

Regional Cooperation in Food and Nutrition Security in South Asia

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Food Security in India and SA

- **Availability**: Projections show foodgrain availability is not a problem. Supply problem in pulses, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, meat etc.
- High food inflation and price volatility
- **Access** of food is a problem for the poor.
- Much more problem is **malnutrition** among women and children. Still 45% of children suffer from underweight and stunting.
- This is true of South Asia in general. The levels of malnutrition in South Asia are **almost double to those** of Sub-Saharan Africa
- In India and South Asia, **agri. productivity** has to be improved. But, **Distribution is the main issue**
- **Post-2015 development agenda. Focus on nutrition.**

Policies for Improving food and Nutrition Security

- Improvement in **agricultural productivity** is crucial. Investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure (subsidies vs. investments)
- Inclusive agricultural growth is important as there is disconnect between economic growth/agricultural growth and nutrition due to **higher inequalities**. Thus, **distribution important**.
- It is known that **food insecurity and malnutrition** is high among small farmers, agricultural labourers, women, SCs and STs, rainfed areas. Focus on them will improve agri productivity (**inclusive agriculture**) and reduce food insecurity & malnutrition.

Policies for Improving food and Nutrition Security

- Access and nutrition are determined by several factors: agricultural growth, health, role of gender, social protection programmes, sanitation, safe drinking water, nutrition education etc.
- In South Asia, 1.2 billion do not have toilets and openly defecate (India 53% of population no toilets)
- National Food Security Act of India can have food security implications at regional and global levels (820 million people would be provided)
- Gender Empowerment is the most important for food and nutrition security in the region.
- Need for convergence convergence of several departments (e.g. agri, health, women & child)
- Apart from national strategies, regional cooperation and knowledge net works are important

Regional Cooperation in South Asia

- Regional cooperation has to be in all aspects of food security: Availability, Access and nutrition.
- Regional Cooperation can be in the following areas.
 - 1. food and agriculture
 - 2. climate change and disaster management.
 - 3. Free Trade agreements like SAFTA
 - 4. Intellectual property rights in agriculture
 - 5. Energy and water
 - 6. Cooperation on global issues
 - 7. Learning from each other: post harvest technologies and operations, social protection programs, accountability and governance

1. Cooperation in food and agriculture

- Presently we have **SAARC food bank**: India is having 63% of reserves. But it is not as efficient as ASEAN food reserves.
- **SAARC Seed Bank**: It is a good step. But, regulation is important
- **Cooperation in agriculture**: Technical Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (TCARD)
- **There are several opportunities in agriculture R&D**
- There is a need to improve productivity of rice and wheat in the region so that land can be released.
- **Joint agricultural research programmes** for development of abiotic stress tolerant improved varieties and hybrids, and natural resource management techniques (e.g.minimum tillage)

1. Cooperation in Agriculture

- • **Cooperation in new sciences** such as GIS, remote sensing, water forecasting, systems modeling
- • **Free exchange of technology and information** such as germplasm, improved animal breed, improved disease management technologies and practices
- • **Capacity building** through development of regional training facilities (Hossain, 2011)
- Another important thing is cooperation in **livestock and fish**
- In South Asia, live stock contributes **more than 25%** of agri. GDP. It provides proteins, calories and micro nutrients.
- Among other things, cooperation is needed on **animal diseases**.

2. Cooperation on climate change

- This is an important area for cooperation.
- **Climate change** will affect South Asian economies.
- It is likely to have **strong adverse effects on food production and the poor** as many people in the region live in areas of sensitive agriculture.
- South Asia has **least** cooperation. Opportunities
- **Joint project** under SAARC for adaptation to climate change needed
- Develop technologies suitable for drought-prone,

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