

Absence of standardisation has hit agriculture economy hard

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Though Nepal is an agricultural country, it has failed to fully exploit its potential due to the absence of standardisation, according to experts.

"Nepal has the possibility to take advantage through bioenergy standards to fully utilise its agriculture potential," said director general of Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology Dr Ram Adhar Sah, addressing a three-day standardisation workshop on 'Strengthening institutional capacity on sustainability criteria for bioenergy' that started in the capital today.

Likewise, executive chairman of South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) Dr Posh Raj Pandey said that the initial euphoria among policy makers and private sector representatives about the role of bioenergy in mitigating climate change is being questioned now since the use of bioenergy is not necessarily carbon neutral, if looked at from a life-cycle perspective.

"Extensive promotion of bioenergy could also have environmental effects like destruction of biodiversity and soil erosion, and social impacts like exploitation of small farmers or their displacement to produce



Executive Chairman of SAWTEE Dr Posh Raj Pandey addressing a workshop on standardisation in Kathmandu, on Wednesday.

bioenergy impacts," executive chairman Pandey said.

Pandey added that there are also concerns that there will be competition on whether to use land to produce food or bioenergy, which, therefore, will have serious implications for food security.

"Hence, it is important for developing and least-developed countries to actively engage in setting standards on sustainability criteria for bioenergy."

International trade of bioenergy has been taking place gradually, and developing countries are more competitive in the

production and trade of bioenergy due to adequate natural resources and low cost of production, Pandey said.

"If their concerns are not reflected in the standards that are being set, they might face trade barriers later."

Speaking as chief guest, secretary at the ministry of industry Krishna Gyawali informed that the government has prepared a climate change policy. "Bioenergy is a crucial aspect of climate change and it is extremely important for the country to engage in such a standard-setting process," he said,

emphasising that by actively participating in the standard-setting process, Nepal will be able to optimise the use of its resources.

The workshop is part of a longer project 'Trade promotion through standardisation' being implemented jointly by SAWTEE and the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS), with support from the Swedish International Development Agency in eight countries of the South and Southeast Asia regions, namely, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

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