

Regional Meeting
Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia
27 June, 2011, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Objective

To disseminate the findings of the Scoping Study on Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia and to discuss the linkages between climate change, food security and trade

Background & Context

The Scoping Study on Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia is focused on farmers' perception toward climate change and its imminent impact on their livelihoods in general and food security in particular. As per the Climate Change Vulnerability Index of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, four South Asian countries are among the top ten in the world facing extreme vulnerability from climate change. They are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

This study covered four countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. CUTS International undertook this work in partnership with Afghan Development Agency, Practical Action-Bangladesh, Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society, India, and Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan. It was supported by Oxfam Novib, The Netherlands.

Based on the available literature on the impact of climate change on agriculture and food security (with a focus on four project countries), a purposive survey of 1,200 small and marginal farmers was conducted to understand what do they think on this subject (their perception) and the type of adaptation measures that they are undertaking to address this challenge. The sample size for each country was equally divided into three sub-samples drawn from different agro-climatic zones.

Perception analyses showed that climate change has adversely affected agricultural activities across the South Asian region. Farmers have reported shortened rainy season and increase in temperature. Yield of many crops (particularly staples) has declined as a result of changes in cropping period.

Looking at farmers' perception and thinking about adaptation measures, the initiatives taken by these countries to address this challenge (including adaptation measures) and good practices from other regions, the study made some policy recommendations. Some major recommendations are:

- Emphasise on anti-poverty programmes to alleviate poverty from the region
- Institutionalise the SAARC Food Bank as a non-profit humanitarian aid organisation
- Invest in research and development of climate resilience agriculture
- Transfer and share technology, knowledge and experience among South Asian economies to develop a holistic response to address climate change and food security concerns
- Eliminate intra-regional trade barriers for sustainable economic development and greater cooperation in the region
- Raise greater awareness among civil society of the region on virtues of regional cooperation and its role toward economic development and regional cooperation

The study underlined that enhanced regional trade in food items and better coordination and cooperation among the South Asian countries in implementing regional initiatives (such as SAARC Food Bank) toward adapting and mitigating the impact of climate change is an imperative for addressing challenges that the impact of climate is having on agriculture and food security.

The knowledge generated from this study will be disseminated to civil society and community-based organisations (particularly those who are working at the grassroots) so that they are in a better position to share those information (adaptation measures, national and regional initiatives, etc) to the affected stakeholders.

Other than presenting the results of this study, this event will discuss a range of issues for enhancing regional food trade and other regional initiatives. It will act as a platform to develop further work on linkages between climate change, food security and trade in South Asia.

Based on the existing research on climate change and food security linkages, the future work will focus on how trade can positively and negatively impact food security situation in the region. It will be done by desk research (literature review and secondary data analysis) and field research (and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data/other information) in selected South Asian countries.

Agenda

0930 – 1030 Registration

1030 – 1100 Opening

Welcome Remarks: Faruk-Ul-Islam, Head of Organisational Development, Practical Action, Bangladesh

Introductory Remarks: Rashid S. Kaukab, Associate Director & Research Coordinator, CUTS Geneva Resource Centre

Thematic Presentation: Srikanta K. Panigrahi, Director General, Carbon Minus India*

Keynote Address: Hasan Mahmud, State Minister for Environment and Forests, Bangladesh*

1100 – 1130 Break

1130 – 1300 Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia

Chair: Azizuddin Ahmadzada, Director, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu

Presentation: Manbar Khadka, Research Associate, CUTS International

Discussants

Ghulam Habib, Programme Manager, Afghanistan Development Association

Faruk-Ul-Islam, Head of Organisational Development, Practical Action, Bangladesh

Alka Awasthi, Co-Director, Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society, India

Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan

1300 – 1400 Lunch

1400 – 1530 Climate Change-Food Security-Trade Linkages and Regional Initiatives in South Asia

Chair: Fahmida Khatun, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh*

Presentation: Sanjay Vashist, Climate Action Network, South Asia

Discussants

Uchita de Zoysa, Executive Director, Centre for Environment & Development, Sri Lanka

Niraj Shrestha, Senior Programme Officer, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, Nepal

Sumit Roy, Project Manager, World Wide Fund for Nature – India Office

1530 – 1600 Break

1600 – 1700 Closing

Presentation: Regional Programme on Climate Change-Food Security-Trade Linkages in South Asia, Rashid S. Kaukab, Associate Director & Research Coordinator, CUTS Geneva Resource Centre

Valedictory Address: Atiur Rahman, Governor, Bangladesh Bank*

Vote of Thanks: Faruk-Ul-Islam, Head of Organisational Development, Practical Action, Bangladesh

* *TBC*