



CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON FOOD SECURITY II



Adopted by Second Civil Society Forum on Responding to
Food Insecurity in South Asia, 24–25 February 2011, Kathmandu, Nepal

Recalling that the right to food is a fundamental human right, and that its realization, particularly by poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups—including local, indigenous and farming communities, women and children—is critically important for the achievement of the objectives of the SAARC Charter, and for regional peace and stability;

Noting that agricultural production and productivity have failed to keep pace with the region's rapidly growing food demand due to infrastructural, technological and various other structural and policy constraints, and that there is an urgent need to incentivize agricultural employment and scale up agricultural investment in the region;

Stressing that the resurgence of food price rise, coupled with the slow pace of global economic recovery, rising fuel prices and, more importantly, climate change impacts, is exacerbating food insecurity and poverty in South Asia;

Emphasizing that the role of agriculture in sustainable development, including in responding to climate change impacts, is under-appreciated, and that climate-induced migration is emerging as a serious challenge for agriculture and food security;

Observing that all South Asian countries except India are net food importers, yet intra-regional trade in agricultural and food products is limited and restricted by a host of trade barriers and supply-side constraints;





Appreciating the continued emphasis placed by South Asian governments on the effective operationalization of the SAARC Food Bank, and recognizing that much remains to be done to strengthen the institutional mechanism of the Bank, as well as food reserves and distribution systems at national and local levels;

Recognizing the tremendous significance of technology transfer for both agricultural development and climate change adaptation and mitigation, particularly for improved farming systems, value addition and diversification of agricultural products, and development of varieties and breeds that adapt to changing climatic conditions;

Noting that the enforcement of intellectual property rights regime could obstruct technology transfer and negatively affect subsistence agriculture and farmers' rights over genetic resources and traditional knowledge;





Recognizing that biofuels and biotechnology present both opportunities and challenges for food security at regional, national and local levels;

Welcoming the Sixteenth SAARC Summit Declaration, which recognizes, among others, the importance of quality seeds in enhancing productivity and calls for an “early consideration of the concept of a regional seed bank, regional testing and certification of seeds, and a framework for transfer of plant genetic material and seeds”;

Emphasizing that the operationalization of these mechanisms is important for the conservation and development of seeds, and advancing collaborative research and development in the region;

Recognizing the significance of an inclusive, institutionalized mechanism for the effective participation of civil society—in particular local, indigenous and farming community groups and



organizations—in policy- and decision-making bodies and processes;

Recalling the recommendations adopted by the First Civil Society Forum on Responding to Food Insecurity in South Asia, held from 23-24 October 2008, and appreciating their due recognition in various governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental level discussions, decisions and documents;

We, the participants of the Second Civil Society Forum on Responding to Food Insecurity in South Asia, held in Kathmandu from 24-25 February 2011, urge the Third Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Ministers to: address the following recommendations of this Forum in Ministerial Decisions and Action Plans; direct and/or request the relevant authorities and institutions to take coordinated initiatives, where required; and implement the project ideas developed by the Forum.

Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security

- Address the challenges of changing farming systems and agricultural conditions, and take measures to capitalize on shifting comparative advantage of agricultural products, taking note of their implications for livelihoods of poor, vulnerable and marginalized farmers, including women;
- Map the scale, nature and trend of climate-induced migration to understand its implications for agriculture and food security;



and implement measures needed to avoid negative consequences on agriculture and the productivity of the agricultural labour force, including that of women farmers;

- Strengthen adaptive research and breeding for variety/breed development with a particular focus on landraces/local breeds and the rights of local, indigenous and farming communities;
- Create regional institutional mechanisms and networks for sharing knowledge and technologies, including traditional knowledge and indigenous technologies, vital to address the negative impacts of climate change on agriculture and food security;
- Assess the implications of biofuels and biotechnology for food security.

Regional Cooperation on Trade in Agricultural and Food Products

- prohibit export restrictions on food within the region;
- implement trade facilitation measures by improving, among others, customs and border administration, and transit rules and procedures;
- review the agricultural and food products on the sensitive lists of Member States under the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area, and take measures to prune the lists, taking into account rural development, livelihood enhancement and food security goals;
- develop a time line for the reduction/elimination of para-tariff and non-tariff barriers to intra-regional trade in agricultural and food products;





- explore possibilities for intra-regional trade in agricultural and food products based on existing and potential inter-country climatic differences;
- Agree on mutual recognition of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and technical standards to enhance intra-regional trade in agricultural and food products, and eventually develop and adopt regional measures and standards;
- Create an “LDC Integration Fund” to, among others, help least-developed Member States enhance their supply-side capacity in agricultural and food trade, including standard-related capacity.

SAARC Food Bank

- Establish a permanent headquarters of the Food Bank at the earliest to assist the SAARC Food Board and the SAARC Secretariat on all matters relating to the functioning of the SAARC Food





Bank, including to make arrangements for: a regional mapping of vulnerable regions and populations; a vulnerability calendar for the effective food distribution and response system; and national and local food reserves and distribution networks;

- Set up an independent SAARC Food Security Monitoring Committee comprising, among others, eminent persons and civil society members to monitor and evaluate the progress in the operationalization of the Bank and provide recommendations to the Council of Ministers, and, as required, to the permanent headquarters of the Food Bank, the Food Board and the SAARC Secretariat;
- Make institutional arrangements for the periodic review of storage, withdrawal and replenishment conditions and requirements, taking into account the state of food insecurity in Member States, in particular the special situation of least-developed Member States;
- Commit resources for the effective



operationalization of the Bank, including development of technical expertise and capacity building of relevant bodies.

Intellectual Property Rights and Farmers' Rights

- Develop regional guidelines for the application of intellectual property rights and the protection of farmers' rights through the sharing of knowledge and experiences;
- Constitute a regional farmers' commission for the realization of farmers' rights, and enable farmers to meaningfully participate in relevant policy-making and implementation processes and bodies;
- Implement proactive as well as defensive measures to curb biopiracy and the erosion of traditional knowledge.

Technology Transfer

- Effectively materialize the “SAARC Technology Initiative” as agreed upon during the Tenth SAARC Summit, and expand its mandate to cover existing and emerging issues in agriculture and climate change, for example to:
 - Identify, document, promote and share appropriate technologies, including local, traditional and indigenous;
 - Identify measures to facilitate technology transfer from developed and advanced developing countries to Member States, especially the least-developed ones.



SAARC Seed Bank and Material Transfer Agreement

- Make the SAARC Seed Bank Agreement comprehensive for the conservation, exchange and use of genetic materials by creating and strengthening a regional network of national and community seed banks;
- Make arrangements for the production and storage of quality seeds, including farmers' varieties; information sharing and capacity building through, among others, farmer-to-farmer exchange and community-based seed production programmes; and research on and development of varieties through programmes such as participatory variety selection and plant breeding;
- Implement measures, including under the Material Transfer Agreement, to address issues relating to intellectual property rights; access to genetic materials and sharing of the benefits derived from their use; prior informed consent and biopiracy; and the rights of local, indigenous and farming communities.

Project Ideas Developed by the Forum

- Setting up mechanisms for assisting farming communities affected by climate change and related calamities.
- Publishing and disseminating annual reports on "The State of Food Insecurity in South Asia".
- Assessing and addressing the social dimension of food insecurity in South Asia.
- Strengthening partnership with media for the realization of the right to food in South Asia.





- Training and capacity building programmes for women on food and nutrition security, innovative farm management techniques and agricultural trade.
- Developing a competitive food market and an effective distribution system in South Asia.
- Supporting the use of GTAP (Global Trade Analysis Project) database in *ex-ante* policy analysis in agricultural trade, food security and climate change (with a focus on including South Asian countries not covered by GTAP).
- Sharing of information and technologies for responding to climate change impacts on agriculture.
- Developing regional standards for agricultural and food products.
- Establishing institutional mechanisms to document, promote and monitor climate-friendly agricultural practices in South Asia.
- Promoting the use of neglected and underutilized plants and animal species.
- Promoting participatory variety selection and plant breeding programmes.



South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and Oxfam organized the Second Civil Society Forum on Responding to Food Insecurity in South Asia on 24-25 February 2011 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Forum was participated by a cross-section of over 50 stakeholders from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and adopted this Statement. The event was part of the Trade, Climate Change and Food Security Programme, which SAWTEE and Oxfam Novib are implementing in South Asia.

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South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) is a regional network that operates through its secretariat in Kathmandu and member institutions from five South Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The goal of SAWTEE is to enable stakeholders, particularly the poor and marginalized, to derive net benefits from changing political economy and environmental landscapes.