

SAARC Seed Bank and Framework for Material Transfer Agreement

Issues from Community Seed Banks' Perspective



Regional Consultation on Trade,
Climate Change and Food Security

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SAARC negotiations

- In the Fifth SAARC Summit, held in Male in November 1990, decisions to:
 - Extend cooperation to the exchange of expertise in genetic conservation and maintenance of germplasm banks
 - Cooperate in the cataloguing of genetic resources stored in different SAARC countries.
 - Support the proposal made by the Group of Fifteen Developing Countries for the establishment of a gene bank.
- Bangladesh suggested for setting up a common regional gene bank.
 - Mobilize this bank to develop new varieties, hybrids, livestock breeds, and promote exchange of germplasm
 - Improve coordination among Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres, the FAO and national laboratories.

SAARC negotiations...2

- SAWTEE, together with partners and members, advocated around these issues at different levels in the region.
- In April 2010, South Asian governments, in their declaration of the 16th SAARC Summit, agreed to promote cooperation for a regional seed bank in South Asia.
- At the 17th SAARC Summit held in November 2011, they signed onto:

The SAARC Seed Bank Agreement

The Framework for Material Transfer Agreement

SAARC Seed Bank Agreement

Three objectives

Provide regional support to national seed security efforts; address regional seed shortages through collective actions; and foster inter-country partnerships.



Promote increase of Seed Replacement Rate (SRR) with appropriate varieties at a faster rate as far as possible.



Act as a regional seed security reserve for Member States of SAARC.



Major provisions of the Agreement

- Seed reserve of quality seeds
- Seed replacement rate and common varieties
- Maintaining seed quality
- Withdrawal, release and replenishment
- Determination of price
- Institutional arrangements

Framework for Material Transfer Agreement

Objective	Principles
Facilitate supply/exchange of seeds of common varieties among the Member Countries so that they achieve food security in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the existing laws, regulations and guidelines of SAARC Member States 2. the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

- Annex-A of the Framework is a format for material transfer agreement which Member Countries have to use for the purpose of exchanging materials within the system of the Seed Bank.

Issues of concerns for community seed banks

- Only a system for improved (modern) varieties or or also to promote conservation and use of local varieties.
- What mechanisms for preserving local/indigenous varieties.
- Harmonised seed testing and certification and facilitation of seed trade but what it means for local or farmers' varieties.
- Country-specific situation, mainly in view of the state of agriculture, farmers, and seed and food insecurity in respective countries, critical to addressing the issue of reasonable pricing and adequate supply of seeds.
- Farmers' representation in the Seed Bank Board

Issues of concerns for community seed banks

- Compliance with the ITPGRFA
 - What it means in terms of IPRs and farmers' rights?
 - What is the linkage with the multilateral system of the Treaty?
- Limited focus on agriculture research and development, including breeding of varieties that enhance food security and ensure effective climate change adaptation.
- Undermining of the informal seed system, and no recognition of and role and space for community seed banks.
- **Future course of action:** How best to link with national and local seed systems at formal and informal systems?