



## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

### **Food and Nutritional Security for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in SAARC Countries: Revisiting Extension Approaches and Strategies**

**02 to 04 February, 2023**

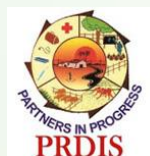
**BRAC-CDM Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **JOINTLY ORGANIZED BY**



**The Society for Bangladesh Agricultural  
Extension Network (BAEN)**  
Sech Bhaban, Room No #412, Level-4  
22 Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka – 1207,  
Bangladesh



**Participatory Rural Development  
Initiatives Society (PRDIS)**  
# 2-6-4175, Satsang Vihar, Upperpally,  
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-500048  
Telangana, India

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Society of Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN) and the Participatory Rural Development Initiatives Society (PRDIS), jointly organized a three-day **International Conference on Food and Nutritional Security for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in SAARC Countries: Revisiting Extension Approaches and Strategies** which was held in BRAC-CDM, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh during 02-04 February, 2023.

### **RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES AND THEMES**

Food security, ending hunger and malnutrition is a key development challenge for South Asian countries accounting for the world's nearly two thirds of undernourished people. The governments of SAARC Countries aim their public policies at achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-2) through cross cutting and comprehensive interventions related to Food security, Nutrition and sustainable Agriculture. However, the current pace and scope of implementation of agricultural extension and advisory services delivery needs a fresh impetus.

Food and Nutritional Security component in the context of SDG-2 is yet to be adequately addressed from a holistic Agricultural Extension perspective. In this context the outlook of extension institutions and services with regard to crop, livestock and fisheries deserve a close review. Bangladesh has recorded significant achievements by various Human Development Indices. Further, SAARC Countries have varied experiences in adoption of outcome-based Extension approaches that need to be shared among the various stakeholders.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To review the Food & Nutritional Security (SDG-2 and its targets) in detail as applicable to SAARC member countries.
2. To study the comparative strengths and constraints of extension and advisory services and strategies to achieve the Food & Nutritional Security.
3. To suggest scalable and replicable strategies as appropriate to crops, livestock, fisheries etc., for achieving the targets of Food & Nutritional Security in member countries.

## **THEMES AND SUB THEMES:**

### **1. Challenges and Policy Reforms in Food & Nutritional Security in SAARC Countries**

- 1.1 Food and Nutritional Security issues and interventions in SAARC Countries
- 1.2 Regional challenges and policy reforms: Situational analysis
- 1.3 Fostering Regional cooperation and partnership networks
- 1.4 Extension systems and approaches in SAARC Countries

### **2. Innovations, Good Practices and programmes in Agricultural Extension for achieving SDG-2 in SAARC countries**

- 2.1 Public, private, farmer led, institution led innovations in extension
- 2.2 Good practices for achieving food and nutritional security
- 2.3 Programmatic interventions to achieve food and nutritional security
- 2.4 Combating Malnutrition among vulnerable groups

### **3. Extension approaches and strategies to promote sustainable, climate resilient, nutrition-sensitive, diversified agriculture and allied sectors**

- 3.1 Public, private and para-extension approaches and strategies and services
- 3.2 Extension approaches and strategies for sustainable, climate resilient and diversified agriculture
- 3.3 Strategies for improving livestock and fisheries production and consumption
- 3.4 Extension approaches for nutrition-sensitive agriculture
- 3.5 Digital agriculture: e-advisories, e-marketing platforms, e-commerce, open learning, AI, block chains, remote sensing etc.

### **4. Strengthening delivery of extension and advisory services for agriculture and allied sectors**

- 4.1 Agripreneurship development, Agri start-up eco systems and partnerships
- 4.2 Agri business and market led extension
- 4.3 Value chain-based extension services including Agri logistics
- 4.4 Empowering farmer collectives with global standards of management

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **I. Challenges and Policy Reforms in Food & Nutritional Security in SAARC Countries**

- 1.1 Farm sector is the chief economic determinant in South Asia. There is a need to double the agricultural production by 2030. Individuals, institutions and authorities in farm sector, should join together in providing integrated extension services through appropriate platforms and mechanisms for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- 1.2 Commodity Interest Group (CIG) approach promoted by Bangladesh Agriculture Department and practiced widely in India, may be popularized to ensure sustainable agriculture in SAARC countries.
- 1.3 SAARC Secretariat may initiate and promote agri-business alliances across the production systems and value chains among the SAARC countries.
- 1.4 Strong and innovative networks are an imperative for sustainable agriculture development. Necessary steps may be taken to formulate policy interventions in order to create an enabling environment to effectively address the regional challenges through such Networks.
- 1.5 Policy reforms should focus on improving agricultural productivity, enhancing delivery systems, reducing food losses and wastage, promoting sustainable food systems and ensuring access to food and nutrition for all.

### **II. Innovations, Good Practices and Programmes in Agricultural Extension for Achieving SDG-2 in SAARC Countries**

- 2.1 Strengthen circular economy in agri-food systems through better production, nutrition, environment and life styles to end hunger by 2030.
- 2.2 Sensitize/reorient the extension services on gender and nutrition issues by promoting Nutri-gardens along with establishment of Nutri-smart villages-at least one at the cluster level, integrating evidence-based food and nutrition programs to evolve innovative extension delivery systems to respond to the local and regional challenges.
- 2.3 Agri start-up eco systems may be developed to support sustainable food systems. Very innovative and successful initiatives viz., RKVY-RAFTAAR, BIRAC, ICAR-BPD, etc. of India may be replicated in other SAARC countries with suitable modifications.

### **III. Extension Approaches and Strategies to Promote Sustainable, Climate Resilient, Nutrition-Sensitive, Diversified Agriculture and Allied Sectors**

- 3.1 Agricultural extension needs to address changing demands of an emerging dynamic agricultural system. Appropriate extension tools and techniques may be updated for transformative reforms in farm sector. Global networking and partnerships are also important in this context.
- 3.2 Krishi Vigyan Kendra's (KVKs) being a time-tested front-line extension model of India, may be considered for replication in other SAARC Countries with locally suitable modifications.
- 3.3 Greater emphasis is needed to Motivate and Attract Youth in Agriculture (MAYA) towards high-tech farming, secondary and specialty agriculture, Agri-insurance, processing and value-addition, agripreneurship, efficient marketing, relevant skill trainings, etc.
- 3.4 A strategy of institutional innovations in extension should be evolved which leverages the strengths of the Public and Private Sectors to serve the needs of the farming community.
- 3.5 There is need to promote Private Paid Extension (PPE) services in commercial/ horticultural crops, secondary and specialty agriculture requiring specialized technical backstopping.
- 3.6 The Corporate Sector may be encouraged to play a more significant role by investing part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to create a private and more efficient extension system/model to complement the on-going public extension activities.
- 3.7 Enhance investment in education, research, agripreneurship and extension services to achieve much needed productivity gains.
- 3.8 Promote Integrated Farming Systems approach with location specific, demand driven technologies.
- 3.9 Nutritional education programs may be rendered more gender sensitive and incorporated into the school curriculum.
- 3.10 Michigan State University's (MSU) 4-H youth development program is meant for learning by doing to elevate nutrition security and productivity. This may be promoted with local adaptations.

- 3.11 Focus on traditional linear knowledge transfer needs to be gradually replaced with a more flexible Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation system (AKIS) system.
- 3.12 Ongoing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programs may be integrated with Food and Nutritional Security.
- 3.13 Action research in extension may be promoted by involving farmers, scientists, rural advisors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as farmer-researcher networks.
- 3.14 Market Led Extension strategies should be focused on promoting farmer empowerment and value chain-based linkages with various marketing channels.
- 3.15 Serious efforts are required from all the public and private stakeholders to augment marketing infrastructure and provide for hygienic marketing arrangements, especially at local and intermediary levels.
- 3.16 Agriculture development stands on five pillars- Research/ Technology, Land, Credit/Capital, Entrepreneurship and Extension. The fifth pillar of extension should be strengthened to support the transformation process by reinforcing the other four.
- 3.17 Capacities of Extension functionaries and farmers should be strengthened through appropriate institutional approaches to accelerate adaptation to Climate Smart Agriculture.
- 3.18 Strengthen research-extension partnerships and coordination mechanisms for scaling new technologies, promoting Natural Resource Management (NRM), efficient conservation technologies, Climate Resilient Agriculture (CRA) and precision farming.
- 3.19 The Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) initiated and promoted by the FAO may be popularized in livestock, horticulture and fisheries. Farmer Field Schools may be strengthened to encourage market orientation and agripreneurship among farmers, so that the Field Schools also double as Farmers Business Schools.
- 3.20 Promote small-scale low-cost aquaculture technologies and practices for improving the rural livelihoods. Production and extension support systems may be updated and aligned with the fisheries sub-sector.
- 3.21 Media research in agriculture may be strengthened and utilized to improve content, treatment, delivery and feedback in Agricultural Extension System.

- 3.22 Social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, E-mails, Blogs, Vlogs, App-based services, etc.) need to be used effectively by networking farmers and offering them context-specific information eco-region wise. Farm-portals like Kisan Sarathi (India), TV, Radio broadcasts and Community Radio Stations (CRS) providing information on production/protection technologies, e-advisories, inputs/prices, e-marketing services and mobile applications need to be promoted.
- 3.23 Integrated Agricultural extension services promoted through Farmers' Information and Advisory Centre (FIAC) at block level under National Agriculture Technology Project (NATP) in India and Bangladesh may be strengthened and replicated with suitable modifications.

#### **IV. Strengthening Delivery of Extension and Advisory Services for Agriculture and Allied Sectors**

- 4.1 Extension in allied sectors like, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy, Poultry, Fisheries, Agroforestry, Nutri-Cereals, Credit, Processing, Agribusiness, etc. needs strengthening and must be re-organized with location specific requirements.
- 4.2 Integrated Extension services may be delivered through convergence and Private- Public- Partnership mode with suitable institutional mechanisms in place.
- 4.3 Action plan may be drawn up to promote entrepreneurship among students in Agricultural Universities and entrepreneurship development institutions.
- 4.4 The Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) promoted in India in various forms (ex. Farmer Cooperatives, Farmer Producer Companies, Farmers Commodity Organizations etc.,) should be considered for replication in SAARC countries.
- 4.5 The unemployed agricultural graduates be trained in entrepreneurship skills to provide specialized advisories to farmers and support them in setting up farm enterprises. This will supplement and complement the public extension services. The Agri Clinics and Agri Business Centres (AC&ABCs) operated in India supported by MANAGE in India be replicated in SAARC Countries.



## **DHAKA DECLARATION**

- ❖ The Conference addressed current and emerging concerns namely food security of nations, nutritional security of societies, income security of the farmers and climate smart agriculture in the context of achieving SDGs in SAARC countries and innovations and need for reforms in Agricultural Extension.
- ❖ The parties recognized varying levels of extension capacities and their uniqueness in different countries and resolved to facilitate strengthening Agricultural Extension on a consortium mode at regional and global level. Keeping in view, it is recommended that the name of the proposed network would be “Consortium of Agricultural Extension Professionals”.
- ❖ The signatories for the declaration are
  - The Society for Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN), Dhaka, Bangladesh
  - Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA), Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
  - Michigan State University (MSU), USA
  - Nepal Farmers Advisory Council, Kathmandu, Nepal
  - International Society of Extension Education (INSEE), Nagpur, India
  - Participatory Rural Development Initiatives Society (PRDIS), Hyderabad, India
  - FAO Representative, Dhaka, Bangladesh
  - SAARC Agriculture Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- ❖ It is also recommended that the above network may be scaled up by admitting other professional extension societies in SAARC countries as members of the Consortium.
- ❖ Drawing from the recommendations that emerged from the conference and the Dhaka declaration, it is recommended that the proposed Consortium may identify specific, scalable and sustainable recommendations for immediate implementation on a pilot basis. Towards this, each SAARC Country may select one or two recommendations that are compatible with their Agriculture development policies and priorities for funding and implementation as pilot projects under the technical guidance of the Consortium.
- ❖ It is proposed to house the Consortium at the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, India to initiate implementation of identified programs/ activities in the spirit of Dhaka Declaration.
- ❖ To ensure that the pilot projects take a time bound trajectory, each SAARC Country may identify and confirm the recommendations that they chose to implement as pilot projects, within six months after the receipt of the recommendations of the Conference. The individual country representatives may share the project outlines with the Consortium and approach national and international agencies for collaboration and funding.