

Quality vegetable production stressed

By A Staff Reporter
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Stakeholders have suggested increasing the production and quality of vegetables by enhancing farmer's capacity in order to boost export of fresh vegetables.

Speaking at an interaction on 'Export potential of fresh vegetables to India and other countries', organized by the South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (sawtee) on Friday, they suggested formulating strategy for the promotion of Nepalese agro-products in the international markets.

"Fresh vegetables have high potential in production and export. But, we must be ready to offer quality product in competitive price, and comply with the standards set by the importing countries," said secretary of the Ministry of

Commerce (MoC) Naindra Prasad Upadhyaya.

He said that the agricultural products could reduce the trade deficit as it had about 20 per cent share in the deficit.

He suggested that the country should enhance the productive capacity by adopting modern and innovative technology in order to meet the demands in the domestic market and reduce trade deficit by exporting it to other countries.

Joint secretary at the MoC Rabi Shankar Sainju pointed towards the need to formulate long-term marketing strategy and immediately implement pest control mechanism in order to create positive image of Nepalese agro products in the international market.

Likewise, former secretary and agriculture expert, Dr. Hari

Dahal said, "Even if we can't export vegetables immediately to India and third countries, we need to increase the product with the aim of replacing export of agro-products."

Presenting the findings of the study, programme coordinator of the sawtee, Neelu Thapa, said most of the vegetable export from six southern borders was informal. "We observe the movement of vegetables from Nepal to India for two days at Kakarvitta border and found that approximately 3,800 kg of vegetables were taken informally across the border," she said.

She stated that although the cultivation of vegetables was increased by 40 per cent in the last decade in Nepal, the yield was increased by just 17 per cent.

"Vegetables production in Nepal is characterized by inconsistency and fluctuating

production. Sometimes it is not sufficient for the farmer's family and sometimes the production is such quantity that you can't sell and have to feed it to the animals," said Thapa.

Former commerce secretary Purushottam Ojha said that vegetable farmers did not have cooperative and were poor in collective bargaining.

"As a result, they have been exploited by the middlemen. Therefore the government should focus on capacity building of farmers," he said.

Chairman of sawtee Dr. Posh Raj Pandey remarked that agriculture could be an entry point toward poverty alleviation.

"Vegetable export has high potential in Nepal due to its diverse climatic conditions and this sector has high elasticity, too," he said.