REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR STRENGTHENING NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIES IN SOUTH ASIA: A POLICY AGENDA

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Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies in South Asia

A Policy Agenda

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Annex 1: Programme of the Policy Dialogue
Foreword

The Development Papers Series of the ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (ESCAP-SSWA) promotes and disseminates policy-relevant research on the development challenges facing South and South-West Asia. It features policy research conducted at ESCAP-SSWA as well as by outside experts from within the region and beyond. The objective is to foster an informed debate on development policy challenges facing the subregion and to share development experiences and best practices.

This paper prepared by ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office is based on the report of the ESCAP-SSWA South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies, a two-day event that was held on 13 and 14 August 2013 in New Delhi, India. The Policy Dialogue brought together over 110 high-level government officials, regional experts, and civil society participants to discuss priorities for greater regional cooperation for food security in South Asia. This paper summarizes the key conclusions and recommendations from the Policy Dialogue. A key conclusion was the identification of a ten-point agenda for regional cooperation for food security that will be prioritized and implemented as a mandate of ESCAP-SSWA and its work in the subregion. We hope that this paper will contribute to the ongoing debate on how regional cooperation can contribute to enhance food security in South and South-West Asia.

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Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies in South Asia
A Policy Agenda

Abstract

This paper, prepared by ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, is based on the report of the ESCAP-SSWA South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies, organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, South and South-West Asia Office (ESCAP-SSWA) held in New Delhi, on 13 and 14 August 2013. Senior government officials, international food policy experts, civil society and other representatives discussed key challenges to national food security policies and opportunities that South Asian member States could pursue to increase regional cooperation for food security. This paper summarizes the highlights of the discussion at the event and the key conclusions and recommendations. A key conclusion was the identification of a ten-point agenda for regional cooperation for food security that will be prioritized and implemented as a mandate of ESCAP-SSWA and its work in the subregion.

JEL Code(s): Q17, Q18, O13

Key words: Food Security, Regional Cooperation, South Asia, Hunger
LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPSA  Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDN  Global Development Network
IFPRI  International Food Policy Research Institute
IGIDR  Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research
IHD  Institute for Human Development
ILRI  International Livestock Research Institute
IPC  Integrated Phase Classification
IPR  Intellectual Property Rights
IPS  Institute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka
LDCs  Least-developed countries
MDG  Millennium Development Goals
MSSRF  M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
NFSM  National Food Security Mission, India
R&D  Research and Development
SAARC  South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAWTEE  South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment
SDPI  Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SPS  Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
TBT  Technical barriers to trade
UN  United Nations
UNDA  United Nations Development Account
UNESCAP  United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCAP-SSWA  United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, South and South-West Asia Office
WTO  World Trade Organization
Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies in South Asia

A Policy Agenda

1. Background

As part of the United Nations Development Account project entitled “Strengthening regional knowledge networks to promote effective implementation of the United Nations development agenda (UNDA) and to assess progress”, UNESCAP is focusing on strengthening regional knowledge networks through regional cooperation for national food security strategies in South Asia. Food Security is fundamental for the achievement of the Secretary-General’s “Zero Hunger Challenge”, which encourages all partners to scale up their efforts and turn the vision of an end to hunger into a reality. Zero hunger and food security are also Internationally Agreed Development Goals and are the subject of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1) on the eradication of hunger and malnutrition. In addition, food security is a cross-cutting priority in the United Nations development agenda and is a determinant for the achievement of all MDGs.

As a key activity in this work, ESCAP-SSWA organized the South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies which was held on 13 and 14 August 2013 at the Taj Mahal Hotel in New Delhi. The Policy Dialogue had two principal objectives: i) to develop an understanding of the opportunities and challenges for the development of regional cooperation policy mechanisms for food security (through fostering regional knowledge networks) and ii) to identify specific regional priorities for strengthening the implementation of national food security strategies.

The event brought together over 110 senior policymakers and experts in food security from across South Asia including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Various ministerial-level representatives participated in the event including H.E. Prof. K.V. Thomas, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution of the Government of India; H.E. Dr. Rabindra Kumar Shakya, Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal; H.E. Mr T. Nanda Kumar, Member, National Disaster Management Authority of India, and H.E. Mr. Muhammad Javed Malik, Member (Food and Agriculture), Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan. In addition to senior government officials, Secretaries and heads of policy think-tanks in South Asia, participants included key development partners and international organizations including the United Nations FAO Asia Pacific Regional Office, the United Nations FAO India Country Office, United Nations World Food Programme, International Food Policy Research Institute South Asia Office (IFPRI-South Asia), International Livestock Research Institute South Asia Office (ILRI-South Asia), representatives from the SAARC Secretariat and SAARC Agriculture Centre, Global Development Network, and other institutional partners for food security in the region.

2. Challenge of Food Security in South Asia

Dr. Nagesh Kumar highlighted the importance of discussing and dealing with issues related to food security, especially in the South Asian subregion that is home to one third of the world’s food insecure population. He identified the challenge of maintaining capacity for the supply of food while facing increasing demand, by focusing on productivity enhancing measures in the agricultural sector, investing in research, developing sustainable agricultural practices, exploiting efficiency gains through better storage and logistics and meeting supply and demand gaps through trade. Dr. Kumar noted that an
estimated four million people in South Asia fell back into poverty in 2010, due to food price shocks, stressing the regions’ vulnerabilities to price volatilities. The persisting challenges, to food security are, among others, increasing demand for food and food distribution challenges. Dr. Kumar also highlighted the recognition of food security as a key development priority in various South Asian countries. The recognition of food security as a legal and enforceable right which has been pursued by various countries in the subregion is case in point. Countries have also invested in increased efforts for, inter alia, policies such as improving public distribution systems, school feeding programmes and cash transfers. Dr. Kumar concluded by emphasizing the importance and potential of good practices and effective strategies for food distribution and market management both nationally and through increased regional cooperation.

Dr. Rabindra Kumar Shakya emphasized the importance of the national response to food security, which should include the four internationally agreed dimensions of availability, access, utilization and stability. Dr. Shakya informed participants that the required food security response in Nepal entails investments in research and promotion of a variety of agricultural products that would bring sustainable production in different geographical locations. He noted the need for further policy focus directed toward enhancing crop insurance and expanding and improving road networks to overcome weak market linkages. With 33 districts out of 75 in Nepal being subject to food insecurity, there is an urgent need for improvements in agricultural production. Poor irrigation facilities and vulnerabilities to monsoons are among the key challenges that need to be addressed. Dr. Shakya noted that the Nepalese national strategy includes targeted programmes to enhance high-value crops in areas with high food insecurity, to expand usage of appropriate technologies and to develop effective monitoring programmes to assess the state of food insecurity. He also noted the costs of food transport from between stages of production and consumption can be substantial and Nepal already has a subsidy system in place which is administered through the transportation cost. Dr. Shakya reiterated that the current policy dialogue would help establishing a network of information and knowledge sharing. The network would allow for exchange of experiences, lessons learned, and strengthening of the agricultural sector.

Prof. K.V. Thomas stressed the importance of cooperation and knowledge sharing across the subregion and emphasized the shared history and geographic identity of countries in South Asia. He highlighted the priority of food security for South Asia, which is among the most densely populated subregion in the world, with a high concentration of people living in rural areas, and heavy dependence on agricultural production directly or indirectly for the majority of individual’s livelihoods. In the context of declining investments in research and infrastructure, falling water resources, global warming, price fluctuations and the diversion land away from food production, he outlined an urgent need for policy reforms and innovations in agro-ecology that would promote sustainable agricultural production. He also shared a good practice from the Indian state of Kerala, which has pioneered a technique for below-sea-level farming, contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and local ecosystem. Prof. Thomas noted that these methods could be highly relevant for other countries such as Malaysia, Bangladesh and Maldives. He also highlighted the characteristics and challenges of Indian agriculture and the impending passage into legislation of India’s national food security bill. He stressed that India’s population estimates for 2018 range up to 1.3 billion people and as such the country must assure that the population growth challenges for food security are kept in mind, especially in terms of innovations of new technologies to grow more with available land. The Minister also gave credit to farmers and agricultural scientists who had taken up the challenge of leading the country and people towards prosperity over the past decades. On the issue of the national food security bill, Prof. Thomas noted that the bill would guarantee basic food stuffs through grains and other foods and cash transfer modalities to over two thirds of the population and provide for increased access by implementing a new subsidized price structure. The Minister concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of considering the external impacts of national policies. He noted that the world can be considered a global village in which one’s action will inevitably have repercussions in other parts of the globe.
Ms. Lise Grande emphasized the commitments of every country that were made during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 where every country pledged to improve food accessibility and availability and to address the underlying causes of global food price volatility. She also highlighted the commitment of countries to the zero hunger challenge launched by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon in February 2013.

3. Regional Cooperation for Food Security in South Asia

Prof. G.K. Chadha welcomed this discussion as being very timely in view of the common problem of food security in South Asia. He commented upon the difference between pre-green revolution and post-green revolution in terms of production of the Indian agricultural sector. Prof. Chadha noted the various market-based challenges of food security and the high volatility in Indian agricultural growth on a year-to-year basis. He briefly commented on the importance of ensuring food is accessible and affordable and remarked upon the timeliness of the discussion in light of the progress of India’s Food Security Bill, which was being debated in the Indian Parliament.

Mr. T. Nanda Kumar opened his comments by addressing the issue of the IFPRI Global Hunger Index and the strong assumption implied by assigning equal weights to each of the three dimensions: (1) the proportion of undernourished in the population; (2) the prevalence of underweight children under five years; and (3) the under-five mortality rate used to measure Global Hunger Index. He highlighted the fact that food production is not the major underlying cause of food insecurity in India. Mr. Kumar remarked that one of the main challenges for sustainable food security is the lack of access to adequate technologies. In this sense, there is both a need to invest in the development of new and sustainable food production technologies and also to address the challenge of the private property rights versus public good aspects for the control of these technologies. The latter is especially important in the era of post-WTO agreement on intellectual property rights for such technologies. Mr. Kumar called for India to invest more in technology and for the countries of South Asia to share agricultural technologies with their neighbours, in particular in areas such as weather forecasting technology that can be developed and shared. On international policy, he noted that there are lessons that can be learned from other countries for regional cooperation. In particular, he remarked that the SAARC Food Bank initiative is an important initiative even though it is not ambitious enough and is constrained by many procedural issues. On this issue, Mr. Kumar also stated that countries with buffer stock can always cooperate, but that they have certain national limitations, which regional cooperation can minimize. Mr. Kumar concluded that improvements in regional cooperation should be made in four key areas: (1) Building and sustaining effective knowledge networks; (2) increasing regional policy coordination; (3) alignment and coherence of regulations and specifications including the safety and phytosanitary measures and others designed to deal with trans-boundary transmission of veterinary diseases; and (4) greater efficiency and cooperation in logistics.

Mr. Muhammad Javed Malik thought that such a policy dialogue was a milestone for the subregion, in the context of significant and priority challenge of food security in South Asia that accounts for one fifth of the world population but only four per cent of total world land. In addition, South Asia must address long-run trends of a growing population whilst the natural resource base remains constant or in many dimensions is diminishing. Mr Malik also emphasized the need for regional cooperation to address national excess supply and demand mismatches by sharing and trade of exportable surplus of complementary and supplementary food items and commodities, noting that a mechanism for this enhancement should be multilateral agreements. These would also facilitate greater trade linkages, exchanges of technologies and assist in eliminating stark price differentials across countries as well as build food storage capacity. Mr. Malik also highlighted the importance of tackling Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) through collective initiatives, and noted that India’s success in overcoming IPR hurdles to increasing access for HIV-related medications could be considered a good practice model for replication in the area of agricultural technologies for food security.
Dr. Saman Kelegama in his remarks noted that all South Asian countries rank around 50 (out of 107 countries) on the Global Hunger Index. He emphasized the various multifaceted challenges to achieving food security in South Asia which include: agricultural input availability, environmentally sustainable farming techniques, new technologies, research and development for food security, international trade in food and agriculture, food supply management and food distribution. Dr. Kelegama highlighted the need to consider South Asia regional cooperation for food security in the context of trade linkages. He stressed the importance of considering and analyzing regional cooperation in dimensions such as market structures, seasonal food factors, prices and taxes’ structure related to food exports and imports. He noted that high agricultural tariffs can place additional burdens on countries to achieve food security. Such tariffs in South Asia are high, on average 29 per cent compared to 10 per cent in ASEAN countries. Dr. Kelegama discussed the issue of the SAARC Food Bank and stressed the importance of maintaining a physical bank of food reserves in addition to other measures such as a virtual Food Bank. He also emphasized the significant gains that regional cooperation could achieve in addressing investment shortfalls and implementation to decrease post-harvest losses and prioritize R&D investment for new food production technologies. Dr. Kelegama also highlighted specific areas of food security that can only be adequately and sustainably addressed through regional cooperation. The issue of management of rivers and ocean waters in South Asia is one such area. Dr. Kelegama concluded by calling on SAARC to take a far more proactive role in implementation of concrete and sustainable regional cooperation initiatives in the coming years.

Mr. Amrit Lugun highlighted a series of common challenges for South Asia regarding trade in agricultural commodities, in particular the importance of reducing the size and use of national “sensitive” lists of specific items, many of which are agricultural, that can delay and inhibit trade of such items across the region. He noted that India has made significant achievements in reducing the number of items on sensitive list, in particular agricultural items for LDCs which have been removed as part of the process under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). Mr. Lugun informed the participants that at a recent meeting of the SAARC, the issue of reducing the sensitive lists for all SAARC countries and margins of preference were discussed. Mr. Lugun also informed participants of the progress of various SAARC initiatives, including the Delhi Declaration of the 15th Summit, the SAARC Food Bank initiative resulting from the 17th Summit, the SAARC Food Bank Board and the SAARC Seed Bank Board management initiatives. He emphasized the importance of agriculture research and greater agricultural trade in the region, and other areas for regional cooperation including concerns over trans-boundary animal diseases and their impact on agricultural production. On this last point, Mr. Lugun informed participants that SAARC had initiated a project with Chief Veterinary Officers to find solutions to this challenge.

Dr. P.K. Joshi emphasized that South Asia has the four ingredients of genes, energy, land, and water (GELWA) necessary for food security through development of the agricultural sector. He underlined the key challenges in the subregion, including acute undernourishment, the low rank of countries in South Asia in the Global Hunger Index, smallholder agriculture, weak institutions and policy challenges. Dr. Joshi highlighted the increasing demand for high value-added production and the necessary condition of ensuring far more effective linkages between farmers and the market. Dr. Joshi concluded that there are three components that require the attention of policy makers in South Asia for regional cooperation in food security. These are: technology, institutions, and policies related to gene, energy, land and water. Finally, Dr. Joshi concluded by identifying five major areas in which stakeholders in South Asia should work together: (1) strengthening the existing institutions; (2) sharing best practices with each other; (3) developing a knowledge-sharing hub; (4) monitoring of trans-boundary regions; (5) strong collaboration and cooperation in agricultural research.
4. National Food Security Strategies: Key Policy Priorities and Good Practices

Mr. Atair Rahman highlighted key challenges Bangladesh is facing in achieving food security including, inter alia, declining land resources (both in quality and quantity), high population growth and high population density, continuing extreme poverty, domestic impacts of global supply uncertainties, food price volatility and urban migration. Among the various programmes and policies implemented by the Government of Bangladesh, Mr. Rahman highlighted the National Food Policy Action Plan 2008-2015, the Country Investment Plan 2010, the Disaster Management Plan, and finally the Food Safety Programme that has been recently approved by the Government. He also noted that Bangladesh had stressed the importance of its active participation in SAARC regional programmes. The Government of Bangladesh encourages the increasing use and implementation of climate change adaptation technologies and is active in encouraging innovation in market systems, conducts substantial agricultural research and development, supports the reduction of fertilizer prices and encourages mechanization and irrigation. Mr. Rahman identified several key priority areas for greater South Asia regional cooperation for food security including further investment in R&D, strengthening food management practices, redesigning agricultural systems to be adapted to climate change, strengthening public distribution systems, forging stronger regional partnerships among food security policymakers and finally, the importance of encouraging diversification, intensification, sustainability and resilience through technologies in order to enhance food security in Bangladesh and in the subregion.

Mr. Sangay stressed that malnutrition and a lack of productive assets were major causes of food insecurity in Bhutan. Agricultural production is another constraint for national food security while a key strategy for Bhutan to increase agricultural production for food security is the encouragement of diversification of food production crops including wild vegetables, medical plants and different types of cereals (buckwheat and maize). Mr. Sangay noted that other concerns in Bhutan are related to increasing food price inflation and increasing prices and imports of oils, fats, fish, pork and chicken. He also highlighted national food security vulnerabilities in water scarcity, high urban migration, and challenges in the development of road networks, which are often built at the expense of farm lands. Mr. Sangay discussed a variety of national strategies Bhutan can pursue for regional cooperation for food security. These included increased investment in agriculture, technology and food-related research and agricultural extension. He also recommended greater emphasis on cooperatives and producer groups for farmers to increase knowledge sharing. Mr. Sangay also made key recommendations for strategies that should account for protecting agricultural land, sustainable management of water resources, addressing food reserve needs and post-harvest storage and distribution systems, employment needs related to agriculture and non-farm enterprises, access to microcredit for smallholder farmers, and mainstreaming climate change adaptation strategies and improving food-related disaster preparedness. Mr. Sangay noted that there are low risks to the commercialization of agriculture. Farmers in Bhutan for example, tend to group themselves together and do the marketing of their products with the help of the private sector. Lastly, Mr. Sangay proposed enhanced collaboration among national institutions and across ministries to optimize knowledge sharing.

Dr. Adibdulla Naseer highlighted the specific challenges for ensuring food security in the Maldives. He noted that the Maldives was highly vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change, such as rising sea-levels, which would affect its 2,000 islands. He also emphasized the demand for current food resources that had to include, not only the local population but also the more than 1 million tourists and 100,000 expatriates located in the island country. The economy of the country relies mainly on tourism, fishery and agriculture. Maldives is only self-sufficient in food in fish consumption, for example, accounting for more than 25 per cent of the Indian Ocean’s tuna, while most remaining food items are imported. Dr. Naseer highlighted government system of subsidization that is required to support food imports and the minimum three month storage for ensuring demand is met on the islands. He noted that the Maldives prioritizes three main food security strategies. Firstly, the Government has a strategy to improve agriculture and fisheries productivity to enhance availability and access to food. Secondly, the Government aims to improve food utilization through safe diets and sustainable health. Thirdly, Maldives
has a goal of enhancing leadership and partnership to improve food security. This includes through integrating food security into national development planning and strengthening regional and international cooperation and partnership. Dr. Naseer acknowledged the notable government priority policies and strong regulatory systems for fishing licensing to maintain a sustainable fisheries sector and protect it from overexploitation, for example by prohibiting fishing by tourists. He also noted that tourism sustainability to ensure revenue and other spillovers to increase consumption was based on ensuring sustainable management of the country’s coral reefs. Dr. Naseer highlighted several elements of the national food security strategy including improving land, water and biodiversity resource efficiency, improving land tenure systems and land use policies, and improving soil and irrigation management and littoral forest policies. Finally, he highlighted the leadership of the Government to improve food security through innovation and through further eco-culture development in the Maldives.

Mr. Beni Bahdur Basnet presented detailed information about the food security challenge in Nepal with 35 per cent of the population considered food insecure. Mr. Basnet also detailed some major challenges particular to Nepal including its limited arable land, the small average farm area, rural outmigration and poor consumer nutrition knowledge. He informed participants about Nepal’s strategies for food security including the Agriculture and Food Security Three-year plan approach paper (2013-2016) to boost agriculture modernization and rural agriculture and livestock productivity for food security. In particular the policy will focus on targeting special assistance to poorest farmers, increasing production through value chain activities and incentives for smallholders to focus on higher-value-added crops, irrigation investments and targeted commodities where Nepal has a comparative advantage. This approach strategy complements the Food and Nutrition Security Plan of Nepal. Mr. Basnet also informed participants of recent trends in increased domestic and other resources to the agricultural sector in Nepal and Nepal’s implementation of the Food Security Phase Classification System in partnership with FAO. Mr. Basnet made several recommendations for increased regional cooperation for food security through investments in agriculture, addressing the issue of fertilizers and the impact of fertilizer subsidies, managing community seedbanks and considering small-scale irrigation and food and agriculture safety nets. He also recommended that countries maintain national food and seed buffer stocks. Lastly he expressed his strong support for increased regional cooperation for food security among SAARC countries and looked forward to implementation of relevant initiatives.

Mr. Seerat Asghar highlighted the importance of agricultural crops to Pakistan’s economy but also the significant role that Pakistan played in non-agricultural food production including in fisheries and livestock and dairy produce. He noted that fisheries for example, remain underexploited. He also informed participants that 54% of agriculture output comes from livestock and Pakistan is the 5th largest producer of milk. Mr. Asghar identified several factors affecting food security in Pakistan including productivity stagnation, the cost of inputs and the national energy crisis, global food price volatility, food import dependence and increased food-related disease incidence. He noted various aspects of Pakistan’s food security strategy including a target of four per cent per annum annual growth of agriculture, more efficient and equitable food distribution system and transparent and well-managed safety-net systems for household income support. Mr. Asghar noted that Pakistan was prioritizing food security through greater agricultural research and development investments, increasing food production and productivity, especially smallholder productivity and competitiveness, and promoting investment in health, education and the implementation of safety-nets. Pakistan has several food security initiatives including the National Income Support Programme, the National Task Force on Food Security, intervention mechanisms for rice and pulse prices, a specialized programme for food security, enhanced food grain storage and subsidized food items through official utility stores. Mr. Asghar remarked on emerging issues related to agricultural productivity. He recommended that Pakistan pursue concentration in low-delta crops, which require less water and give higher return for cultivation as well as other horticulture. He also recommended greater emphasis on reducing usage of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Mr. Asghar highlighted the large scale post-harvest losses in Pakistan as well as in the subregion, and emphasized the priority of reducing losses that often reverse any productivity gains made in the sector. In Pakistan, post-harvest losses are estimated
at 10 per cent to 15 per cent of cereals production, while other crops experience over 25 per cent of losses. To reduce losses, Mr. Asghar recommended countries should increase storage capacity of crops through improvements in infrastructures.

Mr. Nimal Dissanayake informed participants about key characteristics of Sri Lanka in relation to food security. He noted that Sri Lanka has over 20 million people and is one of the wealthiest countries in South Asia in terms of per capita incomes. However, a majority of the labour force work in agriculture and the food production system in the island state must account for the climatic variety between lowland and highland and dry and wet zones. Average daily calorie intake for Sri Lanka is around 2,200 calories but this masks large inequalities in food consumption. The government of Sri Lanka remains focused on increasing food production through increasing research and development in food crops, pursuing the guaranteed price scheme, subsidizing fertilizer use, investing in irrigation systems and management and adjusting import duties and taxes to help local producers. He also pointed out the initiative taken by the government of Sri Lanka since 2005 to improve the production of other crops such as rye, maize and ground nuts. The government identified the crops to be grown in dry, medium and wet regions. As a result, in the dry season, certain fields are being converted into other crop-type production. These initiatives were launched to reduce import dependency for sugar, vegetables and rice, to reduce vulnerabilities to inflation. Mr. Dissanayake highlighted three major food security programmes in Sri Lanka; the Samurdhi programme of food provision targeting some two million households below the poverty line; the Thripasha programme for supplementary food for low income mothers with infant children and the school mid-day meal programme which feeds half a million children with a 600-800 calorie meal. Mr. Dissanayake also described a recent programme the Government invested in called “Life fitness”, by which the Government seeks to encourage small-scale farmers to produce food, while providing guidelines to ensure food security. In addition, as for many other countries across South Asia, Sri Lanka is also facing challenges regarding distribution and storage system, which cause many post-harvest losses. Lastly, Mr. Dissanayake made several recommendations for food security. He called for national food security systems to combine domestic food production priorities and trade; prioritizing acquisition of new technology for food production and utilization; direct government intervention for food security at the micro level and more programmes for utilization and nutrition education in households. He also recommended further information generation through research and knowledge sharing to policymakers.

5. Food Security Policy Analysis Frameworks

Dr. Manoj Panda remarked on the dimensions of intra-household food security, food safety and food preferences, which combined, define the key elements of food security. He noted that for food security to be sustainable, there must be further research to better link the behaviour of farmers and consumers today with the changing patterns of production and consumption of food. Dr. Panda also highlighted the fact that trade is not a directly controllable factor for farmers, unlike domestic food production. According to Dr. Panda, it is important to understand the effects of various government intervention schemes like minimum support price schemes or public distribution system and how these impact producers’ and consumers’ behaviours. He recommended that there be greater regional cooperation for food security in terms of analytical frameworks that can be developed for two primary purposes: policy analysis and forecasting behaviour.

Dr. Upali Wickramasinghe highlighted three critical issues concerning food security: (1) improving food consumption for the more than 1 billion undernourished people in the world; (2) the high priority of the environmental footprint of food production; and (3) the need to ensure sustainable energy security for future generations. He noted that recent ESCAP research had found that SAARC underperformed compared to other regions in terms of cereal production which was essential for sustainable food security. Dr. Wickramasinghe noted that research had to assess trade-offs and policies in food production expansion and intensification for more sustainable food security. He noted that in South Asia, around 54
per cent of land is allocated to agriculture, while this figure is 40 per cent at the global level. Also, 91 per cent of water withdrawal is directed to agriculture, which contributes over one third of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and also has large impacts on water and soil contamination and bio-diversity loss. Dr. Wickramasinghe outlined some broad directions required for policy interventions in food security in South Asia, including freezing farmland expansion, closing yield gaps, increasing efficiency of inputs for food production, reducing waste and losses along food value chains and developing better tools and measurements for food security.

Dr. A. Ganesh Kumar noted that models for analyzing national-level food security policies are just one of the possible variety of models that exist to address the multi-level and multi-dimensional challenges of food security. At the national level, he noted that the key focus is on food availability and fluctuations and associated price volatility. He highlighted the key components of domestic supply and demand for food to be modeled including government policies, household behaviour, intermediate demand and wastage. Dr. Kumar gave insights into challenges and dimensions to appropriately model food supply including data on farm gate prices and crop seasonality, food demand at the household level including data on single versus multiple commodity analysis, and existing data methods and data gaps in capacity for measuring intermediate demand and wastage. He informed participants about various integrated models of supply and demand and described several well-known global models for food policy analysis. In South Asia studies, Dr. Kumar highlighted several examples of applying integrated models in either partial equilibrium or general equilibrium frameworks including work on rice, wheat and other commodities in various countries in South Asia. He raised several issues regarding strengthening capacity for modelling including the need to strengthen methodologies, definitions of components of food security for data collection, and comprehensive and comparable data in South Asia.

Dr. S. Bhide remarked on the issue of India’s agricultural outlook and supply-side challenges of food security. He informed participants of the results of recent work conducted by NCAER on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture on the issue of short and medium-term agricultural outlooks. Dr. Bhide also highlighted the particular elements of the national food economy and specific components that affect the dynamics of each of its dimension, whether the monsoon’s large and important effect on production, income growth affecting the market or water scenarios affecting sustainability. He noted several key trends in Indian agriculture including its declining importance to GDP, the increasingly vast majority of farms being smallholder owned, and that the only key driver of agricultural growth has been productivity gains. Dr. Bhide also emphasized the productivity determinants including increased agricultural investments, greater and more efficient inputs, focus on value addition and better terms of trade. He also noted the rising trend in food prices and informed participants that in India, supply responses are driven by rising income, urbanization and the impact of the Food Security Bill. In the medium-term, Dr. Bhide concluded that, the gradual removal of subsidies from agriculture is likely have an adverse effect on terms of trade. He also noted that other medium-term challenges for food production are fiscal pressures for consumer subsidies and the need to transition to more efficient markets.

Mr. Sumiter Broca emphasized that the globally accepted definition of food security incorporates availability, access, utilization and stabilization as key pillars for its success and all four pillar need to be present for an individual to be food secure. He noted that the definition is multi-dimensional and complementary and is based on application to each and every individual and as such, no country is fully food secure if any one individual in the country is not. Mr. Broca also noted that food insecurity can have both transitory and chronic causes, at the household or the market levels. He then discussed and contrasted different food insecurity measurement methodologies including the FAO measurement of food insecurity based on data from elements of household consumption per capita of different foods, household income and expenditure survey data, food intake surveys or anthropomorphic surveys (weight/height for age) and self-assessment methodologies. Mr. Broca emphasized that the measurement of food security is varied and recommended that a triangulation strategy be employed to use multiple methods to compare and cross-validate findings or to identify appropriate targeted interventions. For example, where
undernourishment is declining but stunting has increased, policy interventions may better focus on other causes such as poor sanitation that would also have beneficial effects on other elements of food security. Mr. Broca called for greater emphasis on linking food security measurement with evidence-based policy making to inform decisions and recommended greater investments in the use of impact evaluation to improve and scale-up successful programmes and interventions. He also stressed the importance of coordination between data collection agencies to ensure efficient and informative information management for food security and reiterated the importance of applying a suite of indicators to monitoring food insecurity in countries.

Dr. George Mavrotas briefed participants on the recent conclusion of the GDN Global Research Project: “Supporting Policy Research to Inform Agricultural Policy in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa”, which aimed to engage researchers from the global south in studying agricultural issues to inform policy in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and address long-term challenges to food security. Dr. Mavrotas informed participants of some of the key findings for food security in South Asia that were included in the various research outputs under the project. Research found that commercialization of agriculture has shifted with consumption patterns, away from cereals to higher value-added agriculture. At the same time, small and marginal farming has become more precarious and excluded from regional and global food chains, and that vertical integration into agri-food chains and access to capital is necessary for strengthening market linkages and smallholder participation. Research on fertilizer use in South Asia recommended expanding fertilizer production capacity and quality whilst promoting smarter and more tailored fertilizer use to protection against adverse environmental impacts. The research also recommended greater regional cooperation in fertilizer sector and harmonization of subsidy policies across the region. Research in agricultural inputs of water and irrigation found that South Asia lacks domestic investment commitment in surface water and recommended user-pay systems for charging per volume of water consumed. Dr. Mavrotas noted that another paper on agricultural pricing and public procurement found that price stabilization policies provided buffers for farmers and consumers from global price volatility but that there was little evidence that output growth in South Asia was linked to any agricultural price or procurement policies. The research also concluded that farmer subsidies through public procurement and public distribution have improved farmer welfare only marginally. Finally, research related to long-term challenges for food security in South Asia found that further investment in agricultural research and development is needed; a greater focus should be made on increasing market participation of smallholders and empowering women farmers and that regional cooperation should improve to enhance buffer stocks to reduce food price volatility.

In the open discussion, participants raised questions about various issues including a gender bias in household surveys, the practicality of freezing farmland expansion and the importance of commodity price speculation. Mr. Broca agreed there definitely was a bias against women in India and Bangladesh, and that this was evident in indicators such as anemia incidence and a lower average body mass index (BMI). Dr. Bhide noted that South Asia had reached a level where agricultural land could not be increased without disturbing bio-diversity. Furthermore the current agricultural land is being used inefficiently and seems to be trending in that direction in the future. Finally, Dr. Kumar noted that speculation is an element in many markets including commodity markets.


Dr. S. Mahendra Dev remarked that ensuring access to food for all is a critical component of food security. He emphasized that in the South Asian context, access is highly dependent on the availability of food grains and also noted that the region’s significant challenge in addressing malnutrition is evidence of the lack of effective access to food.
Dr. N.C. Saxena noted the enormous challenge India faces with regards to food security. He highlighted the key challenge of access and availability to food by noting that India had a buffer stock of over 80 million tonnes of food grains stocked, yet that about 22 per cent of the population suffered from hunger. He highlighted various characteristics and trends in India’s food production and distribution such as the rise in the past few years of India’s buffer stock, the decline of food availability per capita, the strong inequity in cereal consumption indicating poorer households would consume more cereals if possible, as well as the steady and constant rising trend in food grain wholesale prices since 2007. He noted that India’s Global Hunger Index classifies the country as being in an “alarming” situation with regards to hunger. Dr. Saxena also noted the broad distribution in the global hunger index score across states with even the best performing state of Punjab ranking lower than Nicaragua, whilst the worst performing state of Madhya Pradesh was ranked lower than Chad. He also remarked that India is one of the only countries in the world whose hunger index score has worsened since 1996. Dr. Saxena highlighted the quickly rising cost of the food subsidy in India, where the fiscal expenditure on the subsidy at INR 602 billion in 2011-2012 is almost double the cost of the subsidy in 2007. He emphasized the importance of improving the public food distribution system and the rules for procurement and need to ensure that distribution and drawdown on stocks is counter-cyclical in terms of food price shocks and average harvest performance. At the same time, the public distribution system despite the scale of the policy, still only represents less than 25 per cent of the total per capita grain consumption in poor households, a share that declines with household income decile. Dr. Saxena noted the relative success of Chhattisgarh’s implementation of the public distribution system and attributed that success to a number of factors including the local government and panchayat control on dealerships the large state government investment in the scheme, the fact that the state can take advantage of its surplus rice production, priority on monitoring, grievance redressal, responsiveness and accountability through prosecution of episodes of corruption. Dr. Saxena outlined the key aspects of India’s national food security bill including an increase in coverage to up to 75 per cent of rural households and half the urban population of India. That identification of target households will be made within six months. Disadvantaged households such as those identified within the Antyodaya framework as the poorest households receive 35 kg of cereals free and remaining cereals at the subsidized price. Pregnant women and lactating mothers will receive additional cash benefits. The Food security bill will also extend child nutrition and the school mid-day meal programmes. The female head of household receives the household benefits and India has sought to leverage the application of its universal identification system, Aadhaar card, to improve implementation and targeting in the face of identification challenges for poor households. Dr. Saxena concluded by discussing the issue of inter-state allocation of resources to public distribution and various challenges in this regard. He also highlighted the Act’s specification of possible use of direct cash transfer in place of physical grain distribution. In this sense, he noted key challenges in terms of ensuring that the market availability and food supply exists at the local levels to enable utilization of the case and that there remain various challenges in the banking structure, and education and identification for use of debit cards, and overcoming the enormous financial exclusion that exists among poor and vulnerable households.

Professor Mustafizur Rahman noted that ensuring access to food for all and management of food markets and distribution was important in terms of the interlinkages between national strategies and global trends from two perspectives; the issue of the right to food and the consequences for realizing the right to food at the national level in terms of the post-2015 development agenda at the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals; and the ninth ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Bali in 2013 at which a number of issues would be negotiated with respect to specific measures that safeguard food security. Prof. Rahman highlighted the conclusion of Amartya Sen on the study of famines that noted that none of the famines that have occurred in the past 200 years were problems of food production but were instead the result of critical failures in distribution and access. Prof. Rahman emphasized that functioning democratic process for ensuring the right to food was essential to resolving these problems. He highlighted some key characteristics of the food security challenge in Bangladesh in terms of distribution and access to food. He noted that Bangladesh has achieved substantial gains in poverty
reduction, but that undernutrition, food poverty and stunting are still significant national challenges. Prof. Rahman identified five reasons for food insecurity in Bangladesh: 1) income concentration, 2) consumption concentration, 3) spatial dimension of east-west divisions within the country, 4) global market and shocks as Bangladesh depends on global market for food imports and 5) challenges in the national public distribution system (PDS). In public food procurement, Prof. Rahman noted that there are three additional challenges; i) procurement price setting and management, ii) dependence on imports for the procurement, iii) gradual decrease in food aid. Finally, Professor Rahman defined the overall challenges from a generational perspective. The first generational challenges are mainly short-run, such as identifying problems, managing biometrics, developing administration systems and institutions, and enhancing safety nets. He noted that second generation challenges are long-run: economy-wide impact of OMS, cost of storage, dimension of government procurement, urban poverty and other factors.

Professor Alakh Sharma remarked on the improvements in India’s food security situation since the country’s independence in 1947. He noted that India’s food security performance is concentrated in ensuring food security at the macro level but that the country faces many challenges and large policy gaps in ensuring food security at the micro level. Prof. Sharma considered that the Indian public distribution system (PDS) has been reasonably successful to date. India has also been able to insulate to some extent its own domestic food prices and maintain stability in the face of different and sometimes very volatile world food prices. He highlighted one key challenge of the Indian PDS as being the low share of food consumption that it contributes at the household and per capita level. Prof. Sharma also noted that though the recent Indian food security bill has received some criticism for the potential to replace physical grain distribution with cash transfer systems, that cash transfer systems can be very efficient social transfer and redistribution mechanisms as long as institutional and identification challenges are overcome. He also noted recent research undertaken at the state level for India that concluded that an increase in price of rice and wheat in the India PDS would keep quality of grain high and reduce the fiscal strain on the budget, as well as result in higher coverage. Prof. Sharma noted that one of the most important policy issues to be addressed is the expenditure and institutional costs of food management, storage, procurement and transportation. He highlighted the importance for India to address leakages in the PDS as one priority issue that could provide huge food security and efficiency gains. Prof. Sharma concluded by noting that implementation and real results at the individual level are essential if new food security laws are to succeed. He emphasized that national strategies cannot focus on simply increasing coverage of population but to design systems that allow more people to have more and better access to food.

Dr. Rukmani Ramani summarized the activities of the M.S. Swaminathan Research including some major interventions that it has conducted in food security in different Indian states and localities including work in local in-situ biodiversity management, projects for local gene-seed-food grain banks, home garden and mixed agricultural systems production at the local level, conservation issues and technological applications for sustainable agriculture and food production. She highlighted one particular project that provided local hourly information on weather and tide patterns via mobile and cellular telephones to fisherman in local languages, to assist in information on fishing conditions. Dr. Ramani also highlighted another project in which information on government food, nutrition and health programmes was consolidated on eligibility cards confirming the specific eligibility and entitlements of local individuals and households for the range of applicable local, state and national government programmes. Dr. Ramani also highlighted a women’s farmer programme that the Foundation operates for 60 villages nationally in which the Ministry of Rural Development was a key partner.

7. Food Production and Sustainable Agriculture Policies

Mr. Muhammad Malik introduced the theme of food production and sustainable agriculture policies by underlining the absolute limits to agricultural production due to the limitations of landmass and water resources. He noted that there was however enormous potential to increase agricultural intensity and productivity through research and development and the transfer of technology. Mr. Malik described the
region as vulnerable to a low-agricultural-productivity trap where a vicious cycle of low farmer income, low investment quantity and quality and low concentration on technology lead to persistence of concentration in low-productivity agriculture and therefore low incomes. He described the key challenge of the region in terms of food production and sustainable agriculture as breaking this vicious cycle through better pricing policies and concentration on research and innovation to improve productivity. At the same time Mr. Malik noted that rural development and the increased economic wellbeing of a majority of households in the region are dependent on agriculture as the majority of employment occurs in this sector. He also noted that a corollary to this observation was that a concentration on policies to simply increase GDP growth rates and GDP overall without accounting for the quality of growth would fail to generate proportionate gains in rural development and the alleviation of national levels of poverty and hunger. Concentrating policies on prioritizing gains in agriculture in particular will provide direct benefits to the majority of workers across the subregion.

Dr. Jeet Sandhu noted that India’s agricultural improvements and transformations over the last six decades had included gains in productivity, access and utilization of irrigation, production gains in terms of volume of grains and the success of the original Green Revolution. Dr. Sandhu highlighted the programme "Bringing the Green Revolution to East India", which includes short- and medium-term goals for the efficient management of water, power and other agricultural production inputs, as well as subsidies to maximize agricultural production on a sustainable basis, focusing on seven selected states in north-east India. Dr. Sandhu also identified a number of key issues that policies for food production had to prioritize. These include managing with a fixed amount of agricultural land and natural limit to total land area, a lack of water and the importance of proper water management, and increasing demand and production of food. He recommended a number of areas in which policy change may be effective including promoting investments in agriculture and productivity, technological and efficiency systems in agriculture and food production including the usage of micro and sprinkler irrigation systems, and a greater focus on sustainable energy access for the farm sector such as promoting innovation such as solar panels and other renewable energy sources.

Dr. Tayan Raj Gurung stated that discussion of policies related to food production had to focus less on solely targeting increased food production, which is already high in aggregate terms, but rather concentrate on overcoming key challenges in related to food distribution. He emphasized three challenges: the region’s dependence on a currently unsustainable production system, the poor food distribution systems and mechanisms and the limited public support for increasing food production. Dr. Gurung emphasized that food production systems are unsustainable in the region due to the challenges of shrinking and localized food production areas, threats to essential inputs such as water and nutrients and chemicals including fertilizers and increasing production costs. Key food distribution system challenges included the subsistence-oriented production system, the long supply chains and high costs and distances for food to travel between farm and fork, issues related to food and animal transport, including hygiene. Dr. Gurung provided details on a range of SAARC Agriculture Centre’s initiatives and experiences to improve food production and sustainable agriculture. These included: the establishment of expert regional networks for agriculture and allied disciplines; increasing seed quality in SAARC countries; analysis of key food value chains of fruits and vegetables in SAARC countries; focus on the impacts of trans-boundary animal diseases; stock management, fisheries and coastal management; public support for agriculture; weather forecast and advisory services; the use of ICT in agriculture; and finally, improving irrigation water use efficiency. Dr. Gurung concluded with some key recommendations including targeted agricultural research and development; designation of agriculture production zones; integrating local food distribution networks into the food distribution system; investment in social capital and safety-nets; and finally, the greater use of regional institutions including those such as the SAARC Food Bank and SAARC Seed Bank.

Dr. Mohammad Azeem Khan described the situation of food security in Pakistan and noted that agriculture contributes 21 per cent to GDP but employs around 40 per cent of the national labour force.
He noted that over 80 per cent of the land area for agriculture is irrigated. In terms of food insecurity Dr. Khan highlighted Pakistan’s in the top 11 of the most food insecure countries across the world. One-third of the population lives below the food poverty line and a similar proportion of children are underweight. There is also a strong gender inequality in food insecurity with women more likely to be food insecure than men. Dr. Khan then discussed the welfare analysis of current government policies for food security. He noted that the heavy use of subsidies was found to partially benefit consumers, although rural poor populations lacked access to most safety nets, and that subsidies were found to crowd out private investment in agriculture. Dr. Khan highlighted the importance of raising food production productivity. He outlined several areas of food development strategies including innovation in food diversification, efficiency in input and output management, reduction of wastage and post-harvest losses and removing policy distortions. He identified a number of programmes that could address these issues including the Rod-Kohi Development; Bio-remediation of sewage water; bio-fertilizers; fostering a blue revolution in fisheries management and farming; use of alternate and sustainable energy for agriculture; and the use of agricultural service providers to increase specialization and raise marginal gains. Dr. Khan concluded that agricultural innovations have enormous potential to provide food security and improve situations including at the smallholder level. He recommended greater investment in improving agricultural varieties and hybrids. He also recommended effective pro-poor food policies and more effective implementation as well as greater focus on food affordability.

**Dr. Jayantha D. Samarasinghe** discussed issues related to challenges to sustainable food production in **Sri Lanka**. He highlighted the prominent issues similar to other countries in South Asia, in terms of characteristics of agriculture and food production that is majority smallholder, declining in profitability, vulnerable and lacking resilience to adverse weather shocks. He also noted that in Sri Lanka, most agriculture has high concentration of agro-chemicals despite free water and highly subsidized fertilizer. He emphasized that the sustainability of subsidy programmes for inputs is a significant challenge. Dr. Samarasinghe noted that Sri Lanka has promoted various policies to help improve sustainability in agriculture including integrated crop management practices to improve low fertilizer yields; model villages for promoting innovation and technology in agriculture, and the Divineguma national programme for increasing food production by 25 per cent and vegetable consumption from 134 to 175 grams per day per capita. In other areas of agriculture, Sri Lanka has promoted movement to a third season of crop cultivation for some crops and the country has also made research and development a strong priority. Research and development investments concentrate on overall goals of reducing fertilizer and other input dependence, breeding more resilient crop varieties and use of more technology in farming and cultivation to improve efficiency. Dr. Samarasinghe noted that a significant policymaking gap remains in the country in terms of agriculture productivity and resilience, in particular noting that over the last three decades local research and development expenditure has almost halved in terms of per cent of GDP whilst the national research agenda has not received due investment and priority. He recommended that regional cooperation could encourage strategic partnerships and sharing of research and knowledge for agriculture, especially to face emerging challenges such as climate change. He also emphasized the importance of pursuing public-private partnerships and capacity-building for increase human capital in research and strengthening research institutions. Finally, he recommended that countries increasingly engage, through memoranda of understanding, with each other to support inter-institutional cooperation in the region.

**Dr. Purvi Mehta-Bhatt** concentrated her remarks on the role of livestock in global and national food production and sustainable agriculture policies. She highlighted the tendency for many policymakers to only concentrate on linkages of food production and agricultural output in terms of grains and vegetables but in fact, noted that four of the five highest value global commodities are livestock-based. In South Asia, livestock of over 600 million provides employment to more than 150 million people and is smallholder concentrated and demand driven. Dr. Mehta-Bhatt also noted that livestock GDP growth rates in South Asia exceed those of other agriculture in GDP. She remarked that policymakers also have an incentive to bring livestock onto the policy agenda and address specific needs and strategies for livestock in sustainable agriculture as 85 per cent of the farming systems in South Asia are mixed systems.
combining crop production with livestock and livestock produce. She also raised the issues of mitigation risks, the challenges related to resource sharing in the region and the importance of controlling zoonotic diseases since 60 per cent of the diseases are common to humans and animals. Trans-boundary diseases can affect humans through death and illness and have severe and lasting impacts also on agricultural trade policies. Dr. Mehta-Bhatt concluded by recommending that livestock be given increased priority on the policy agenda and that sustainable agriculture must be addressed through a systems-approach which takes into account cross-sectoral collaboration between health, agriculture, environment, trade and education sectors. She emphasized the need for greater regional cooperation to focus on productivity-led growth and the potential of leveraging existing successful models such as the cooperative model for more sustainable food production. Dr. Mehta-Bhatt remarked that there is limited capacity in controlling the livestock diseases and South Asia faces serious challenges in this respect. She concluded that the only way of ensuring livestock and trans-boundary disease management is through far greater regional cooperation, such as in standards for biosafety and monitoring, through regional agreements and forums. She called on UNESCAP to take the initiative of assisting South Asia member States to establish institutional collaboration and systems for regional cooperation in this area.

8. National Food Security Strategies and Pathways to Increased Regional Cooperation

Professor Mustafizur Rahman noted that Bangladesh had made important gains in food security, especially in light of the post-independence famine in 1971. He emphasized that the country’s gains were concentrated on improved quality and productivity and that both are necessary for improving food security as the way forward. He also noted that there is increasingly common recognition and acceptance of the importance of increasing technological research. Prof. Rahman also highlighted how climate change plays a major role in crop yield, and noted the trend decline in arable land and the increasing population size place great challenges on sustainability in the face of climate change. Prof. Rahman called for a second generation of policies, which will need to be geared towards adaptation to climate change, through focusing on agricultural practices that increase productivity in low rainfall situations of the development of saline resistant varieties. He also noted that Bangladesh agriculture includes production in genetically-modified organisms and food production in contrast with other countries such as India which has not adopted GMOs in plants, and the differentiated impacts of restrictions in trading in food commodities in this respect. Another priority is the development of seeds and new types of seeds as a result of greater research, although there is a need for appropriate risk management strategies in these cases. Prof. Rahman also highlighted that fragmentation of land and tenancy will soon be the main challenges related to food accessibility and availability. In terms of regional cooperation through trade, he emphasized that the current number of agricultural products included on sensitive lists under the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) is very long, which in turn deters regional cooperation. He also noted that ASEAN countries provide a good practice model on regional cooperation where countries can resolve issues regarding non-tariff trade barriers including Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade (SPS and TBT, respectively). He noted that ASEAN countries have a platform and mutual agreements for addressing such issues and that they have resulted in overall progress. Prof. Rahman also noted that trade and connectivity are among the major issues for regional trade in South Asia. He concluded by recommending that South Asia adopt a dual strategy of adapting to the global changing regime in agriculture through addressing the need to protect farmers and livelihoods but also ensuring that food production and exports can penetrate global markets and traditional trading partners including developed countries. Prof. Rahman noted that in this respect, the region must advocate in forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the current high and costly subsidy regimes in European and US and other developed country markets that protect unproductive farmers and impede trade.
Dr. S. Mahendra Dev noted that India’s agricultural sector had shown some dynamism in recent years with important growth in agriculture, increasing importance of sectors such as cotton production and other selected high-value crops, increasing performance in some high-rain fed regions and increased investment in agriculture over the last decade. At the same time, he noted the significant national food security challenges where 45 percent of children are underweight and 38 per cent are stunted. Dr. Dev highlighted the need for policies to increase food security to be focused on increased supply through increased productivity, smallholder agriculture gains and concentration of investments, matched increased in social protection policies, and greater regional cooperation in all dimensions of food security. In terms of increasing food production and productivity, Dr. Dev noted that the gains of the green revolution are fading and that agriculture investment through relevant infrastructure in roads, irrigation and research must be matched by increased efficiencies and institutional capacity for credit, land and water management. He noted that market orientation and price incentives are important components of increased productivity. For concentration on smallholder agriculture, Dr. Dev noted that the average holding size is only 1.4 Ha. In India and that smallholder farmers face inequalities and inequities in access to land, credit, inputs and markets. He noted that inadequate savings limit reinvestment and that women face significant inequalities in agriculture and the lack of recognition of the role of women in agriculture. This is seen in the lack of property rights, land issues, low formal education and skills, and high vulnerability of women farmers and agricultural workers to external shocks. For women, opportunities lie in group efforts through the formation of collectives and cooperatives. Opportunities for smallholder agriculture lie in technological innovation and institutional innovations in land and water management. Dr. Dev highlighted issues of successes in public-private partnerships or fostering private sector investments. For example, he noted the success of the e-Choupal (internet kiosk) system established by ITC Limited that provides a supplier market of agricultural goods for aggregating sales and exports and for sharing information in local languages on local, global market prices, weather, practices and crop insurance. Dr. Dev also noted the need for reforms in food marketing and trade. He highlighted the lack of consistent and predictable policies for domestic and international trade and the over-regulation of domestic trade and agro-processing, as well as enterprise size, land and credit which provide strong disincentives for private investment in agriculture. He noted that India’s three-pronged approach to food policy concentrated on procurement, buffer stock and distribution neglects agricultural diversification. Dr. Dev identified various policy options at the national level for increasing food security including investing further in existing platforms and research institutions for resource management, agriculture production and disease management; improving food policy through bio-fortification of foodstuffs (GMO) and nutrition-sensitive processing; empowering women in agriculture and investing in upsampling the agricultural value-chain. Dr. Dev also noted that complementary macro policies must be prioritized at the same time including promoting the non-agriculture sector and labour intensive manufacturing and rural non-farm sectors to help improve labour productivity and reduce excess agricultural labour supply; greater investment in post-harvest food processing where India could leverage its large production; greater investment in agricultural workers as currently half remain illiterate and only five percent have upper secondary education; and greater investment in human capital, especially for women. With respect to regional cooperation, Dr. Dev identified a number of key areas in which regional cooperation in South Asia can be leveraged to help achieve national food security. These include reducing volatility of food supplied through regional buffer stocks in place of national buffer stocks, increased ease of agricultural trade, joint agricultural research programmes and cooperation for investment in new agricultural-related sciences such as remote sensing; better technology and information sharing and transfer and greater capacity building. Regional cooperation can also concentrate on post-harvest operations including handling and processing, food storage solutions and facilitating private sector investment across the region. Good practices to scale up in terms of agriculture related social protection programmes can have positive impacts on food security through regional cooperation by replicating successful programmes from different states and countries in South Asia and sharing lessons learned on design and delivery systems for social protection and transfers. Regional cooperation could also assist increasing accountability for public delivery systems for food which are problematic across South Asia. Elements
and schemes that have improved accountability could be replicated and scaled-up. South Asia could also engage in regional cooperation to have a larger and more coherent voice on priorities in global level cooperation in terms of market information and transparency, international policy coordination to manage food markets and episodes of crisis, and developing risk management tools and management of derivatives markets and minimization of speculative and diversionary activities. Dr. Dev also noted that regional cooperation knowledge networks can play a significant role in enhancing food and nutrition security in the region. Networks and linkages between academia, civil society, research institutions and government policymaking are essential in this regard. He identified several good practices including CGIAR’s CRP4 on agriculture, LANKA the DFID-funded network on leveraging agriculture and nutrition in South Asia and the work of the IGIDR and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on the knowledge network on Tackling the Agriculture and Nutrition Disconnect in India. Dr. Dev concluded that there is a need for a convergence framework of mainstreaming strategies for food security across several sectors and concentrations such as health, women and children, employment, trade, agriculture and education. He noted that regional cooperation in knowledge networks is important for South Asia in terms of raising food and nutrition security as it is multi-task and multi-dimensional.

**Dr. Posh Raj Pandey** noted that food security in **Nepal** is embedded in the constitution in terms of food sovereignty. He remarked that the ninth and tenth national development plans highlighted agricultural growth as a priority, but there was no plan on implementation of this and the linkages with improving the food security situation. At the same time, Dr. Pandey identified the current Nepal three-year plan approach paper for 2013/14-2015/16 that aims to improve food consumption and nutrition status and increase access to food quality by identifying vulnerable groups and regions. Dr. Pandey then discussed Nepal’s causes of food insecurity including the challenges in food availability through lower productivity in production; decline in traditional foods; challenges for agricultural extension services and skills gaps for farmers; availability and access to inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and other inputs; lack of adequate storage and processing facilities and inadequate infrastructure and insufficient public distribution. In terms of access, Dr. Pandey noted that unemployment and high poverty incidence were barriers to food security, that regulation gaps and underdeveloped rural markets inhibited access to food as well as prevalent discrimination in food distribution by gender and age. He noted that utilization challenges were concentrated on low awareness among producer and consumer, weak monitoring of food markets, low sanitation, electrification and access to safe drinking water and a lack of harmonized nutritional standards and guidelines. He also noted that high food price inflation, and inadequate social safety nets increase vulnerability and food insecurity. Dr. Pandey identified a range of areas in which policy interventions could assist in improving food security including prioritization of agricultural productivity; increasing national buffer stocks and improving infrastructure and transportation; reducing market distortions and uncompetitive trade practices; improving food quality standards and nutritional education; strengthening targeted and cash transfer interventions and increasing strategies for adapting to impacts of climate change. In terms of regional cooperation Dr. Pandey recommended that the SAARC Food Bank be expeditiously operationalized; that South Asian countries prioritize the importance of intra-regional trade and take a regional approach to intellectual property rights (IPR). He also recommended that issues be addressed in terms of vulnerabilities including food and weather early-warning systems; cooperation in the management of natural resources including water; cooperation in management of trans-boundary diseases; greater cooperation in investing in research and development for agricultural productivity and applications of technology. He also suggested that countries invest in realizing the SAARC Technology initiatives and expand such initiatives to cover climate-related technologies. Dr. Pandey also specifically called for regional coordination of policy and price to increase facilitation and the stability of markets.

**Ms. Duaa S. Sayeed** noted that in **Pakistan** was considered extremely food insecure and the situation is worsening. She also noted the demand-driven nature of food insecurity in Pakistan and the fact that production is relatively sufficient but that there are challenges with food price inflation, low incomes and limited employment opportunities. Per capita production has remained constant since 1992, despite high population growth in Pakistan. Ms. Sayeed informed participants about food security legislation in
Pakistan including the Ministry of National Food Security and Research; the launch of the national zero hunger programme modelled on Brazil’s successful Fome Zero Programme and the formation of a National Food Security Council. Pakistan has also led implementation of the Integrated Phase Classification system (IPC) and food security is a component of existing social safety nets such as the Benazir Income Support Programme. Ms. Sayeed described the need for Pakistan to engage with other countries in increased regional cooperation due to several challenges including the issue of the majority of food trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan being informal and unaccounted for; the need for coordination in the face of natural disasters; cooperation for addressing production shortfalls and the need for cooperation in the management of shared natural resources. Ms. Sayeed identified several areas of opportunity for greater cooperation including in cooperation on agricultural trade in South Asia, especially between India and Pakistan; cooperation in the implementation of common food security mechanisms such as the integrated phase classification (IPC) system for defining and measuring food insecurity and identifying food insecurity hotspots. Ms. Sayeed noted that the, intra-regional trade is highly limited and undocumented. She specifically highlighted the importance of intra-regional cooperation, namely price stabilization through trade. South Asia is prone to natural disasters so working together could help overcome challenges. She recommended greater collaboration in information sharing and research as well as sharing of good practices. Ms. Sayeed also recommended the expedited operationalization of the SAARC Food Bank, following the ASEAN model, and the operationalization of the SAARC Seed Bank.

Dr. Saman Kelegama noted that Sri Lanka has a long history of emphasizing the importance of food security. He then outlined Sri Lanka’s main national food security strategies and policies including the Mahinda Chintana vision for 2010 to promote subsistence farming and innovations through technology; the national agriculture policy focused on production technology and marketing; the national livestock development policy for targets of self-sufficiency in milk production; the national nutrition policy for inter-sectoral coordination for nutrition and the national fisheries and aquatic resources development policy which targets fish production goals of 22kg of fish and fish products per capita. There are also various other programmes including fertilizer subsidy programmes; programmes for technologies and innovations for essential crops and social protection programmes for targeted poor and vulnerable populations for subsidies, nutrition provision and food supplements and cash transfers. In addition there is a national mid-day meal programme for schools to provide children with one 600-800 Kcalorie meal per day. Dr. Kelegama then described two key existing regional cooperation strategies for food security which are embedded in the SAARC Colombo Declaration of Food Security, 2008, which established the SAARC Food Bank and SAARC Seed Bank. The SAARC Food Bank is aimed at maintaining reserves of principal grains across the region – mainly rice and wheat. Such reserves remain the property of the member country. The SAARC Seed Bank aims to provide regional support to national seed security efforts and will act as a regional seed reserve for member States. Dr. Kelegama outlined the challenges in the implementation of these two policies and a number of opportunities countries in South Asia have for increasing regional cooperation for food security. For the effective operationalization of the SAARC Food Bank, Dr. Kelegama noted that its success depends upon how it is accessed and the distribution system including the costs. He noted that there are challenges to whether the SAARC Food Bank can realistically meet the needs of those people in food deficit in remote areas. He recommended that the Food Bank clarify plans for how it can assist in cases of regional disasters and also the need for the Food Bank to accommodate choices and preferences for reserving particular grains. In addition, he noted that the implementation of the Food Bank faces a number of significant national hurdles. In terms of the SAARC Seed Bank, Dr. Kelegama noted its intention to act as a reserve to address challenges including climate change, bio piracy, agricultural productivity and IPR issues. However, the Seed Bank remains to be fully implemented and requires that countries have a well built and well-functioning Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) system already in place. In terms of IPR, Dr. Kelegama highlighted that countries must ensure that national innovation systems can work cooperatively with the SAARC Seed Bank and do not perceive the seed bank as a threat to other property rights. He also noted that the SAARC Seed Bank must
still clarify its access to seeds for depositing in the bank. He stressed smaller countries in the South Asian region can learn much from larger countries in the area of post-harvest losses, cold storage facilities and transportation techniques, as the percentage of losses is still 30-40 percent in certain countries. This can be avoided through intra-regional cooperation. Trade liberalization in agriculture is another major issue especially non-tariff barriers such as SPS and TBT measures that can discriminate against imports in the region and inhibit regional cooperation and food security. Dr. Kelegama then identified a number of areas for increased regional cooperation including investing in research and development and agricultural extension systems across SAARC countries; joint research programmes; promoting intra-regional trade and improving trade policies across South Asian countries in terms of quotas, tariffs, export taxes and subsidies. Dr. Kelegama concluded by noting that the way forward for South Asia is to concentrate on implementing the SAARC Food and Seed Banks, rules related to the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS), mechanisms for sharing experiences and knowledge among SAARC countries, and a proper mechanism to increase monitoring and evaluation of experiences and implementation of regional cooperation in terms of food security-related initiatives.

Dr. P.K. Joshi summarized the key recommendations from this South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies. He noted that it is important that countries learn from each other to ensure more effective food security strategies and to scale up and replicate good practices from among all South Asian countries. He also emphasized that there must be a clear targeting of the areas in which countries will push forward the agenda for regional cooperation and engagement and that these areas should be discussed and listed. Thirdly, Dr. Joshi noted that countries must tackle challenges on how to achieve regional cooperation and identify methods and practices to do so. Fourthly, he highlighted the importance that countries undertake empirical studies and research in order to supplement the knowledge of policymakers as well as the region’s cooperation. Finally, he proposed that professional groups be constituted in selected identified areas of regional cooperation for future debate and for undertaking common researchable areas. He suggested that this initiative be led by ESCAP-SSWA. In terms of the areas in which South Asian countries should focus on to enhance and increase regional cooperation, Dr. Joshi highlighted 10 areas of regional cooperation that have been identified throughout the two days of the Policy Dialogue. The first area is climate resilience, sustainable agriculture as well as agricultural intensification. (ii) regional food banks (iii) SAFTA activities as policies, technologies and institutions should be reviewed to evaluate their effectiveness for food security and in terms of sustainable agriculture. (iv) regional cooperation in government programmes to encourage Research and Development (R&D). In this sense, governments should identify common areas of research to make R&D more efficient. (v) continued building up of the knowledge network, including lessons learned and experiences from each country. (vi) regional connectivity, specifically in terms of addressing key trade and transport and infrastructure gaps both nationally and regionally that have large negative externalities on food security. (vii) development of common positions in international forums and multilateral negotiations such as the WTO to increase effective advocacy and negotiate with one voice. (viii) natural resources management, in particular regional cooperation for water treaties for example, between India-Nepal or India-Pakistan. (ix) IPC for food security and finally, (x) cooperation in non-agriculture sectors for example, in terms of energy, which is often left unaddressed.

9. Key conclusions, recommendations and the way forward

Key characteristics and trends in Food Security in South Asia

- There is broad consensus on the concept of food security and its definition encompassing four dimensions: food availability; access to food; food utilization and food stability and also the fact that food security is a fundamental right
- Increased emphasis on national legislation and policies for food security should continue, such as India’s new legislation on the National Food Security Act.
• Food security is one of the most important development priorities in South Asia given the vast problem of hunger and the subregion’s lagging performance in eradicating hunger compared to other regions.
• Food security policies must take into account intra-household food distribution and redress large gender inequalities in access to food for women, girls and boys.
• Food production trends in South Asia include various current and emerging challenges including declining productivity-led and labour intensive agricultural growth; declining size of the agricultural sector for GDP though still a source of most employment; a vast majority of agriculture being produced by smallholder farmers; the rising role of women in agriculture; poor utilization and inefficiency of agricultural inputs; the strong role of government in the management of food markets, food distribution and assistance.
• Food wastage and post-harvest losses are an enormous challenge in South Asia, estimated at up to 40 per cent of total food production lost.
• There is a need to address a long-run rising trend in food prices, current high food inflation in South Asia and frequent episodes of significant food price volatility.

Key recommendations for greater regional cooperation in food security in South Asia
• Governments and policymakers should request and invest in increased capacity for designing policy triangulation strategies when identifying food insecurity and populations, applying diverse instruments and data for the multiple dimensions of food security, also for the purpose of identifying appropriate targeted assistance and services.
• Regional cooperation can assist in the development of common priorities for food security interventions and policies and recognition of the need for cross-sectoral policy coordination, also recognizing strong linkages between access to food and the eradication of poverty, gains in education, health and human capital and productivity.
• Food security policies should address and scale-up good practices in ensuring individuals and targeted populations have access to information and government services. The design of one-stop shops for government service eligibility information and programme delivery is one good practice that could be scaled up across the subregion.
• Uniform methods of food security measurement should be replicated across the countries of South Asia, in particular the Integrated Phase Classification system.
• Greater regional cooperation in information sharing and knowledge networks can assist in increasing capacity of policymakers to design the appropriate policy mix of food distribution programmes, cash transfer programmes, education and health interventions and broad social protection programmes to increase effectiveness in addressing hunger and food insecurity.
• There should be far greater regional cooperation to address management and efficiency of agricultural inputs including the sustainable use of water, energy, fertilizer and technologies and innovations. Increased cooperation in the management of shared natural resources including water and energy can offset severe supply and demand mismatches in South Asia.
• Countries should engage in regional cooperation for greater investments in regional agricultural and rural infrastructure, especially in terms of connectivity, transport and logistics to reduce wastage and post-harvest losses.
• Regional cooperation can be a mechanism to improve the management of food reserves and buffer stocks. Physical buffer stocks remain an essential tool of food management in South Asia, in particular through effective implementation of the SAARC Food Bank and SAARC Seed Banks. Other instruments such as virtual buffer stocks should serve as complements to physical buffer stocks and can assist in addressing the volatility of food prices.
• Regional cooperation can assist in sharing good practices on food distribution programmes and investigating applications of alternative mechanisms such as cash transfer systems to decrease
dependence and fiscal impact of food subsidies for consumers and producers. However, alternative systems also require strong complementary administrative systems to ensure that all individuals have official identification and access to financial systems and bank accounts.

- Countries should invest far more in increasing smallholder productivity and efficiency in agriculture and can share good practices and lessons learned in this regard.
- South Asian countries should engage in greater regional cooperation for livestock and trans-boundary disease management, including developing standards for biosafety and monitoring, through regional agreements and forums.
- Countries should engage and cooperate with each other to increase intra-regional trade in agricultural goods and facilitate greater cross-border interactions and investments for increased access to food and increased food production.
- Regional cooperation in trade for food security should focus on reducing trade barriers including SPS and TBT and also reducing the number of items from agriculture on “sensitive” lists for trade.
- Regional cooperation across South Asia should also aim to develop common positions for negotiations in international and multilateral forums such as the WTO for the subregion to speak with one voice in support of increased access to markets and measures to reduce international price volatility and supply shocks.

**Priority Areas identified for Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies in South Asia**

i. Climate resilience, sustainable agriculture and agricultural intensification
ii. Regional food and seed banks, milk grids, fodder banks, sharing of information of production and stocks of agricultural commodities
iii. Liberalized regional trade for food security including tariffs and NTBs within the SAFTA framework
iv. Joint Research and Development (R&D) to address common problems and technology transfer for productivity enhancement
v. Effective regional knowledge networks for sharing best practices
vi. Regional cooperation for greater efficiency in logistics to enable rapid movement and reduce waste and post-harvest losses
vii. Increasing policy coordination including coordinated positions in international forums and multilateral negotiations such as the WTO including on IPRs
viii. Alignment and coherence of regulations and specifications including the food safety regulations and those designed to deal with trans-boundary transmission of veterinary diseases
ix. Natural resources management, including integrated water resource management including through regional and bilateral water treaties and regional cooperation in non-agriculture sectors, including energy sector.

x. Implementing Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) methodologies for food security

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Annex I  South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies

Programme

South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Strengthening National Food Security Strategies

13-14 August 2013
Aftab Mahtab Hall, Taj Mahal Hotel
New Delhi, India

Provisional Agenda

DAY 1: Tuesday, 13 August 2013

8.45 a.m. – 9.15 a.m.  Registration

9.15 a.m. – 10.15 a.m.  Opening Session

- Opening statement: Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director, ESCAP-SSWA.
- Special address: H.E. Dr. Rabindra Kumar Shakya, Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- Inaugural address: H.E. Prof. K.V. Thomas, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India.
- Vote of thanks: Ms. Lise Grande, Resident Coordinator, United Nations India

10.15 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.  Photo session
### Session 1: High-level panel on regional cooperation for food security in South Asia

High-level policy dialogue by a panel of regional and national experts and policymakers in South Asia on priorities for accelerating effective regional cooperation for food security. Opportunities and challenges. Importance of improved knowledge networks and knowledge sharing between key national policy makers for regional cooperation.

**Chair** – Prof. G.K. Chadha, President, South Asian University

**Panelists**

- H.E. Mr. T. Nanda Kumar, Member, National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India.
- H.E. Mr. Muhammad Javed Malik, Member (Food and Agriculture), Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan.
- Dr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka.
- Mr. Amrit Lugun, Director, Economic, Trade and Finance Division, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC Secretariat), Kathmandu.
- Dr. P.K. Joshi – Director, South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), New Delhi.

**Open discussion**

### Session 2: National Food Security Strategies: Key policy priorities and good practices

Presentations by government representatives in South Asia on national food security strategies with recommendations for key policy good practices and lessons learned.

**Chair** – H.E. Dr. Rabindra Kumar Shakya, Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.

**Panelists**

- Mr. Atair Rahman, Joint Secretary, Directorate General of Food, Ministry of Food, Government of Bangladesh.
- Mr. Sangay, Policy Specialist, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan.
- Mr. Deepak Kumar, Joint Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India.
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- Dr. Abdulla Naseer, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Government of Maldives.
- Mr. Beni Bahdur Basnet, Chief, National Potato Development Program, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agricultural Development, Government of Nepal.
- Mr. Seerat Asghar, Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan.
- Mr. Nimal Dissanayake, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Sri Lanka.

Open discussion

3.30 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.  Tea and coffee break

4.00 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.  **Session 3: Food Security policy analysis frameworks**
Good practice methods of analyzing food security situations and vulnerabilities and sharing knowledge of food security issues between countries.

**Chair** – Dr. Manoj Panda, Director, Institute of Economic Growth.

**Panelists**
- Dr. Upali Wickramasinghe, Regional Advisor, on Poverty Reduction and Food Security, ESCAP Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA), Bogor, Indonesia
- Dr. A. Ganesh Kumar, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) Mumbai.
- Dr. S. Bhide, National Council of Applied Economic Research, India.
- Mr. Sumiter Broca, Policy Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok.
- Dr. George Mavrotas, Chief Economist, Global Development Network (GDN), New Delhi.

Open discussion

7.30 p.m.  Reception and Dinner

**DAY 2: Wednesday, 14 August 2013**

9.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.  **Session 4: High-level panel on ensuring access to food for all:** Food policies to alleviate poverty and hunger, market management and public
distribution
A discussion of different policy options for ensuring access to food among people living in poverty and hunger. National food distribution programmes and market management. Financial and regulatory instruments that can assist management of food and commodity prices and volumes in South Asia. Instruments and policies to manage volatility, speculation and other indirect non-food/commodity demand-supply market shocks.

Chair – Dr. S. Mahendra Dev. Director (Vice Chancellor) Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai.

Panelists
- Dr. N.C. Saxena, Member National Advisory Council, Government of India.
- Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh.
- Professor Alakh Sharma, Director, Institute for Human Development, India
- Dr. Rukmani Ramani, Director, Food Security Programme, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai.

Open discussion
11.00 a.m. – 11.15 a.m.  Tea and coffee break

11.15 a.m. – 12.45 p.m.  Session 5: Food production and sustainable agriculture policies
Key policy opportunities and challenges to address sustainable growth in agriculture productivity and output. Sharing of experiences regarding innovations in agricultural production, research and development

Chair – H.E. Mr. Muhammad Malik, Member (Food and Agriculture), Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan.

Panelists
- Dr. Jeet Sandhu, Agriculture Commissioner, National Food Security Mission, (NFSM), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, India.
- Dr. Tayan Raj Gurung, Senior Programme Specialist (Natural Resource Management), SAARC Agriculture Centre, Dhaka.
- Dr. Mohammad Azeem Khan, Director General, National Agricultural Research Council, Pakistan.
- Dr. Jayantha D. Samarasinghe, Chairman, Sri Lanka Council for Agricultural Research Policy.
- Dr. Purvi Mehta-Bhatt, Regional Representative South Asia, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), New Delhi.
- Mr. Bipul Chatterjee, Deputy Executive Director, CUTS International, Jaipur.
### Session 6: National food security strategies and pathways to increased regional cooperation

Expert discussion on national incentives and challenges to increased unilateral or multilateral formulation and participation in regional cooperation policy mechanisms for food security. Assessment of concrete actions to facilitate greater regional cooperation and opt-in to regional processes by countries.

**Chair** – Dr. P.K. Joshi – Director, South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), New Delhi.

**Panelists**

- Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh.
- Dr. S. Mahendra Dev, Director (Vice Chancellor) Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai.
- Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Executive Chairman, South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal.
- Ms. Duua S. Sayed, Research Associate and Dr. Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan.
- Dr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka.

### Concluding Session

- Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director, ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office
- Mr. Matthew Hammill, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office.

### Additional Information

- **Open discussion**
- **Lunch**
- **Tea and coffee served**

~ End of Meeting ~