

# S Asia set to liberalise agriculture trade

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Negotiations are underway to further reduce the sensitive list under Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) which may see a liberalisation of agriculture trade too.

“There has been an encouraging development in opening agriculture trade on the bilateral front, for example, between Nepal and Bangladesh,” said director of Economic, Trade and Finance Division at the SAARC Secretariat Amrit Lugun during the inauguration of a two-day regional consultation on ‘Trade, Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia’ that began here today.

Emphasising that political economy plays an important role in the issue of liberalisation of agriculture trade in the region, he called for an objective investigation into the gains and losses across different segments of the population from increased trade in agriculture and food products.

Participants, on the occasion, called for policies and strategies to cope with the impacts on agriculture and food production from a highly likely increase in global temperature of more than two percentage points above pre-industrial levels. Similarly, they concluded that unclear operational modality of SAARC Food Bank has made the dream of feeding the poor in South Asia a far cry. They also called for simplifying the operational modalities of SAARC Food Bank and make it more pragmatic for member countries to benefit from it in times of need.