

REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON TRADE, CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

20-21 December 2012
Hotel Himalaya, Kathmandu

Background Note

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South Asia houses 40 percent of the world's poor and 35 percent of the world's undernourished people. The countries of the region are poor scorers on overall as well as different measures of human development. The poor are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Given their high exposure to the effects of climate change—for example, dependence on rain-fed agriculture and residence in settlements that are highly exposed to climate variability—and their meager means to adapt, climate change is expected to increase the severity of food insecurity and make the implementation of commitments on food security further challenging.

The studies on the impacts of climate change, research on farmers' contributions (existing and potential) to climate change mitigation, and how that can be leveraged for a sustainable improvement in their livelihood is lacking in the region. South Asian governments and many others in the region view trade liberalization as a potential instrument for reducing poverty, ensuring food security and promoting the use of climate-friendly technologies. They also view that trade has a strong potential to contribute towards the mitigation of climate change impacts and promoting resilience to climate change.

Because climate change adds to existing threats and challenges, traditional responses need to be commensurately strengthened, and new ones developed. Along with the direct impact of climate change on food security, some policies taken in response to climate change—for example, the production and promotion of biofuels—may also adversely affect food security.

Trade, Climate Change and Food Security Programme in South Asia

The need to ensure food security, in the face of challenges unleashed by climate change and changing paradigms of global and regional trade, is a paramount concern for the global community, including South Asia. Realizing this need, in partnership with Oxfam Novib, SAWTEE developed and has been implementing a regional programme titled "Trade, Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia" since October 2010.

Under the programme, a number of studies were undertaken such as on the proposed SAARC Seed Bank, food distribution systems in South Asian countries and their linkage with the SAARC Food Bank, liberalization of environmental goods in the region, among others. Similarly, discussion papers were prepared on topics such as climate change adaptation and

priorities for South Asia, issues related to biofuel and food security, role of competition regulation in containing food price rise, etc. Also, briefing/issue papers were prepared on issues such as climate change and gender, issues of green economy, among others. Policy briefs covered issues such as technology needs and transfer with regard to climate change, climate finance, etc.

The Regional Consultation

SAWTEE is organizing a regional consultation on 20-21 December 2012 to disseminate the works undertaken as part of its regional project on “Trade, Climate Change and Food Security”, and to present the findings of the research conducted as part of the programme. It will bring together experts, government officials, academics, practitioners and media personnel who will assess the works undertaken and provide necessary inputs to fill missing gaps. It is also hoped that the Consultation would provide some concrete recommendations for regional cooperation on related issues, which could be submitted to SAARC country governments during their preparatory works for the 18th SAARC Summit.

Some of the major issues that will be discussed during the two-day consultation will include:

- Climate change adaptation issues for South Asia
- Biofuels and food security challenges in South Asia
- Operational modality for the SAARC Seed Bank
- Technology needs of South Asian countries and transfer issues in the context of climate change
- Liberalization of environmental goods: South Asia’s concerns
- Regional trade of agriculture and food products in South Asia
- National food distribution systems of South Asian countries and their linkages with the SAARC Food Bank
- Anti-competitive practices and food price inflation

Date and Venue

The Regional Consultation will take place on 20-21 December 2012 at Hotel Himalaya, Kupondole, Lalitpur, Nepal.

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