

# Simplify conditions of SAARC Food Bank: Experts

KATHMANDU (REPUBLICA): Experts from member countries of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have said that operational modalities of the SAARC Food Bank should be simplified to make them more pragmatic.

The SAARC Food Bank that was established in 2007 is a regional mechanism to support member countries in case of food crisis. However, the very conditions that SAARC has set for its members to be able to get support from the Food Bank are not pragmatic, said Professor Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka.

Presenting a paper on "regional approach to food security in South Asia: SAARC Food Bank" at a regional workshop, Rahman urged the South Asian leaders to develop a cooperative approach to save the region from food insecurity. The region houses 40 percent of the world's poor and 35 percent of the world's undernourished people, as per the statistics of SAARC secretariat.

The two-day long workshop organized by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) is being attended by around 50 experts and officials from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan,

Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal. It focuses on issues such as climate change, SAARC Food Bank, SAARC Seed Bank, liberalization of environmental goods, regional trade in agriculture and food products, among others.

Dr Abdur Rahim Mikrani, member of the National Planning Commission (NPC), said

shortages," Mikrani said speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the workshop.

Additionally, experts also picked up the issue of political economy in the regional food security. "Political economy factor plays an important role in the issue of liberalization of agriculture trade in the region,"

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**- Dr Abdur Rahim Mikrani,  
National Planning Commission member**

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Nepal and the region has no capacity to bear impacts that the climate change has threatened to have on agriculture sector.

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said Amrit Lugun, director of Economic, Trade and Finance Division, SAARC Secretariat.

Likewise, Dr Ratnakar Adhikari, chief executive director of SAWTEE highlighted lack of adequate climate finance as another major problem facing South Asian least-developed and vulnerable countries. Lack of such finance has disabled LDCs like Nepal to adapt to climate change, he stated.