

INAUGURAL SESSION  
(20 SEPTEMBER 2018)

International Conference on Doubling the Income of Farmers of SAARC Countries:  
Extension Strategies and Approaches, Kathmandu, 20-23 September 2018

REMARKS BY H. E. MR. AMJAD HUSSAIN B. SIAL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC

Rt. Honourable Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal,  
Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development of Nepal and Chairman of this  
Conference,  
Honourable State Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development of Nepal,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great privilege for me to address the Inaugural Session of the International Conference on Doubling the Income of Farmers of SAARC Countries.

We are greatly honoured by the august presence in our midst of the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal as the Chief Guest. His presence demonstrates his commitment to the SAARC process. We are enlightened by his inspiring inaugural address that will guide the proceedings of this conference.

I wish to thank Nepal Agricultural Extension Association, Nepal Agriculture Information and Training Centre and International Society of Extension Education for co-organizing this Conference. The theme chosen for this Conference is certainly pertinent to SAARC.

I am delighted to see the participation of a large number of experts and professionals in this important Conference. With the expertise and experience that they bring to this Conference, I am confident of its successful outcome.

As you are aware, South Asia is home to around a quarter of world population, majority of whom live in rural areas and depend on agriculture. Millions of South Asians are employed in agriculture, including livestock and fishery. Although our region is endowed with abundant human and natural resources and agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the South Asian economies, the agricultural sector encounters massive challenges, which include increasing population, shrinking arable lands and farm sizes, rapid urbanization, impact of climate change, natural disasters, post-harvest losses, animal diseases, etc.

Much of the agricultural production in the region is undertaken by smallholders. In the context of diminishing farm sizes and other existing challenges, appropriate approaches and strategies for sustainable agriculture can play an instrumental role in enhancing the income of farmers as well as in achieving food security, improving nutrition, developing value chain and eventually contributing to poverty alleviation and ending hunger.

Since the inception of SAARC in 1985, our Leaders have underscored the importance of agriculture in the context of overall developmental goals of the region. Accordingly, food and nutrition security and agriculture constitute a key component of cooperation under the framework of SAARC. The "SAARC Agriculture Vision 2020" shows the way forward for enhanced regional engagement in the field of agriculture and related sectors.

The SAARC Agriculture Centre, which is a centre of excellence, is doing a commendable job in research and development in the field of agriculture. Some of the need-based programmes recently undertaken by the Centre include Conservation Agriculture, Climate-smart agricultural policies and strategies, and risk management for small farmers.

I am delighted to inform you that regional projects on “Consortium for Scaling-up Climate Smart Agriculture in South Asia” and on "Livelihood enhancement of small farmers in SAARC region through small agro-business focusing on value chain development" have been developed. Besides, regional projects on Zero Energy Cold Storage, Post-Harvest Management and Value Addition of Fruits are being implemented.

In concluding my remarks, I wish to thank the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal for making it convenient for himself to grace this Inaugural Session with his august presence.

I wish the Conference great success and the delegates pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Kathmandu.

I thank you.

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