

INAUGURAL SESSION  
(Pokhara, 17 April 2019)

SAARC Regional Consultation on Fish Culture in Cages and Pens in Reservoirs, Lakes, Rivers  
and Marine Waters for Aquaculture Diversification in South Asia

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY H. E. MR. AMJAD HUSSAIN B. SIAL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC

Chief Guest, Hon'ble Minister for Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Gandaki  
Pradesh,  
Dignitaries on the Dais,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Inaugural Session of this important SAARC  
Regional Consultation on Fish Culture for Aquaculture Diversification in South Asia, in this  
beautiful city of Pokhara.

I wish to thank the SAARC Agriculture Centre for convening this Consultation in  
collaboration with the esteemed Government of Nepal. The arrangements made are excellent.

As you are aware, the domain of 'food and nutrition security' is complex and  
multidimensional. It cannot be looked at merely in terms of augmenting production and  
distribution of crops. It also implies increasing production and productivity of non-crops like  
fisheries, livestock and horticulture. This Regional Consultation is, therefore, both timely and  
relevant.

Distinguished Delegates,

South Asia is home to around a quarter of the global population. Ensuring food and  
nutrition security for such a huge population is indeed an enormous challenge, despite the fact that  
our region is endowed with vast agricultural landmass and unmatched agricultural diversity.  
Although agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the South Asian economies, the agricultural  
sector in the region encounters massive challenges, which include, *inter alia*, increasing  
population, shrinking arable lands and farm sizes, rapid urbanization, and impact of climate change  
and natural disasters.

Distinguished Delegates,

As you are aware, with increasing global population, the demand on fisheries for food and  
nutrition security has substantially increased. According to FAO, since 1961, the annual global  
growth in fish consumption has been twice as high as population growth.

Asia is the largest contributor to world aquaculture. In 2016, 85 percent of the global  
population engaged in fisheries and aquaculture belonged to Asia. As per the estimates of 2016,  
India and Bangladesh ranked the second and fifth largest in aquaculture production.

Distinguished Delegates,

Recognizing both the inherent challenges and opportunities in agriculture, successive SAARC Summits have underscored the importance of regional cooperation in ensuring food and nutritional security through sustainable farming. The visionary pronouncements of our leaders culminated in the adoption of the “SAARC Agriculture Vision 2020”, which shows the way forward for enhanced regional engagement in the field of agriculture and allied sectors. I am glad to state that the SAARC Agricultural Centre (SAC), which is the Centre of Excellence, has been playing an important role in carrying forward this vision.

Distinguished Delegates,

As the fish in open water bodies are overexploited, aquaculture is the only alternative to meet fish demands. However, aquaculture needs diversification for its sustainability, while paying greater attention to environment and value chain of production.

I am confident that this Regional Consultation will provide a welcome opportunity to the participants to share the best practices and experiences in aquaculture to help meet the challenges of our Member States.

I wish the Regional Consultation great success and the delegates a pleasant stay in this magnificent city of Pokhara.

I thank you.

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