Biotechnology Policy, and published in 2018 with the aim to ensure profitable agriculture, nutrition and food security in Bangladesh. The special guest, Dr. Bhuiyan explained various activities of USAID along with the activities of SABP. The inaugural session concludes with the vote of thanks by Dr. Aparna Islam, Country Manager, SABP Bangladesh and one of the coordinators of this program. She explained the activities of SABP and continual activities of harmonization with in South Asia countries.

Mr. Md. Samsul Haque, Director General, SAARC and BIMSTEC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh as a chair of the chief guest of the concluding session assured the continuous support to SAC activities from the Government of Bangladesh. Dr. Pradyumna Raj Pandey expressed his sincere thanks to all participants from the Member States of SAARC, local participants, colleagues of SAC, BSAP and ILSI Foundation for their significant contributions to make a successful and fruitful program at the end of the program. Among the participants, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are participating as national focal point expert from the Member States of SAARC. Besides, more than 30 professionals belonging from national, regional and international organizations located in Dhaka attended the meeting.

### Objectives of the Training:

1. To share information on the current status of agricultural biotechnology and biosafety regulations in South Asian countries.
2. To explore mechanisms to promote harmonization, including a regional biosafety platform.
3. To identify areas where SAARC countries can adopt harmonized policies that will provide benefit to farmers and consumers through access to food and technologies.



Group photo with the Chief Guest

## Recommendations

1. Need to develop the SAARC standard on 'Principles for risk assessment of foods derived from modern biotechnology', by taking assistance from the corresponding CODEX guideline, CAC/GL 44-2003.
2. Access and benefit sharing standard of GM germplasm and genes within SAARC Member States.
3. There should be information portal, which is free exchange of biosafety and biotechnological information within SAARC countries.
4. It is need to develop SAARC standard for biosafety and genetic engineering.
5. More programs for capacity enhancement and SAARC road map in this sector.

## Regional Training on “smart agricultural water management interventions for enhancing water productivity and resilience in South Asia”

The opening session of the Regional training on smart agricultural water management interventions for enhancing water productivity and resilience was graced by Honorable Chief Guest, Dr. P. K. Agrawal, Vice Chancellor, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Guest of Honor Dr. A. K. Sikka, Country Representative, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Dr. S. K. Ambast, Director, Indian Institute of Water Management and all Directors of ICAR- Institutes stationed in Bhubaneswar.

This training was attended by 12 participants from 7 SAARC Member States (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka) and the lecture of the training covers range of topics related to water management and water productivity, and how do we be resilient in the face of climate change. The details of lectures delivered are compiled in Training Manual of this important training. Apart from the lectures, participants of training went for one-day field visit to Rubber Check Dam site, Horticulture Research Centre and to Puri to see agricultural water management best practices.

The closing session of the training was graced by Honorable Chief Guest, Dr. H. Pathak, Director, ICAR-NRRI, Cuttack by awarding of certificates and delivering important closing remarks related to water management and global issues.

### Objectives:

- Develop a team of master trainers on smart agricultural water management in the region
- Establish a network of practitioners of smart agricultural water management to continue exchange of knowledge and technology

### Recommendations

Participants have recommended that if similar kind of training could be held in future with the advancement of water management technologies.



Different looks of the training program



## Field visit cum Meeting for partnership development



Group photo with farmers of the Syngenta Foundation

A team comprising of Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar (Director), Dr. Ashis Kumar Samanta (Senior Programme Specialist – Livestock) and Dr. Younis Ali (Senior Technical Officer), visited Rangpur on 7th April, 2019 to witness the sustainable agriculture activities carried out by Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA). The day started with the visit to Research & Development Station, Milerpar, Mominpur, Rangpur. The varietal seed trial of multiple crops including chili, tomato, guava, brinjal, beetroot, ber (*Ziziphus mauritiana*), mango, *Moringa oleifera* under different experimental conditions were explained by Md. Farhad Zamil (country Director) and Md. Shahinur Islam. They also explained how appropriate spacing of rice seedling ensured farmers to enhance the crop yield. Out of the 100 “Farmer’s Hub” established in Rangpur Division, the team visited two “Farmer’s Hub” located at village Parbatipur and Birgonj. All the “Farmer’s Hub” are formed by the technical guidance of SFSA. Nevertheless, it is running by the local entrepreneur following rigorous skill development and capacity building by SFSA, Bangladesh. The team interacted with beneficiary farmers regarding the challenges and opportunities. The farmers confessed the benefits accrued as a result of establishment of “Farmer’s Hub”, including selling of their produce, reduction of drudgery, availability of quality seed and seedlings, pesticides, fertilizer, farm machineries. To use the farm machineries of “Farmer’s Hub”, farmers routinely pay according to the duration of usages. In case of failure of any farm equipment, the entrepreneur repairs and he earns his livelihood from the “Farmer’s Hub”. Thereafter, the team visited GBK-E Ltd – Master Franchise of SFSA Farmer’s Hub and interacted with Mr. Moazzem Hossain, the Chief Executive Officer, Gram Bikash Kendra, Haldibari, Parbatipur, Dinajpur district. He apprised the organizational activities and facilities created for serving the farmers. Later on, the team reached at Birgonj, Dinajpur to witness the novel initiative taken up by the SFSA for indigenous tribal (Saothal community) woman farmer towards sustainable agriculture. The cluster (formed by tribal woman farmers) is growing high value market oriented vegetable crops through protected cultivation. Woman farmer shared their experiences how different kinds of net (ordinary net, 50% U-V protected and 100% U-V protected) influencing the yield of vegetables keeping in mind the quality and safety. Evidently, the 100% U-V protected cultivation enhances vegetables yield with quality assurance. During the discussion, Mr. Farhad (country Director of SFSA) also explained the initiative taken towards small ruminant production for strengthening livelihood and meat production among marginal farmers in Rangpur. As a part of livestock development programme, initially they offer two female goats along with one male goat to the interested farmer and the same family is linked to another farmer for handing over the upcoming goat kids. In such platform, a self-sustainable goat production is happening for ensuring livelihood and food security. The visit was formally ended by closing remarks of Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar for developing partnership towards sustainable agricultural production to ensure food and livelihood security in South Asia.