

**INAUGURAL SESSION  
(12 JUNE 2019)**

**Regional Consultation Workshop on Gender Sensitive Value Chain in South Asia  
Kathmandu, 12-14 June 2019**

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

**Honourable Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation of Nepal,  
Distinguished Participants from the Member States,  
Representatives from Food and Agriculture Organization and Asian Farmers' Association,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is indeed a great pleasure for me to address the Opening Session of the Regional Consultation Workshop on Gender Sensitive Value Chain in South Asia.**

**I wish to thank FAO and AFA for organizing this Workshop in collaboration with the SAARC Secretariat and the SAARC Agriculture Centre. I also wish to thank the esteemed Government of Nepal for facilitating this Workshop.**

**We are greatly honoured by the distinguished presence of the Hon'ble Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation of Nepal as the Chief Guest of this Inaugural Session.**

**I am delighted to see the participation of distinguished representatives both from the government and non-governmental entities as well as from regional and international organizations in**

**this important Workshop. Given their rich expertise and experience, I am confident of meaningful outcomes of this Workshop.**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**As you are aware, a majority of our region's population lives in rural areas, while agriculture continues to be the mainstay of our economies. However, much of the agricultural production in the region is undertaken by smallholders. At the same time, agriculture encounters massive challenges, which include, *inter alia*, increasing population, shrinking arable lands and farm sizes, rapid urbanization, and impacts of climate change and natural disasters.**

**In this context, the SAARC Agriculture Perspective-2020 puts forth the visionary targets to be achieved across the region in agriculture and its allied sectors. Inspired by this visionary document, our ongoing efforts are geared towards making agriculture knowledge-intensive, market-oriented and demand-driven.**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**As you are aware, gender equality and development of sustainable food systems are interdependent goals. In South Asia, a larger number of women are engaged in agriculture, contributing significantly to the goal of food security. Therefore, the contribution of women to our economies is enormous and must be duly recognized.**

**While women are key actors in agriculture, they continue to face challenges in accessing productive resources and benefitting from effective participation in value chains. Our efforts, therefore, should be directed towards promoting gender sensitive value chain in agriculture with a view to augmenting the livelihood of women in the region. It is also necessary to facilitate greater gender involvement in economic activities and livelihood initiatives so as to be able to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of our region.**

**In this regard, we are happy to note that FAO is currently using the value chain approach as the key to the development of sustainable food systems, with gender relations as a primary component of the socio-economic context. At the regional level, the SAARC Agriculture Centre, which is the Centre of Excellence, has long been undertaking various need-based programmes on value chain development and gender mainstreaming in agriculture.**

**We are confident that this Workshop will provide a welcome opportunity to the participants to exchange views on further promoting gender sensitive value chain in South Asia.**

**I wish the Workshop great success and the participants pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Kathmandu.**

**I thank you.**