



# **SOUTH ASIAN NETWORK FOR SOCIAL & AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**The Turning Point, April 2010 Issue, Vol. VI, No.1**

## **Foreword**

SANSAD wishes all its readers a very happy and prosperous march towards realizing goals of equitable and just society. We strongly believe, it's hard for one person to make changes or even just keep things going, but in partnership anything is possible! We are looking forward to cope with challenging times ahead in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development of people in the face of constraints imposed through financial crisis and climate change events in solidarity with other likeminded people and organisations.

I would like to extend very warm greetings to our readers to the Joint edition of December-February 2010 of the SANSAD Newsletter. In this issue, the focus of the month is to give an overview of the **Sustainable agricultural production as a Climate Change Mitigation Strategy**. We have carefully chosen to avoid or at least limit political inferences, if any and all political views that appear in this publication are solely the opinion of the author and the author only. It is the intention of the author that issues highlighted in this and subsequent newsletters will spur the reader to greater action and become part of the global community for change. Please feel free to share this Newsletter with your friends. We greatly welcome your comments.

Kind regards,

Anil K Singh  
Secretary-General,

# **News Analysis of the Month**

## **Sustainable agricultural production as a Climate Change Mitigation Strategy**

Several socio-economical indicators highlight the fact that patterns of food and feed production and use are changing rapidly. The most obvious trends include: a rapid change in diet composition, with a shift to meat-based diets increasing demand for grain; accelerated rates of urbanisation in low-income developing countries; increased scarcity of water and its inappropriate allocation; the clear relationship between volume of world cereal stocks and both commodity prices and levels of aid donation; the failure of food production for political reasons. Furthermore, farm yields in parts of Asia are approaching optimum levels. These trends imply 1) that wider fluctuations in food production and prices are to be expected, and 2) that vulnerable developing countries will be exposed to higher risks of food insecurity.

Considerations regarding the sustainability of food production must focus particularly on cereal cultivation, given the dominant role of these crops in agricultural systems. Intensification of wheat, rice and maize cropping systems has, in fact, been largely responsible for the fact that shortfalls in food supply have been avoided in the last 35-year period, by doubling food production. This increase was associated with a 6-fold increase in nitrogen (N) fertilization, a 3.5-fold rise in phosphorus (P) use, a 1.7-fold increase in the area of irrigated land and a 1.1-fold increase in cultivated land<sup>8</sup>. A second doubling of global food production will require an additional increase of N input by 2 - 3 fold, and doubling the area of irrigated land (to 32 % of total agricultural land). According to Cassman, the major cereal production systems include (1) irrigated annual double- and triple-crop rice in tropical and subtropical Asia; (2) irrigated annual rice-wheat double cropping in northern India, Pakistan, Nepal and southern China; (3) temperate rain-fed maize cropping in North America; and (4) the favourable rain-fed wheat systems of Northern and Central Europe. Other cropping systems exist in cereal-producing regions of the world in ecological environments similar to those of the regions cited. Both past and future agriculture intensification had, and will have further, detrimental impacts on non-agricultural ecosystems, both terrestrial and aquatic. Hence,

an urgent need is emerging for more sustainable and efficient agricultural practices. The four major systems cited are already highly productive, but whether they are also sustainable is not clear.

The world's food supplies will increasingly depend on raising production per unit area of farmed land. The need now, therefore, is for farmers to take up more sustainable, productive and profitable ways of production that do not damage the soil, land and environment. However, the land management systems now applied in many areas of the world, and particularly in the tropical, subtropical and semi-arid regions, are damaging soils and limiting their capacity to generate rising yields on a sustainable basis. Amongst various technological alternatives, the workshop focused its attention principally upon CA based farming systems since they appear to have the potential to be applied on a global scale and to do much to ensure the future adequacy and security of the world's food supplies while improving farmers' livelihoods.

At present, the almost standard, world-wide preliminary to planting a crop requires farmers to either dig or plough their soil, turning it over in order to loosen it and to bury weeds and the residues of previous crops, and then to harrow it to create a fine seed-bed. To maintain fertility, "modern" farmers, when they can afford it, rely largely on the application of inorganic fertilizers to replace the soil nutrients taken up by their crops. Most agencies that advise farmers on technology choices – and the firms supplying inputs – recommend that increased production should come from more frequent cultivation, higher levels of fertilizer and pesticide applications and the use of seed of improved varieties.

This type of farming has enabled global food production to expand in line with fast rising demand but there is a growing recognition that they are damaging top-soils and, in many situations, are no longer sustainable. Moreover, they have not succeeded in ensuring that all people have enough food of adequate quality to eat or that levels of poverty are falling significantly amongst rural populations.

Poverty in rural areas due to population density, production deficits, climate, catastrophes, low incomes and fragile soils, which in turn leads to environment degradation. The effects of poverty, in part due to agricultural intensification based on

forest burning, excess grazing and use of water generate several of the negative results mentioned.

The inter-linkages and synergies between climate change mitigation, adaptation and food security have explicitly recognized since long by social scientists and development experts. The recent Policy Brief of FAO prepared for the Copenhagen summit acknowledges that farming practices that capture carbon and store it in agricultural soils offer some of the most promising options for early and cost-effective action on climate change in developing countries, while contributing to food security. Hence it is quite perplexing to note that agriculture has been largely excluded from the main climate financing mechanisms under discussion in Denmark Agriculture not only suffers the impacts of climate change, it is also responsible for 14 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. But agriculture has the potential to be an important part of the solution, through mitigation-reducing and/or removing a significant amount of global emissions. Some 70 percent of its potential for reducing emissions could be realized in developing countries. Farmers in poor countries are crucial to fight climate change.

The report duly recognizes that climate change threatens agricultural production through higher temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns, and increased occurrences of droughts and floods, especially in areas that are already prone to climate-related disasters. Poorest regions with the highest levels of chronic hunger are likely to be among the worst affected by climate change. Certain farming practices, including those used by organic & conservation agriculture capture carbon and store it in soils. These include no/low tillage, utilizing residues for composting or mulching, use of perennial crops to cover soil, re-seeding or improving grazing management on grasslands and agro-forestry, which combines crops and trees. Beyond soil carbon sequestration, more efficient fertilizer use and management of livestock systems are also promising options that enhance emission removals and reductions. Many of these activities may also reduce deforestation and forest degradation due to their associated productivity gains that means more food can be produced without expansion of agriculture into forests. The FAO rightly emphasizes that improved farming practices required for climate change mitigation are often the same as those needed to increase productivity, food security and

adaptation, including the restoration of agro-forestry, degraded agricultural lands, integrated nutrient and soil management. Nearly 90 percent of agriculture's potential to reduce or remove emissions from the atmosphere comes from such practices.

(References: FAO Policy Brief, Dec. 2009; Enabling Agriculture to contribute to climate change mitigation by FAO. Sustainable agricultural production By Francesco Salamini)

## **News from South Asian Region**

### **Food prices up again**

In its December 2009 Food Outlook report, FAO said that Global food prices are on the ascent again with the FAO Food Price Index – a food basket composed of cereals, oilseeds, dairy, meat and sugar – registering four straight monthly rises. However market conditions are different from those that triggered the food price crisis that started two years ago. Although the preliminary outlook for **cereals** points to a decline in world output compared to 2008, mostly on account of lower price expectations which depressed plantings, production in 2009 is still expected to be about four percent higher than in 2007.

According to the FAO **meat** price index, world meat prices were an average 8 percent lower in the first ten months of 2009 than the same period last year. Lower global imports are expected to depress world trade in all various meat categories in 2009 but a modest recovery is expected in 2010.

**Source:** <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/38040/icode/>

### **SAARC food bank to double storage**

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is planning to double the storage of food in its food bank with the aim of tackling the possible food crisis in the region. The SAARC food Bank, which was established a few months ago, now has 243,000 metric tonnes of food in store. The decision is likely to be endorsed ahead of the 16th SAARC summit slated in Bhutan from April 28-29, he said, adding that the impending food crisis in the region has prompted them to take such a decision. How much each country would contribute to the SAARC Food Bank has already been

fixed, he said. According to him, India will contribute the largest with 63.42 per cent, followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan each contributing 16.58 percentages. Likewise, Sri Lanka and Nepal will each contribute 1.66 per cent each, Maldives 0.08 per cent and Bhutan 0.07 percent. Afghanistan's contribution is fixed at 1,420 metric tonnes. The idea of a SAARC Food Security Reserve was first conceived way back in 1987 but that failed.

**Source:** <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=SAARC+food+bank+to+double+storage&NewsID=223987>

## **Specter of Afghan drought brings hunger**

Nearly half way through the Afghan winter, unusually warm and dry weather is raising fears of a drought that could cause food shortages, undermine efforts to slash poppy growing and worsen security problems. Snowfall has been far below historical averages across key mountainous parts of Afghanistan, which provide much of the country's water for irrigation when the spring melts starts.

Source: <http://in.reuters.com/article/southAsiaNews/idINIndia-45390020100114>

## **ADB, UK Study to Help South Asia Address Climate Change**

### **Challenges**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Government of United Kingdom are financing a study to help South Asia analyze the costs and benefits of climate change adaptation actions. ADB is providing a \$500,000 technical assistance grant from its concessional funds, and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development will provide a \$700,000 grant to lay the groundwork for the study, Regional Economics of Climate Change in South Asia Part II: Adaptation and Impact Assessment. The study follows an earlier assessment of the potentials and costs of adopting cleaner fuel technologies to support low-carbon growth in the region funded by the Australia-ADB South Asia Development partnership Facility. South Asia is vulnerable to climate change. The impact of climate change can already be seen in the greater variability of the monsoon, increased frequency of tropical cyclones, and faster melting of the Himalayan glaciers.

Source: <http://www.adb.org/Media/Articles/2010/13152-south-asian-climates-changes-studies/>

## **FAO launches new climate change mitigation programme**

In December, 2009, FAO launched the climate change mitigation programme based on funding from the developed countries. Finland is the first country to contribute to a \$60 million FAO programme to support climate change mitigation in agriculture in developing countries. Finland will provide an initial support of around \$3.9 million for the period of 2010-2011, FAO announced in the context of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. FAO will approach other donors for further funding. The multi-donor programme aims to promote sustainable low-emission agriculture in developing countries over the coming five years, in partnership with countries and other relevant organizations. Agriculture is a key source of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, accounting for 14%. But the sector also has a high potential to reduce greenhouse gases by removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and sequestering it in soils and plants and by reducing its own emissions.

Source: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/38029/icode/>

## **Removing trade barriers can boost South Asia trade: World Bank**

Intra-regional trade in South Asia could increase from \$5 billion to \$20 billion and trade between India and Pakistan could jump from \$1 billion to \$9 billion if trade restrictions are removed, according to a new World Bank report. For example, cross-border cooperation on water between India, Bangladesh, and Nepal offers the only long-term solution to flood mitigation, and would benefit over 400 million people, the report said. “A part of this change will come from leadership from the civil society in terms of much more informed knowledge and debate of the underlying opportunities, issues, and constraints,” it said.

Source: [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/business/removing-trade-barriers-can-boost-south-asia-trade-world-bank\\_100322029.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/business/removing-trade-barriers-can-boost-south-asia-trade-world-bank_100322029.html)

## **Bangladesh moves to ban religion-based parties**

The Election Commission of Bangladesh has begun the process to ban religion-based political parties by issuing a directive to three Islamic parties to amend their charters found to be in conflict with the country's Constitution. It wrote to the Bangladesh Jamaat-

e-Islami, Bangladesh Khelataf Andolan and Tarikat Federation to amend their respective constitutions as these were not adhering to the provisions of the Representation of People Order (RPO). Election commissioner M Shakhawat Hossain said as long as these party constitutions were inconsistent with the constitution and the RPO registration clauses, it would not accept them. The review committee felt seven such provisions in the Jamaat's constitution contradicted the RPO.

Source: <http://www.rttnews.com/ArticleView.aspx?Id=1189421&SMap=1>

### **India hopes Rajapaksa win will give stability to Sri Lanka**

Quietly happy over Sri Lanka's electoral outcome, India hopes that the victory of President Mahinda Rajapaksa will lead to political stability in a country still seemingly ethnically divided. Officials here say Sri Lanka knows where to draw the red line vis-à-vis Indian strategic concerns even as it pursues economic and military ties with other countries, not all of them friendly to New Delhi. Sri Lanka has also made repeated promises to the Indian government to carry out meaningful political reforms so that the minorities, the Tamils in particular, feel empowered. India would be happy if Tamil concerns are addressed speedily, if not overnight, and with sincerity so that Sri Lanka gets to enjoy genuine political stability so vital for the war-scarred nation.

Source: <http://newshopper.sulekha.com/>

### **Easing Trade, Investment Barriers Can Unlock South Asia's Vast Potential – ADB Report**

Reducing visa restrictions and non-tariff barriers, and improving customs procedures, are among a host of steps South Asian countries can take to boost private sector-led growth, unlocking the region's vast economic potential, says a report prepared by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The report, "Key Proposals for Harnessing Business Opportunities in South Asia", follows a conference held in New Delhi in November 2009 which looked at challenges to increased trade and investment links in the region, along with possible solutions. The conference was co-organized by ADB, the Federation, India's Ministry of External Affairs, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.



Source: <http://www.adb.org/Media/Articles/2010/13168-south-asian-trades-developments/>

### **UN Says East, South Asia Leading Mild Global Economic Recovery**

The United Nations is predicting a mild global economic recovery in 2010 with Asia leading growth. But the U.N. warns if governments withdraw stimulus measures too early, the global economy could slump again. In its 2010 economic report the U.N. says, East and South Asian economies will lead the world recovery. East Asia is expected to see average gross domestic product grow by 6.7 percent, the highest rate in the world, followed by South Asia at 5.5 percent. Despite the quicker recovery, the U.N. report points out that in developing Asia and Africa the financial crisis pushed more people into jobs that do not provide social protections. The U.N. says since the crisis the global share of working poor has increased to 64 percent in 2009 from 59 percent two years earlier.

Source: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/96161/-un-says-east-south-asia-leading-mild-global-economic-recovery.html>

### **Pak talks first, not SAARC**

The SAARC home ministers' conference scheduled for February 26 in Islamabad was today conveniently postponed so that India and Pakistan would not have to hurry their proposed foreign secretary-level dialogue. Pakistan's envoy to New Delhi today officially accepted India's offer for the dialogue, which both countries want to hold before the SAARC meeting. Shahid Malik promised to confirm the dates suggested by India — which have not been revealed — after talking to Islamabad. Officials said the SAARC meeting had been put off indefinitely at a request from Nepal, whose home minister did not find the conference date convenient.

Indian home minister P. Chidambaram was to attend the Islamabad meeting in the first Pakistan visit by an Indian minister after the Mumbai terror attacks. This is the third time this edition of the SAARC home ministers' meeting has been postponed.

Source: [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100206/jsp/nation/story\\_12073533.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100206/jsp/nation/story_12073533.jsp)

## **SANSAD News/Events**

### **National Annual Consultation Meeting of Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) organised in Patna**

**December 1-2, 2009:** National Annual Consultation Meeting of Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) was held in Patna, Bihar in which 80 Delegates from 5 States of India participated. As a Board Member, SANSAD, Secretary General Mr. Anil K. Singh participated and facilitated the meeting proceedings.

### **A Step Forward towards Women Empowerment, Women's Tribunal held in Patna, Bihar**

**December 3, 2009:** Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA), Bihar Unit organised the Women's Tribunal in the State capital Patna to strengthen Women's Task Force of WNTA to devise future course and plan of action. SANSAD Secretary General, Mr. Anil K Singh, who is a Steering Group Member, facilitated the smooth running the entire process.

### **Core Member Group Meeting of South Asian People's Alliance organised in Gwalior, (MP)**

**7-9 December, 2009:** South Asian People's Alliance organised a 3-day South Asian level meeting in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh to deliberate upon further course of action and strategies. As a Core member of SAPA, Mr. Anil K. Singh participated in the meeting.

### **On the occasion of Global Action Day on Climate Change, a Massive Rally Organised in New Delhi**

**December 12, 2009:** SANSAD, in collaboration with various civil society organisations, organised a massive rally from '*Rajghat - to- Jantar Mantar*' in New Delhi to generate awareness among the people against adverse consequences of climate change on livelihood and other issues. More than 10,000 people participated in the colorful Rally. After the rally, a memorandum was submitted to Prime Minister's Office (PMO) by Anil K Singh.

### **Strategic Planning Meeting of Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) Organised**

**19-20 December, 2009:** Strategic Planning Meeting of Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) organised in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. Mr Anil K. Singh, as one of the Trustee of the organisation, participated in the planning meeting.

**5 January, 2010:** As Board Member, Mr. Anil K. Singh participated in General Body Meeting of National Centre for Advocacy Studies held in Pune, Maharashtra on January 5, 2010.

### **South Asian Facilitation (SAFG) of Global Call for Action against Poverty (GCAP) Reactivated**

**10-11 January, 2010:** To activate the South Asian Facilitation Group (SAFG) of Global Call for Action Against Poverty (GCAP) and chalk out future course and plan of action, a 2-day meeting was held in New Delhi on January 10-11, 2010. During the said meeting, a well devised and clear cut 1-year plan of action was drafted. Some of the Indian donors and strategic organizations from India participated during lunch meeting. It was also decided to approach various donor agencies to apprise them of the results of the meeting and other relevant issues and seek their assistance.

### **CSO Development Effectiveness Meeting Organised in Mexico City**

**22-23 January, 2010:** Global Facilitation Group Meeting of CSO Development Effectiveness took place in Mexico City. As a GFG member, Mr. Anil K. Singh (SANSAD) participated in the meeting.

### **National Consultation on Food Security and Water organised in Andhra Pradesh**

**3-4 February 2010:** In order to develop future plan of action, division of various responsibilities and formation of a new Steering Group, a 2-day National Consultation of Coalition members of Food Security and Water organised in Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh. Being a member of group, SANSAD Secretary General Mr. Anil K. Singh participated in the said consultation.

### **Thematic Action Group on Livelihood (WNTA) devises its Plan of Action and Strategies**

**16 February 2010:** A meeting of the Thematic Action Group on Livelihood of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan was organised in the office of Christian Aid from 10.00 am- 1.30 pm to develop future plan of action and strategies. As a Convener of the Thematic Action Group, SANSAD Secretary General, Mr. Anil K. Singh participated and facilitated the meeting.

### **A High level Multi stakeholder Meeting on Food and Agriculture with Agriculture Ministry of Netherlands organised in New Delhi**

**16 February 2010 (3.00 pm-6.00 pm):** Strategic Planning Meeting on Food & Agriculture took place, in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture (Government of Netherlands). Dr. Biswajit Dhar, IRE, New Delhi facilitated this high level meeting of government officials of ministries relating to food and agriculture. Many farmer leaders and researchers also participated in the said meeting. Mr. Anil K. Singh represented SANSAD in this high level meeting.

**22-23 February 2010:** Centre for World Solidarity (Bihar unit) organised a 2- day State Annual Consultation Meeting of CWS, Bihar in Patna on 22-23 February 2010. As a Board Member of CWS, Mr. Anil K. Singh participated and facilitated the meeting.

### **National Consultation on CSO Development Effectiveness organised in New Delhi**

3-5 March 2010: SANSAD, in collaboration with other 14 organisation, organised National Consultation on CSO Development Effectiveness in New Delhi to deliberate upon the issues of dimensions and principles of CSO development effectiveness. Among the 54 participants who were involved in discussion, deliberations and thematic group work during the 3-day consultation included Government officials of various ministries of Government of India, representatives from various donor agencies, INGOs, CSO leaders from different States of Northern region of India, academicians and researchers.

## **Upcoming Events**

**12 March 2010:** General Body Meeting and Board meeting of Charkha, New Delhi will be organised on 12 March 2010. As a Board member, Mr. Anil K. Singh will participate in the said meetings.

**16 march, 2010:** Being one of the Board Members of CBGA, Mr. Anil K. Singh, will participate in the Board Meeting of Centre for Budget & Governance Accountability (CBGA), New Delhi to be held on 16 March 2010.

**20 March, 2010:** A National preparatory meeting of **People's SAARC** scheduled to be organised on 20 March 2010 in New Delhi. Similar country consultation will be organized in each of member countries of SAARC. It may be noted that P-SAARC is being held as a parallel Consultation of various CSO members of South Asian Countries just before the Official SAARC Meeting in New Delhi, India on April 22-23, 2010. The tentative date of Official SAARC meeting in 24-28 April, 2010, scheduled to be held in Thimphu, Bhutan.