



SAARC AGRINews



Regional Consultation Meeting on Strengthening High Value Vegetable Seed System in SAARC Countries

Issue Highlights

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Group photo with the chief guest

Regional Consultation Meeting on Strengthening High Value Vegetable Seed System in SAARC Countries was jointly organized by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) and Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative (MoLMAC), Gandaki Province, Nepal during 22-24 December 2019 at Shangri-La Village Resort Pokhara, Nepal. Mr. Achyut Prasad Dhakal, honorable Secretary, MoLMAC Gandaki Province, chaired the session and Mr. Lekh Bahadur Thapa, Honorable Minister for the Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative, Gandaki Province, inaugurated the consultation meeting as the chief guest of the session by traditional lighting of lamp. Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Bokhtiar, Director, SAC and Dr. Grishma Neupane, Chief, Planning and Monitoring Division, MoLMAC, Gandaki Province graced the occasion as special guests. In the welcome address, Dr. Nasreen Sultana, SPS (Horticulture), and the coordinator of the program stated that the common goal of the meeting is to strengthen the current high value vegetable seed system development in SSARC region,

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preliminarily by sharing the knowledge among experts on the status of current vegetable seed system in their respective countries. Secondly, identifying gaps in the current system by putting brains together, and outline future program efficiently on how to strengthen current seed system by establishing a SAARC vegetable seed platform/network with regional stakeholders for sharing the technologies of production, creating linkages among actors, standardization of quality and facilitation of trade. Stressing on transformation of subsistence Agriculture to commercial Agriculture she stated that the ultimate objective is to strengthen the process of transformation of present agriculture system by creating enabling environment to increase participation in regional and global trade through learning more on seed system, seed quality standards and conformity assessment issues.

Objectives

- To review the current status of high value vegetable seed production, supply and distribution systems in the region;
- To identify opportunities and challenges of seed system development, and
- To identify possible ways for regional cooperation of developing a seed system in the region.

Recommendations

- For identifying the gaps in any system, representatives of all stakeholders groups of that system should be included in the consultation meeting.

SAARC Regional Training on Pesticide Residue Analysis

The five day long SAARC regional training programme on Pesticide Residue Analysis has been conducted in the Entomology Division, BARI with 17 participants from six SAARC Member States (except Afghanistan and Pakistan). The training was jointly organised by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) and (BARI). The inaugural session of the training program was held in the Seminar room of BARI.

Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Director General of BARI presided over the inaugural session while Dr. Md. Abdur Rauf, honorable Additional Secretary (PPC wing) of the Ministry of Agriculture inaugurated the training programme as the Chief Guest. Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Bokhtir, Director, SAC and Dr. Md. Miaruddin, Director (Training & Communication Wing), BARI were present as Special Guests. Chief Scientific Officer and Head of the Entomology Division of BARI Dr. Debasish Sarker welcomed all participants and guests. Directors and heads of Divisions and scientists of BARI, officials of Department of Agriculture Extension, National Agriculture Training Academy (NATA) and some other agricultural organizations attended the session as invited guests. On behalf of SAC, Dr. Nasreen Sultana, Senior Program Specialist (Horticulture), coordinated the program. In his inaugural address, emphasizing the role of agriculture in achieving the sustainable development goal, the Chief Guest, Dr. Abdur Rouf,

told that doubling the crop production in a sustainable manner is crucial worldwide. He added that it is not an easy job. For increasing the crop production farmers are using pesticides. As a result some pesticides always remain in crops as residue, which is a big threat for human health and environment. But our target is to produce safe and nutritious crops hence it is an urgent need to monitor indiscriminate use of pesticides.

Thanking the BARI, Dr. Bokhtiar said that as the largest agricultural research institute in the host country of SAC, BARI always lends a hand to SAC in any aspect of collaboration asked. He also added that, pesticide residue analysis in agricultural products is of great importance not only for protecting human health but also for strengthening international trade and regulatory control. He expressed his commitment to work with BARI in future too.

Objectives

- To increase the knowledge of the scientist/analyst who are working in the area of pesticide residue analysis.
- To increase awareness for the monitoring of pesticide residue analysis in the agricultural commodities.

- To teach the recent QuEChERS extraction and cleanup techniques for pesticide residue analysis.
- To exchange the knowledge for the development and validation of analytical methods for the determination of pesticide residues in agricultural commodities.

Recommendations

- Duration of training can be increased from five to seven days (Participants were highly interested in analysis pesticide residues from food samples and have requested to increase the total number of days for training).



Group photo with the chief guest

SAARC Regional Consultation on “Fostering Investment for Sustainable Agricultural Development for SAARC Member Countries: Public-Private-Farmer Cooperation (PPFC)”

SAARC Agriculture centre (SAC) organized a SAARC Regional Consultation on “Fostering Investment for Sustainable Agricultural Development for SAARC Member Countries: Public-Private-Farmer Cooperation (PPFC)” in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 23-25 October 2019. The program was jointly organized by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Ministry of Agriculture, Sri Lanka and ActionAid Bangladesh. Mr. K.D.S. Ruwanchandra, Honorable Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Sri Lanka was graced as the Chief Guest.

Mr. Ajantha De Silva, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Sri Lanka was present as the Special Guest. **Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar**, Director, SAARC Agriculture Centre and **Dr. Dr.RanjithPunawardena**, Principal Scientist, Natural Resource Management (NRM) Department of Agriculture, Sri Lanka were present as guests of honor. **Mr. Helal Uddin**, South Asia Advocacy Coordinator, POWER Project, ActionAid International was also present as a guest in the inaugural session.



23rd - 25th October 2018 Colombo, Sri Lanka
Organized by
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and
Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Economic Affairs, Irrigation and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development

Member States participant with the Chief Guest

The consultation meeting was attended by more than 40 participants from different institutions, organizations and SAARC member countries-Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. On behalf of SAC Dr. Md. Younus Ali, Senior Technical Officer, SAC coordinated the consultation and led the SAARC delegation to Colombo. After the inauguration, technical sessions were taken place and eight country status papers were presented on **“Fostering Investment for Sustainable Agricultural Development for SAARC Member Countries: Public-Private-Farmer Cooperation (PPFC)”**. In the second day, hiring consultant Mr. Ahmed Borhan was presented a guideline on **“Fostering Investment for Sustainable Agricultural Development: Public-Private and Farmers cooperation**. Also invited speaker from India shared their learning, challenges and way forward on Public- Private and Farmers cooperation. Last day of the meeting, the participants visited the intervention on Public-Private-Farmers cooperation in Colombo, on 25th October 2019.

Objectives

- To establish favorable conditions to attract responsible investment in agriculture sectors through a clear policy and regulatory framework nationally and a more coherent approach across SAARC.

Recommendations

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

- Agricultural research & extension, seed sector, water resources and rural finance might be priority areas for investment in agriculture.
- R&D support may continue for innovation and Climate Change resilience agriculture which might help to responsible invests in agriculture.
- Agri-business startups should be government priority within the SAARC MSs;
- Capacity building, business plan development should be given priority for private sector and backward & forward linkage may attract to fostering investment in the agriculture sector;
- The implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) at the on-farm production is considered to be the initial point of producing quality and safe food and the final target is to make all farmers to adopt GAP program in production process ensuring food and nutritional security;
- Strengthen Business Model -Shifting from subsistence to sustainable commercial production with strategic direction;
- Agriculture transformation through organized farming and focused responsible investment resulting production to be increased.
- Focus on agribusiness value addition through light manufacturing to drive the transformation ;
- Making agriculture a friendly enterprise to farmers and new generation especially for youth.

Regional Exposure Visit for Partnership to Strengthen Community Based Seed Systems in South Asia

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) and Asian Farmer Association (AFA) jointly organized first Exposure Visit of Farmers on Community Engagement on Seed Sovereignty for Resilient Agriculture in South Asia in 2018. Seeds are saved by farmers and exchanged among themselves and improved in accordance to local environmental conditions from time immemorial. The conventional knowledge, traditions, practices and customs for seed saving and exchange among farmers could differ in each local communities. However, phenomenon of saving and sharing of seeds among farmers have gradually changed with time due to changes in the technology development consistent with the changing environment. With rapid change of agricultural technology development, traditional seed systems which were controlled by farmers have eventually moved to government sector, plant breeders, and private seed companies. There are four implications of such modern seed management system: one, genetic diversities have been lost; two, local knowledge and practices have been lost; three, farmers do not access to seed on planting time; four, farmers can be at risk since farmers are not ensure if the improved/hybrid seeds will properly give production. As a consequence, the vulnerability of the farmers have been increasing, making the farmers more marginalized, and eventually lead the farmers towards food unsecured. Today, the majority of the seed market is controlled by a few giant multinational seed companies.

In this 3 days program, National Experts from the SAARC Member Countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) presented on Strengthening Community Based Seed Systems for Improving Food and Nutrition Security in the country.

Objectives

- Assess the CBSS initiatives, its developments, and identify and exchange of the best practices in the region;
- Map out the CBSS groups in the respective countries and establish networking at the regional level;
- Analyze the constraints, challenges, and opportunities, and policy programs on CBSS;
- Analyze CBSS to contribute in biodiversity conservation and food and nutrition security;
- Outline a proposed program plan to strengthen the CBSS in South Asia
- Issue a joint communique incorporating policy recommendations to strengthen the CBSS in the region.

Recommendations

- CBSS is the best means of saving, exchange, store and use of seeds in the rural communities where seeds are difficult for availability.
- Formulating the policies and programs towards strengthening CBSS is imperative for improve food security and biodiversity conservation.
- The CBSS and farmers' right need to be aligned along with the UN Declaration .



Views of the consultation meeting

13th Meeting of the Governing Board (GB) held in Hotel Intercontinental Dhaka, Bangladesh



Group photo of the SAC GB Member

The Inaugural Session of the 13th Meeting of the Governing Board (GB) was held in Hotel Intercontinental Dhaka, Bangladesh on 14 October 2019. The technical sessions were held at SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Dhaka during 15-16 October 2019. The inaugural session of the 13th Meeting of GB was presided over by Dr. Aminath Shafia, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture of Government of Maldives, in absence of incumbent GB Chair from Bhutan in the inaugural session. Dr. Md. Abdur Rouf, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh graced the inaugural session as the Chief Guest. Dr. Md. Kabir Ikramul Haque, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) and Mr. Md. Shamsul Haque, Director General (SAARC & BIMESTEC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh addressed the inaugural Session as Special Guests. GB Members/Mission Representatives from seven Member States and Ms. Ishrat Jahan, Director (ARD&SDF), SAARC Secretariat attended the inaugural session. Representatives from Diplomatic Missions, various national, regional and international organizations also attended the event. Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar, Director, SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) welcomed all Members of Governing Board (GB) of SAARC Agriculture Centre(SAC), Chief Guest, Special Guests, diplomats, and delegates from the SAARC Specialized Body, Scientists of NARS, officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture of Bangladesh and other distinguished guests attended

the Inaugural Session. He highlighted the activities of SAC and the role of SAC in research and development and dissemination of technologies across the Member States. He emphasized that SAC is making efforts to enhance collaboration with national, regional and international partners as per the directives of the higher Bodies of SAARC. He acknowledged the efforts, cooperation and collaboration of SAARC Member States in successfully performing the activities of SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) during 2019.

Ms. Ishrat Jahan, Director, SAARC Secretariat conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC for successful holding of the 13th Meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC Agriculture Centre. She expressed gratitude to GB Members for attending the meeting. She also thanked the Director of the Centre, all the Professionals and Staff Members of the Centre for their efforts in implementing the programmes. She highlighted that given the importance of Agriculture in the livelihood and economies of the South Asia, since its inception SAARC has identified Agriculture and food security as one of the major areas of cooperation among the Member States. Ms. Jahan highlighted the outcomes of the Fourth Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Ministers held in Thimphu, Bhutan on 24-27 June 2019, culminated in the adoption of the "Thimphu Statement on Agriculture and Rural Development" with 19-points regional pledges and strategies, to deal with the emerging challenges being faced by the region in agriculture and allied sectors and

to advance agricultural sector of the Region. She mentioned that Fourth Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Ministers directed SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) to realign its strategies to the priorities and activities proposed by 9th Meeting of the Technical Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (TCARD) and 4th Senior Agriculture Officials' Meeting and also directed SAC to prepare draft SAARC Agriculture Vision-2030. She hoped that with the support and guidance of the GB Members SAC would be able to successfully accomplish its mandate. She underscored the importance of GB Meeting in overseeing the programme activities and in reviewing the financial and administrative matters of the Centre. Mr. Md. Shamsul Haque, Director General, SAARC & BIMSTEC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh delivered his speech as Special Guest. He emphasized on the importance of agriculture in the SAARC region and role of SAC in this regard. Mr. Haque mentioned that as the host country, Bangladesh always extends all-out support to the Centre. He thanked the Director and other officials of the SAARC Agriculture Centre for their efforts in carrying out the activities of the Centre. Mr. Haque underscored the importance of Governing Board in guiding SAC and urged GB Members to critically review and provide guidance to SAC. He also underscored the need for formulating appropriate programmes to address emerging challenges of the region. He expressed the hope that the GB members will have extensive deliberations on the agenda items during the following two days and bring out a fruitful outcome document. Dr. Md. Kabir Ikramul Haque, Executive Chairman, BARC, Dhaka, Bangladesh delivered his speech as Special Guest. In his speech Dr. Kabir emphasized that agriculture and its allied activities would remain the most predominant sector in improving food and nutritional security for the people besides creating job opportunities in the SAARC Region. He mentioned that SAC has enormous potential to fulfil its mandate for reducing poverty in SAARC Region. Dr. Kabir particularly appreciated the SAC for initiating PhD Scholarship Program for the SAARC Member Countries. Dr. Md. Abdur Rouf, Additional Secretary (PPC), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh delivered his speech as Chief Guest. Dr. Rouf in his speech mentioned that agriculture in SAARC Region is an important sector that supports more than 50 percent of the population for their livelihood and employment; agriculture in all SAARC Member Countries as a whole contributing to the extent of about 18 percent to its GDP; agriculture has created employment generation to around 48 percent of the population of SAARC Member Countries. Dr. Rouf has greatly appreciated the remarkable programme for

awarding PhD Scholarship of SAARC Member Countries, strengthening capacities keeping in view to working in partnership and collaboration with various international and regional organizations to achieve the SDGs. Dr. Aminath Shafia, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture of Government of Maldives delivered her speech as Chairperson of the Inaugural Session, on behalf of the SAC GB Chairperson Mr. Ugyen Penjore. She thanked the Government of Bangladesh and the SAC for hospitably extended and the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. She appreciated the efforts made by the SAC as a "Centre of Excellence" to support the Agricultural communities in the SAARC region. She mentioned that the demand for knowledge and support from the agriculture communities in the region is diverse, hence the outcomes of the capacity building and trainings must make a positive impact on the institutions and ripple down to the farmers, fishers and rural communities of member countries. Dr. Shafia highlighted on the importance of regional collaboration and hoped that with the commitments from the Governing Board members to support the team of SAC and with the support of the institutions of the Member States to maximize collaborations and partnerships, no country will be left behind and SAC would become a more respected and relevant institution in the endeavour of addressing the challenges of the agriculture and natural resource management sectors of the SAARC region. She appreciated the contributions of the international community who are supporting the countries through the SAC platform, and thanked IFAD, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations and other international and regional bodies for their enduring support. She mentioned that it would now be the thrust of the GB and the SAC team to ensure the success of these interventions and build the trust of other development partners. Dr. Shafia hoped useful decisions and guidance of the GB on the activities of SAC for the betterment of the people of SAARC region.

Recommendations

- GB reiterated that as per rule, Centre should maintain strict budgetary discipline and discretion in incurring approved expenditure. GB noted that under several heads, the budget has been kept to be utilized/procured only at the end of the year and under few heads allocated budgets have been left unutilized. GB suggested that activities should be staggered over the calendar year. GB reiterated that SAC should schedule/plan its activities to be implemented round the year– to ensure quality of the programmes as also to avoid staggering of activities towards the end of the year;

- It was noted that SAC did not seek approval from the Secretary General of SAARC on the re-appropriation of funds from one head to another of the budget for 2018 as per rule and as directed by the 12th GB. GB expressed dissatisfaction over the matter, and advised the Director, SAC to obtain approval from the Secretary General of SAARC on the re-appropriation of funds from one head to another as per rule and to **strictly comply with the rules**;

- It was also noted with concern that both in the Institutional cost and Programme cost of the Budget of 2019, under many heads, SAC made re-appropriation of funds, without seeking prior approval from the Secretary General of SAARC. GB once again advised the Director, SAC to obtain approval from the Secretary General of SAARC on the re-appropriation of funds from one head to another as per rule. With that understanding, the proposed following revised budget for 2019 was approved by the GB:

SAC Celebrated 35th SAARC Charter Day

The SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) organized the 35th SAARC Charter Day on 08th December 2019 at KIB, Dhaka. The Charter Day celebrated with several important events like flags hoisting, release of pigeons and balloons, and release of the books published by SAC. Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Mr. Md. Nasiruzzaman, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and Ms. Nahida Rahman Shumona, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs were the special guests in the occasion. The function was chaired by Dr. Md. Kabir Ikramul Haque, Member, Governing Board of the SAARC Agriculture Centre and Executive Chairman, BARC. Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE) and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India was the Keynote Speaker. Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar, Director, SAARC Agriculture Centre gave welcome remarks to all dignitaries, guests and participants in the SAARC Charter Day. A number of officials from NARS Institutions, BARC, FAO, Action Aid, Asian Farmer Association, DAE, BADC, IRRI, CIMMYT, CIRDAP, KGF who have been intimately working with SAC were also present as special invitees.



Honorable Agriculture Minister on the dais



Releasing the balloons by the DG, ICAR