

SAARC MEET

Agenda Agriculture

South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) organizes a SAARC meet on agricultural in Kathmandu

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when all eight South Asian countries are making efforts to increase their agriculture production, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) has organized a workshop on validating the findings of a regional project, Strengthening the Role of SAARC in the Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture in South Asia.

The workshop, a collaboration of SAWTEE, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat, the SAARC Technical Committee on Agricultural and Rural Development (TC-ARD) and the SAARC Agricultural Center, discussed the key outputs of the study and disseminated the findings to the stakeholders and for the wider public.

The study was carried out to identify the thematic areas for long-term cooperation among relevant stakeholders on Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture in South Asia and to contribute in preparation of a SAARC Partnership Action Plan (2017-2025).

The workshop was held to discuss the action plan on two key thematic areas: land and soil management, and water management which will be submitted for endorsement by the TC-ARD. During the first day of the event, agriculture experts from the region were unanimous in voicing South Asia's need to adopt a more technologically efficient farming system than it is doing today to meet its food production requirement.

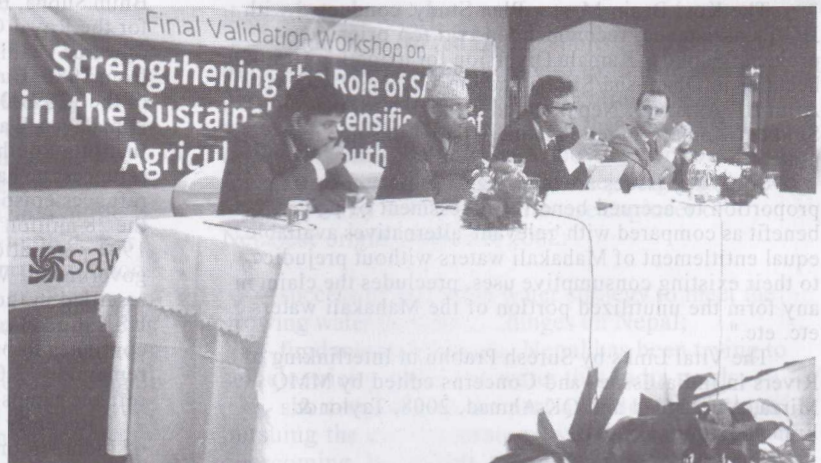
During the inaugural session, member secretary of National Planning Commission, Chandra Ghimire highlighted implementation of policies promoting sustainable intensification of agriculture.

"SAARC could be instrumental so as it can support agriculture research, which promotes faster, cheaper and more reliable technology," he said adding that these kinds of cooperation can trigger new rounds of common agenda and common action plan even at the political level.

Despite an exemplary economic progress, South Asia is still one of the poorest regions and home to a large swathe of malnourished population. Moreover, it is also one of the most vulnerable regions to

will be using 94 per cent of its arable land by 2030, an already existing water scarcity for irrigation means these countries need to adopt sustainable agriculture practices with less land and ensure minimum exhaustion of the environment.

Fabrizio Bresciani, regional economist at IFAD-Asia and the Pacific, insisted on the need for a paradigm shift with regard to technological and management practices and making them accessible at the local level. He



the impacts of climate change. Thus, the region needs to relook at the prevalent agriculture practices so that the farmers could intensify production on the limited land area causing minimum damage to the environment, pointed out Mr. MJH Javed, Director, Agriculture and Rural Development Division, SAARC Secretariat, as a rationale behind the push to adopt sustainable intensification of agriculture in South Asia.

Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, executive chairman of SAWTEE, also pointed out the challenge South Asia is facing in terms of agriculture and food security, especially related to nutrition security. As South Asia

highlighted the importance of accelerating the flow of idea and this is where regional cooperation and SAARC platform can offer big opportunities.

In a presentation, senior consultant at SAWTEE and former agriculture secretary Dr. Hari Dahal pointed out that in the modern times, agriculture is both the victim and cause of climate change. He suggested adopting practices of crop diversification, integrated pest management, participatory irrigation management, among others, as a way to adopt sustainable intensification of agriculture practice in South Asia. ■