

INAUGURAL SESSION
(0930-1040 HRS., SUNDAY, 28 JULY 2024; HOTEL HIMALAYA)

REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME ON SUSTAINABLE AND AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS
FOR THE CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN SOUTH
ASIA

REMARKS BY H. E. MR. MD. GOLAM SARWAR, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC

Hon'ble Chief Guest Mr. Ram Nath Adhikari, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Government of Nepal;
Special Guest, Ms. Izabella Koziell, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD;
Mr. Shakeb Nabi, Country Director, WHH;
My colleague Mr. Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Director, SAARC Secretariat;
Distinguished Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of Nepal, SAARC Agriculture Centre, ICIMOD and WHH;
Trainee Participants from the Member States of SAARC;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning!

I extend a very warm welcome to you all to the Inaugural Session of this four day-long *Regional Training Programme on Sustainable and Affordable Solutions for the Climate Resilient Agriculture in South Asia*, jointly organized by the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Welthungerhilfe (WHH).

I convey a special word of gratitude to our Chief Guest, Honourable Ram Nath Adhikari, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development of the Government of Nepal, for gracing this Session with his august presence. We look forward to benefiting from his inspiring Inaugural Address this morning.

I also welcome Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and Mr. Shakeb Nabi, Country Director of the Welthungerhilfe (WHH) to this Inaugural Session. We look forward to their enriching deliberations as well.

On this note, I thank ICIMOD and WHH for collaborating with SAC in organizing this Training Programme and for their financial support. We are keen to continue working with ICIMOD and WHH in future as well, in realizing targets set out in *SAARC Agriculture Vision-2030*.

I appreciate the painstaking efforts made by the SAC Team, led by Director, Dr. Md. Harunur Rashid, in organizing this Training Programme. I am confident that this event will add further momentum to SAC's quest in promoting sustainable farming in ensuring food and nutrition security in our region.

I am happy to see many young officials of the region coming together for this Training Programme, showcasing a shared commitment to address one of the most pressing challenges of the globe - Climate Change. As we assemble here today, it is imperative for us to acknowledge the critical importance of agriculture in our region. It not only sustains the livelihood of more than a quarter of the world population, but also plays a pivotal role in maintaining regional food security and economic stability.

Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, agriculture is most vulnerable to Climate Change due to its high reliance on climatic conditions. Besides erratic weather patterns, rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall, smallholder farmers usually face the most challenges. These challenges call for collective efforts to innovate sustainable agricultural practices that are resilient to Climate Change.

Addressing the adverse impacts of Climate Change on regional agriculture is one of the priorities of SAARC. With this end in view, we are currently implementing one project titled, “Consortium for Scaling up Climate-Smart Agriculture in South Asia (C-SUCSeS)” in our Member States with funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the SAARC Development Fund (SDF). The overarching objective of this project is to identify the best Climate-Smart Agriculture technologies and practices suitable for smallholders and scale-up those in the SAARC member states. The project has earned positive feedback from the policymakers and practitioners of our countries, and we hope to undertake Phase-2 of the project when Phase-1 is over.

Distinguished Participants,

I believe that this Training Programme will provide an opportunity to our regional experts to explore the best practices, innovative technologies and conducive policy frameworks to empower smallholder farmers to build sustainable food systems. We must be looking at strategies and solutions aimed at enhancing the resilience of agriculture in the face of adversaries posed by Climate Change.

It is time for us to adapt to the principles of “eco-preneurship” in promoting resilient agricultural practices that not only withstand the adverse impacts of Climate Change but also contribute to the well-being of our communities and ecosystems.

It is surely the time for us to shift towards the concept of eco-friendly farming with an innovative and adaptive approach to effect a paradigm shift in agriculture, prioritizing principles and practices that work in harmony with Nature. I am sure, this training program will focus on such innovation and benefit all the participants to take home new knowledge and skills on Sustainable and Affordable Solutions for Climate Resilient farming suitable for South Asian farmers.

I once again thank the Hon’ble Chief Guest for gracing the inauguration of this program this morning and inspiring us with his kind presence.

I wish the distinguished participants a fruitful learning experience and a pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Kathmandu.

Thank you.
