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SAARC AGRI NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter of SAARC Argiculture Centre (SAC)

SAARC Regional Training on " Agri Business and Product Development"

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) organized a SAARC Regional Training on Agri Business and Product Development at RDA, Dhaka, Bangladesh from 15-18 February 2020 under the SDF funded project on "Livelihood Enhancement of the Small Farmers in SAARC Region through Small Scale Agri- business focusing on Value Chain Development." The training program was jointly organized by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) and Rural Development Academy (RDA). The overall objective of the training was to build capacity of the participants of the implementing agencies on fostering agri business and product development in South Asia. The inaugural training program was graced by Mr. Md. Aminul Islam, Hon'ble Additional Secretary GoB and Director General, RDA as the Chief Guest. Among others, Dr. Samir Chandra, Director training and Dr. Md. Younus Ali, Project Focal Point, SAC were present as guests of honor.

The Training program was attended by more than 15 participants from different institutions and organizations of SAARC Member countries Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and SAC. On behalf of SAC Dr. Md. Younus Ali, Senior Technical Officer, and Project Focal Point, SAC coordinated the training and led the SAARC delegation to Bangladesh.

Issue Highlights

Vol.14, Issue-I
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SAARC Regional Training on " Agri Business and Product Development" 1

SAC participated the Omor Ekushey Boi Mela 2020 3

Eleventh SAARC Food Bank Board meeting, Colombo, Sri Lanka 4

Voluntary Certification Scheme for Medicinal Plant Produce a tool for quality assurance and facilitating regional trade (VCSMPP) 5

New Professional Joined in SAC 6

Books on emerging areas 6

Meeting with IRRI Country Representative Bangladesh 9

Farewell & Welcome Ceremony of Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar and Dr. Mian Sayeed Hassan 10

Dr.Mian Sayeed Hassan assumed the Charge of Director of SAARC Agriculture Centre 11

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Inaugural program of the Regional Training Event

Participants of the training

SAC participation at the Omor Ekushey Boi Mela 2020

The SAARC Agriculture Centre participated in the Book Fair on 21st February 2020 at the Bangla Academy premises in Dhaka. The event was organized by Bangla Academy. Nearly 300 visitors visited the SAC stall. SAC displayed around 200 publications related to agriculture, livestock, Fisheries, Natural Resources Management, Crops and Horticulture sectors aimed at sharing knowledge and information among the mass people. SAC was interested to sell some publications to visitors. SAC books were sold for a total value of BDT 56000.

Picture of the book fair 2020

Picture of the book fair 2020

Eleventh SAARC Food Bank Board meeting, Colombo, Sri Lanka

The Eleventh SAARC Food Bank Board meeting was held at Colombo, Sri Lanka from 21-22 January 2020 with the participation of representatives of eight member states of SAARC region hosted by Food Commissioner's Department, Ministry of Internal Trade Food Security and Consumer Welfare, Government of Sri Lanka. The objectives of the meeting were to review the status of implementation of the decisions taken at the Tenth meeting of the SAARC Food Bank Board, to discuss the modalities of operationalizing SAARC Food Bank by the inputs received from member state representatives, review the present status of food reserves and further enhance the collaborative linkages with International organizations.

The presentations made by SAARC Agriculture Center (SAC) was discussed and inputs provided by the participants on the functioning of SAARC Food Bank Information System (SFBIS) were noted. Dr Sreekanth Attaluri, Senior Program Specialist (Crops), SAARC Agriculture Center, Dhaka along with Ms Ishrat Jahan, Director- ARD, SAARC Secretariat, Mr Shihab Uddin, Desk officer, SAARC Secretariat, member state representatives and host country representatives were among those participated. The closing ceremony of the SAARC Food Bank Board meeting was graced by Mr. Chamal J Rajapaksa, Minister-Mahaweli, Agriculture, Irrigation and Rural Development, Minister of Internal Trade, Food Security and Consumer Welfareand State Minister of Defence.

Chief Guest and participants of SAARC Food Bank Board Meeting

Workshop on Voluntary Certification Scheme for Medicinal Plant Produce (VCSMPP)-A tool for quality assurance and facilitating regional trade

A half day sensitization workshop on Voluntary Certification Scheme for Medicinal Plant Produce A tool for quality assurance and facilitating regional trade (VCSMPP) was jointly organized by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), National Medicinal Plant Board, Government of India (GOI) and Quality Council of India (QCI) on 03 February, 2020 at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) Conference room-1. The workshop was chaired by the honourable Executive Chairman of BARC, Dr. S. M. Bokhtiar, along with Chief Guest Mr. Md. Shansul Haque, Director General (SAARC & BIMSTEC) and the Additional Secretary MoFA, Bangladesh graced the workshop. Mr. Saurabh Sharma, representing National Medicinal Plant Board, Ministry of AYUSH, India, attended as a Special Guest. A total of 34 participants attended the workshop from different organizations of Bangladesh including Research, Academia, and Regional organizations.

The QCI has formulated a Voluntary Certification Scheme for Medicinal Plant Produce (VCSMPP) at the behest of NMPB, Ministry of Ayurveda, Unani, Sidha and Homeopathy (AYUSH), India for introducing quality and traceability in the medicinal plants trade. The objective of the workshop was to promote the VCSMPP scheme in SAARC Member States that have strong medicinal plant trade and traditional medicine system.

Dr. Manish Pande, Director QCI delivered the keynote paper, Dr. Babul Akter, Professor, Hamdard University, Dhaka presented an over view of Medicinal Plant Products: Problem and Prospects in South Asia. Dr. Amrita Kumar Sarka, Faculty member of Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital presented a paper on behalf of Director General Of Drug Administration (DGDA) Bangladesh on Status of quality control and Standardization of medicinal Plant Products in Bangladesh.

There was Aavibrant discussion among the eminent professionals, Dr. M.A. Rahim, (Professor, Department of Horticulture, Bangladesh Agricultural University), Dr. Shahabuddin Kabir Choudhuri, (Professor, Department of Pharmacy, Jahangir Nagar University), Dr. Khitesh Chandra, (Chairman, Department of Pharmacy, Dhaka University), Dr. Mizanur Rahman, (Proprietor, Green Life Natural Health Care), Mr. Saurabh Sharma (NMPB, AYUSH, India) and Dr. Manish Pande, (QCI, India).

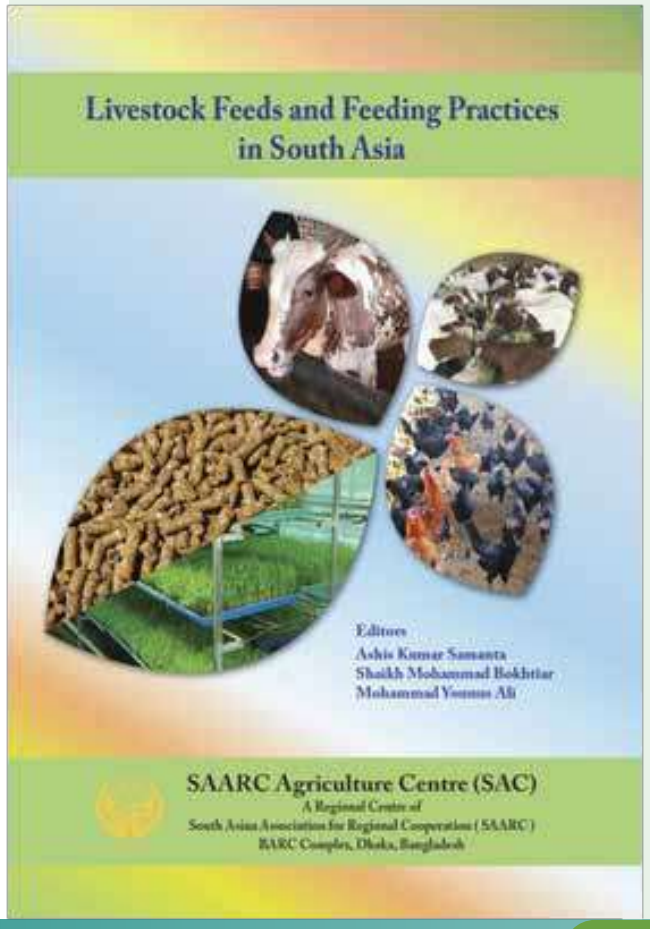
QCI has requested SAC to consider the VCSMPP to adopt in SAARC Countries. Supporting the request of QCI, panelists and other participants suggested SAC to work together with QCI in developing a system of certification of medicinal plants produces to address the issue of quality, safety and traceability based on international best practices. On behalf of SAC, Dr. Nasreen Sultana, SPS (Horticulture) delivered vote of thanks.

Chief Guest and other dignitaries on the dais

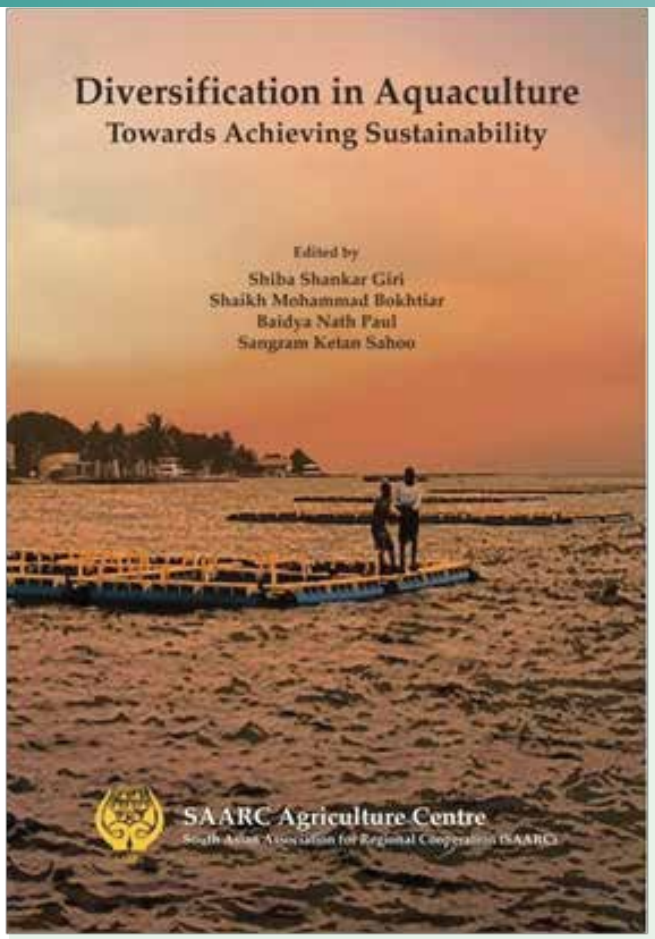
New Professional joined in SAC

Dr. Grinson George joined as Senior Program Specialist (Fisheries) at SAC, Dhaka on 27th February 2020 on deputation from ICAR, Government of India. He started his career as teacher in fisheries science during 2003 at Ministry of Education in Republic of Maldives. Later, he joined the CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Goa as a CSIR-fellow to complete doctoral research in marine science. Further he joined as a Scientist in 2005 at ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair with additional responsibilities as honorary coordinator of CPR Environmental foundation and Julliete Massey Honorary fellow of World Aquaculture Society. Dr. Grinson is currently serving as Senior Scientist at ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi since 2012 and coordinated the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Science Fellow programme by Govt. of India where he collaborated with Late Prof. Trevor Platt FRS of PML, UK. He received academic grants of more than ₹50 million as research grants from all major national funding agencies. He served as the member of board of studies in environmental sciences of KUFOS, Kerala. Dr. Grinson received Dr. Rajendra Prasad Puraskar, a national award in 2010 for the best book in agriculture and allied sectors by ICAR. He was awarded Dr. Hiralal Chaudhury prize and Dr. Kulkarni award at CIFE, Mumbai for his research accomplishments. He is the recipient of merit fellowships for graduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes. There are fifteen best paper/poster awards to his credit in various conferences and symposiums. On his expertise and global appreciation of works, he was provided six foreign travel grants by various global funding agencies to visit United Kingdom, China, Thailand, Italy, France and Australia. He has published more than 130 articles with 52 peer reviewed high impact research papers, 7 books, 3 edited books, 13 book chapters and more than 100 conference abstracts.

Publications: Books

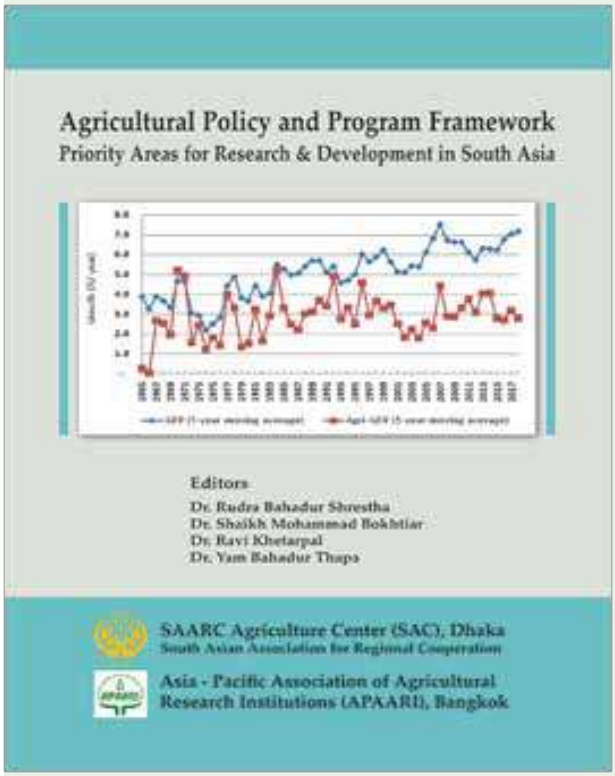


Livestock Feeds and Feeding Practices in South Asia: Livestock occupies significant niche on the socioeconomic fabric among all South Asian countries. Often, the productivity of livestock is adversely affected owing to inadequate quantity or quality of feeds and fodder. Furthermore, the expenses on account of feed and fodder shares 65 to 70% of the total expenses of livestock. Hence, any strategy on cutting down the cost of livestock feeding is expected to ensure higher economic returns. “Livestock Feeds and Feeding Practices in South Asia” is published with the aim to have in-depth analysis of feed and feeding practices among Member States to guide the policy makers, developmental agencies, livestock cooperatives for taking necessary steps towards sectoral improvement.



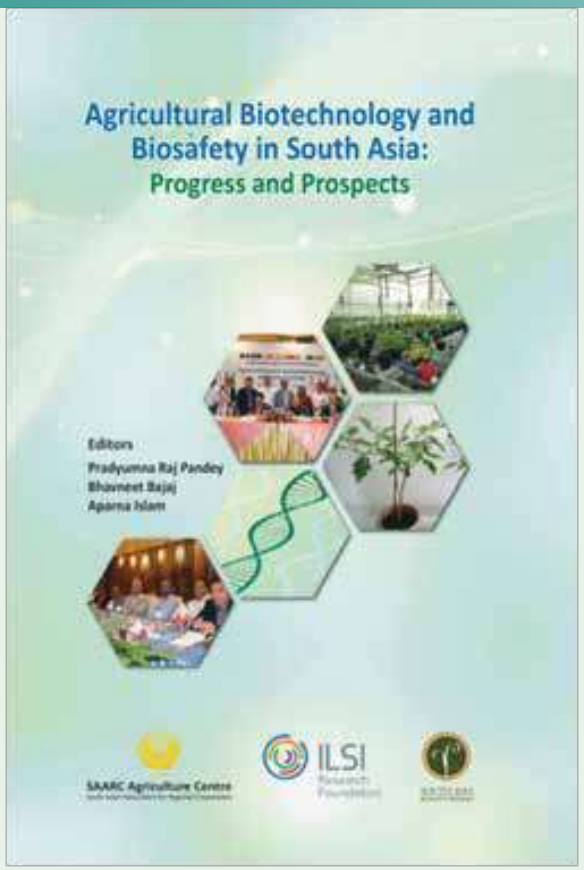
Diversification in Aquaculture

Towards Achieving Sustainability: With the rapid decline of capture fisheries, the so-called fishermen are suffering from livelihood displacement and poverty. In order to increase the fish production as well as engage these people in traditional income generating activities, diversification of aquaculture especially cage culture could be the solution for them. The model of cage culture using tilapia in the river of Bangladesh or reservoir of Sri Lanka and grass carp and silver carp in the Pokhra lake of Nepal have been found successful for livelihood security as well as for productivity enhancement. The book entitled "Diversification in aquaculture towards achieving sustainability" is aimed to share information pertaining to crucial aspects of aquaculture diversifications and their related opportunities, challenges, available policies and future needs for the South Asian region.

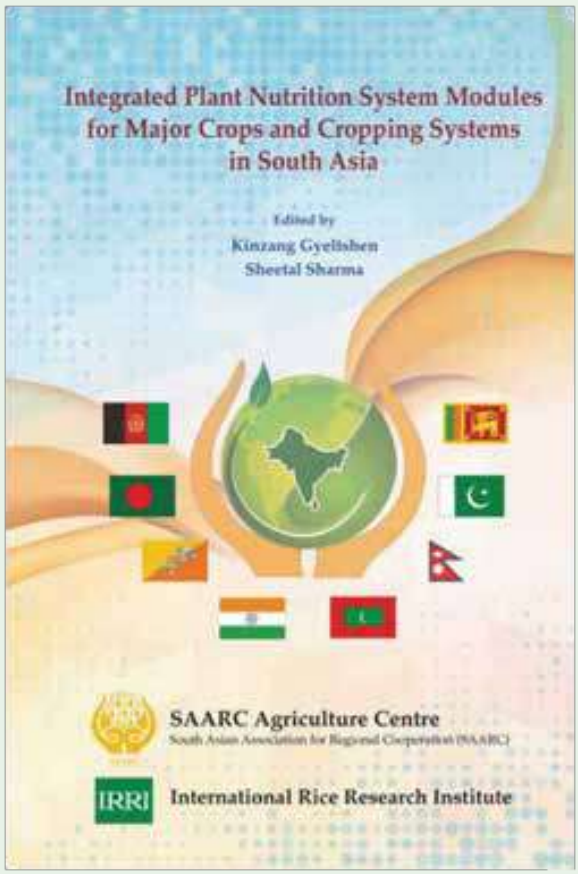


Agricultural Policy and Program Framework

Priority Areas for Research & Development: A majority of South Asian population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Hence, the region's economy is dominated by Agriculture. Although the region, endowed with large arable land, possesses huge potentiality for sustainable agricultural development, the agricultural sector has several challenges like smallholding farms, lack of access to quality inputs including improved seeds and fertilizers, weak mechanization and infrastructure development, inefficient value chain, and extreme climate change effects. Considering the regional challenges and opportunities, the book has made an effort to present the agriculture policy and program framework after due contemplation to multi-sectoral approaches i.e. crops, horticulture, livestock, fisheries, natural resource management.



Agricultural Biotechnology and Biosafety in South Asia: Progress and prospects: The South Asian agriculture is facing serious, interconnected challenges, including the constant threat of pests and diseases, increasingly severe consequences of climate change, and other forms of environmental degradation and land use changes. Viewing the severity of these challenges, we need innovations in agriculture, including the development and deployment of modern biotechnology for ensuring food and nutrition security in South Asia. The book embodies the currents status of knowledge on prospects of agricultural biotechnology and biosafety among SAARC Member States coupled with harmonization of regional standards on safety of GM foods. The book was jointly published by SAARC Agriculture Centre, ILSI, USA and South Asia Biosafety program, Bangladesh.



Integrated Plant Nutrition System Modules for Major Crops and Croping Systems in South Asia: This book 'Integrated Plant Nutrition System Modules for Major Crops and Cropping Systems in South Asia' is published to share information on the status of natural resource degradation, availability of organic and inorganic fertilizers, IPNS approach, IPNS modules for major crops and cropping systems, issues and challenges associated with the adoption of IPNS approach at the farm level in South Asian countries. The policy measures, research and extension support with regard to IPNS were put in place in all countries of South Asia. However, additional requirements of appropriate policy interventions, research innovations, effective extension services and need for joint coordinated efforts of the stakeholders were also included in the publication.

Meeting with IRRI Country Representative Bangladesh

A meeting was held on 12 March 2020 between SAC and IRRI in the conference room of SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC). Director Professionals and technical staffs of the centre attended the meeting. Mr. Humnath Bhandari, IRRI Country Representative of Bangladesh and other officials of IRRI were present in the meeting. The main objective of the meeting was to explore the opportunities for possible collaboration with SAC. SAC made a presentation on SAC activities in the meeting. IRRI has shown their keen interests for collaborative programs on agricultural innovations especially Horticulture and Aquaculture with SAC in the future. Finally, IRRI Country Representative of Bangladesh welcomed the SAC new Director by flower Bouquet.

Meeting with British Council Representative

A meeting was held on 15 March 2020 between SAC and British Council Representatives at the Director's room of SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC). Director, SAC, SPS (Livestock), STO and SPO of the centre attended the meeting. Gerry Fox (Team Leader, PROKAS) and HM Taslima Akhter (Manager -IBP Food Safety, PROKAS British Council) were present in the meeting. The main objective of the meeting was to explore the opportunities for possible collaboration with SAC and PROKAS, British Council has shown their keen interests for collaborative programs on agricultural innovations especially Horticulture and Aquaculture with SAC in the future.

Director handed over the souvenir to the guest

Farewell & Welcome Ceremony of Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar and Dr. Mian Sayeed Hassan

Dr. Mian Sayeed Hassan was welcomed as new Director of SAC and a grand farewell to Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar was held on 3rd March 2020 at SAC Conference, Dhaka. The staff of SAC attended the farewell & welome ceremony and gave their emotional remarks. Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar in his remark, thanked all SAC staffs for providing support during his tenure. Dr. Sayeed Hassan expressed that his contribution for SAC would be in mind forever. Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar, Chairman, BARC welcomed the SAC new Director with a flower bouquet. Dr. Bokhtiar received a crest from new Director of SAC.

New Director Dr. Mian Sayeed Hassan handed over the crest to the previous Director

Group photo with the new and previous Director

Dr. Mian Sayeed Hassan assumed the Charge of Director of SAARC Agriculture Centre

Dr. Mian Sayeed Hassan, PhD, joined on 1st March, 2020 as Director of SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), a regional organization of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). He is succeeding Dr. S.M. Bokhtiar, who has been recently promoted as Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC). During the official ceremony for receiving the charge of Director, Dr. Hassan lauded the achievements of his predecessor and wished him for all round success at his new position of BARC to trickle down the benefits of research at the doorstep of farming communities of Bangladesh.

The SAC, the knowledge and information hub in South Asia, is one of the most vibrant regional centres working under the umbrella of SAARC. While interacting with the staffs of SAC, he wished for higher levels of working atmosphere for the benefit of the agrarian sector among all the Member States i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Since several decades, the SAC is working on human resource development, policy guidelines, project implementation, SAARC food bank, Seed without border; essentially related to agriculture and allied sectors. Dr. Hassan promised to continue all those activities for the benefit of entire South Asian region.

Dr. Hassan started his carrier as scientific officer of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) in 1989 and later on he successfully discharged duties on several responsible positions assigned to him by the People's Republic Government of Bangladesh. During the past, he visited several countries to represent Bangladesh on the matter of agricultural research and development.