

Experts call for concerted effort to ensure food security

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FOOD security in South Asia is one of the most vulnerable to the climate change given that a 60 percent of the region's total workforce is associated with the agriculture sector, experts said here on Thursday.

At the regional seminar, organised by Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka and the South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), the experts stressed the need for national and regional efforts to address such situation.

Climate Action Network South Asia Director Sanjaya Vashist, during his presentation, said that the crop yields might decrease up to 30 percent in South Asia by mid 21st century. The rice yield may decrease by 23 percent, wheat by 57 percent and 36 percent in maize, according to Vashist.

The World Bank in its report in 2009 has predicted that a two-degree centigrade temperature rise in South Asia may result in reduction of permanent gross domestic production by 5 percent in the region.

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Besides the establishment of the food bank, officials and experts also emphasised on its proper management and transfer of adaptation and mitigation technology among the South Asian countries.

Sri Lankan Minister for Environment Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said that diffusion of technology related to adaptation and mitigation in South Asia is a must to get better prepared for the effect of the climate change. "The trade liberalisation in the region may also help diffusion of technology in South Asia," said Yapa.

Apart from the climate change affecting food availability, he pointed out, accessibility and stability of system, lack of adequate adoptive capacity with the South Asian

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countries has been a major concern.

SAWTEE Executive President Posh Raj Pandey said that given the multilateral framework such as World Trade Organisation providing fair platform to the developing countries, the South Asian countries should bring domestic policies to get full advantage of multilateral framework. "South Asia may have different issues but they have common objective and common concerns," said Pandey.

Climate negotiator for Maldives Amjad Abdulla said that the South Asia's policy decision must be guided by science given the magnitude of impact that climate change would have on agriculture. He was, however, optimistic with the region's policy makers demonstrating better understanding about the climate change than before.

The participants also called for more effective operation of the Saarc food bank and seed bank as envisioned in the Saarc Declaration to promote food security.
