REPORT

The future of food security in an age of pandemics: Building a modern and resilient food system in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

A pandemic with the scale and severity of the current coronavirus has not been experienced in any of the South Asian countries in recent decades. Furthermore, even apart from challenges presented by the pandemic, South Asia is one of the hotspots of global food insecurity. This study, published by Southern Voice, investigates ways to strengthen agri-food markets and value chains—and related social-protection mechanisms—to build a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food system in Sri Lanka and Nepal, with the aim of helping these countries make a speedy recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic shock. Combining secondary research with primary data collected through in-depth interviews, the study, undertaken by Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) analyses the impacts of COVID-19 on rice and vegetable value chains in the two focal countries.

In the shorter term, the study suggests that ensuring a smooth supply of inputs, such as seeds, fertiliser, and agro-chemicals; improving access to agricultural financing; establishing efficient decentralised public and private procurement and distribution systems that feature buffer stocks and utilise e-commerce; and strengthening food-related social security programmes can help mitigate the effects of the pandemic. In the medium and longer terms, the study recommends addressing several larger, structural issues in the food system; these issues are related to agri-extension, food-system monitoring, food processing and value addition, and farm-market linkages.
Pakistan, China vow to tap full potential of Gwadar port, free zone

Pakistan and China resolved to redouble efforts to tap full potential of the Gwadar port and free zone and to ensure that the local population fully benefits from the projects.

India imposes antidumping duty on 5 Chinese goods for 5 years

India has imposed antidumping duties on five Chinese products for five years to guard local manufacturers from cheap imports.

No long-distance travel for Afghan women without male relative: Taliban

The Taliban authorities say women seeking to travel long distances should not be allowed on road transport unless they are accompanied by a close male relative.

How Nepal’s bid to diversify trade after the blockade fell flat

Experts say over-reliance on the southern neighbour has rather increased because of a lack of strong policies and failure to implement recommended measures.

Bangladesh drafts land port upgrade plan

Bangladesh has proposed to develop infrastructure at a number of land ports of the country to improve the trade relation with South Asia sub-regional countries.

High shipping rates wreak havoc on Nepal’s foreign trade

Nepal’s domestic traders say that international freight charges have swelled by three to five times, pushing up the cost of imports.

Sri Lanka plans to pay off Iran oil debt with tea

Sri Lanka plans to settle a debt for past oil imports from Iran by paying it off in tea as the country plans to send US$5m worth of tea to Iran each month to clear a US$251m debt.

Nepali importers suffer as China continues to hold up shipments

Delays in the delivery of goods and constant disruptions on the roads to Khasa and Tatopani have also resulted in higher transportation costs, traders say.

Rohingya sue Facebook for $150bn over Myanmar hate speech

Dozens of Rohingya refugees in the UK and US have sued Facebook, accusing the social media giant of allowing hate speech against them to spread.