



**APRAC
2023**

এশিয়া-প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের
খাদ্য অধিকার এবং কৃষি খাদ্যব্যবস্থা সম্মেলন ২০২৩

**Asia-Pacific Right to Food & Agrifood
System Conference 2023**

26-27 July 2023

Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban
University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

খাদ্য অধিকার বাংলাদেশ
RIGHT TO FOOD BANGLADESH



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RIGHT TO FOOD BANGLADESH

A Report on

Asia-Pacific Right to Food and Agrifood System Conference 2023

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Preface

The Right to Food Bangladesh network convened a two-day Asia Pacific Right to Food and Agrifood System Conference (APRAC) at Dhaka University to promote equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient agrifood systems, as well as the right to adequate food for all. People from all walks of life have gathered at this conference, particularly small-scale food producers, farmer movements and organizations, CSOs, researchers, academia, and policymakers to navigate the future course of the agrifood system in light of the realization of the right to food and nutrition, as well as to endorse agroecology as an integral part of the way forward in the Asia-Pacific region. This conference was attended by 633 individuals and 110 organizations from this region, who provided enthusiastic support and insightful contributions both in person and virtually. This two-day conference was scheduled with two plenary sessions and eight technical sessions, as well as an inaugural and closing ceremony.

APRAC 2023

Contextualisation and Conceptualisation of the Conference

The existing corporate led Agrifood system are dealing with a spiral of issues ranging from ecological and climate crises to supply chain disruption owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine, as well as persistent poverty, hunger, and inequality. The enormity of these strains and crises deepens global hunger and poverty, with new extreme hunger hotspots evolving around the world. However, the number of hungry people has risen since 2017, with 3.1 billion people unable to afford a healthy diet in 2020 and 2.3 billion insufficiently fed in 2021. It should be pointed out that this region contains three of the ten extreme hunger hotspots (Yemen, Afghanistan, and Syria), as well as emerging new hunger hotspots like India (World Food Programme, 2020). Furthermore, an open letter to the UN General Assembly revealed the severity of global hunger, estimating a person dies of hunger every four seconds. The people of Bangladesh likewise suffer from hunger and food insecurity owing to disrupted supply chains, inflation, and global grain, fertilizer, and oil price rises, ranking Bangladesh 84th out of 121 countries on the 2022 Global Hunger Index. It is evident that attaining SDG 2, a global goal for eradicating hunger by 2030, will remain critical and require addressing structural barriers, climate change, and economic downturns.

APRAC

2023

Objectives of the Conference

The prime objective of the conference was to transform existing agrifood systems and its governance to be more equitable, sustainable, climate resilient and promote the right to adequate food for all. The objectives included-

Analyzing the legal and policy framework for realizing the 'Right to Food'

Strengthening the multistakeholderism to promote 'Right to Food' by building partnership with smallholder family farmers, fisher folks, CSOs, farmers' organizations, youth, women, academia, researchers and policy makers

Analysing the social security policy framework and its practices to ensure food security and nutrition of the most marginalized sections of the society

Recognizing, protecting and promoting the role, contribution and participation of Indigenous Peoples, smallholder farmers, rural women and local communities in transforming agrifood systems in the Asia-Pacific region

Analysing agrifood system and its policy frameworks to adopt One Health and agroecological approaches as essential elements of promoting sustainable and equitable systematic approach

Raising the voice of the small-scale family farmers (both men and women) on sustainable, equitable and climate-resilient agriculture



Inaugural Ceremony

The grand inaugural ceremony took place at the prestigious Senate Building auditorium of Dhaka University. It was presided over by Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman, Right to Food Bangladesh and Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and Mohsin Ali, the General Secretary of Right to Food Bangladesh and the Executive Director of WAVE Foundation delivered the welcome speech. The inaugural session was moderated by Kaniz Fatima, coordinator, Right to Food Bangladesh Network.





Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury

Honourable Speaker
Bangladesh National Parliament

Speech of Chief Guest

“ The chief guest of the session praised Bangladesh's rapid development and highlighted the legacy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's emphasis on agriculture. She emphasised the importance of a transformative agrifood system as well as the significance of sustainable food management. Recognizing the problems ahead, she stated that food production alone will not enough, and food demand is anticipated to increase by 2050. She also calls for an integrated approach that includes managing food reserves, harnessing technology, and embracing e-agriculture. She also underlined the importance of family farming in the endeavor to achieve food security. She concluded her remarks by expressing optimism that the conference's findings will provide a vision for the future and will be immensely useful in guiding the region toward sustainable and secure food systems.

Let us join hands to build a food-secure Asia and Pacific by 2050, leaving no one behind in our pursuit of a hunger-free world



M. A. Mannan MP

Honourable Minister
Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh

Speech of Special Guest

“ The special guest expressed optimism about the steady positive results obtained in the field of food security. He stressed the government's efforts to improve agricultural production by introducing improved crops and fertilizers. He emphasized the government's commitment to guaranteeing fair agricultural produce prices and offering assistance to landless and homeless farmers, recognizing their critical role in the food supply chain.

A future free from food shortages is within our grasp, and through collaborative efforts and unwavering commitment, we shall prioritize the welfare of farmers and laborers, securing a nourished and prosperous nation

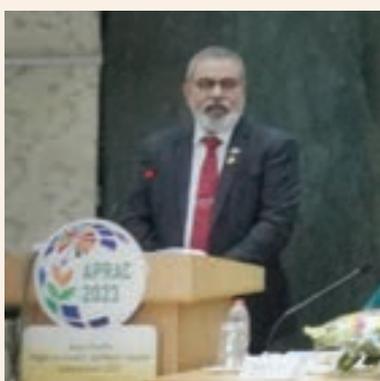
Speech of Guests of Honour



Professor Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman

Vice Chancellor
University of Dhaka

He emphasised that the right to food is not merely a regional issue, rather a global one, deserving of global attention and collaborative efforts. He commended the necessity of such international event, providing a platform for diverse stakeholders to come together and address pressing food security challenges.



Ramesh Singh

Country Director
CARE Bangladesh

He recognised the progress made in food security over the previous two decades. However, he expressed concern that countries are becoming increasingly reliant on imports and unable to rely primarily on domestic food production and supply. He also brought up the gendered aspect of food insecurity, stating that women lack equal access to food as men and are the first to go without it.



Sanjeev Kumar Karn

Joint Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Nepal

He graciously expressed his gratitude for being invited to the conference. He affirmed that the prime objectives of the conference align perfectly with Nepal's plans and commitment to achieving food security in the country. He emphasized Nepal's recognition of the right to food as a fundamental human right, underscoring the importance of active participation from indigenous communities in shaping food policies and initiatives.



Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad

Chairman
Right to Food Bangladesh

Speech of the Chair

“ Chairman of RtF Bangladesh, pointed out three crucial areas to prioritize: food availability, accessibility, and affordability of food. He also underscored the importance of optimizing resource use to solve food security challenges, as well as the importance of addressing unemployment concerns, acknowledging its profound impact on food accessibility for vulnerable groups. He advocated for a shift toward more organic agriculture while reducing chemical-intensive practices, as well as for more sustainable farming methods. Additionally, he expressed concern about the severe implications of rising inflation, recognizing the need for effective remedies to lessen these effects. In light of global pandemics, he emphasized the value of adaptation, urging participants to be resilient in the face of unanticipated challenges and to develop strategies that can assist food systems endure and recover from crises.

In our quest for food security, we must embrace adaptability and learn from one another



Mohsin Ali

General Secretary
Right to Food Bangladesh

Speech from General Secretary

“ He extended a cordial welcome to all delegates of the (APAC 2023). He was very appreciative of the presence of policymakers, experts, scholars, and social advocates, who were all collaborating to advance agricultural practices and food rights. The significance of the right to food, its connection to human dignity, and the pressing need to combat hunger, particularly in vulnerable communities. He emphasized the need of collaboration and innovation in addressing global food concerns, and he invited participants to share their skills for long-term and sustainable solutions.



Legal Framework & Fundamental Concerns on Right to Food in Asia-Pacific Region

A comprehensive analysis of the challenges and solutions around food security and poverty was presented in the plenary session. It brought attention to the severe food crisis which has been made worse by the pandemic's effects on vulnerable communities. The importance of using agroecology, food sovereignty, and the solidarity economy to confront climate challenges was underlined. It underscored the intricate relationship between food security, human rights, and sustainable development to ensure a right to food for all in this region.

Keynote Speakers



Professor Dr. M. M. Akash, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, in his first keynote presentation highlighted pivotal concerns relating to food security and poverty within the context of the Asia-Pacific region. He pointed out that approximately one-third of the world's population suffers from hunger owing to a lack of food. He admitted that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionately negative effect on vulnerable communities, plunging many of them into poverty. He delved into critical indicators, including per capita food gaps, poverty rates, and land distribution, for South Asian countries. He emphasized how the lack of available land exacerbates issues and requires prudent land use regulations for poor and landless. He noted that south Asian countries are home to a sizable part of the world's extreme poor. He stressed the significance of peace and security to preserving both the right to food and grassroots democracy in Asia and the Pacific.

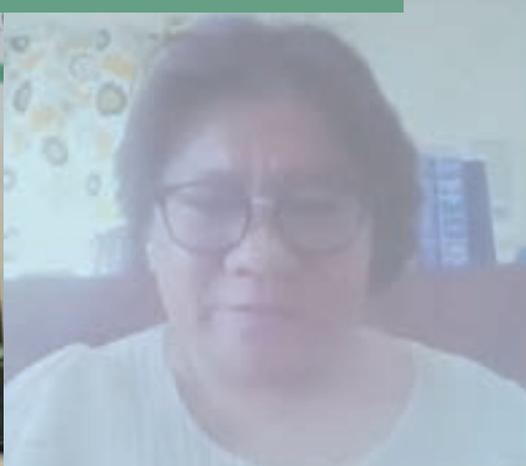
I believe that right to food is the foundation of all other rights.



Farooq Tariq, General Secretary, Rabita Committee, Pakistan, in his keynote presentation on "Promoting Food Sovereignty and Agrarian Reforms in Pakistan: Challenges and Solutions," brought attention to the on-going struggles the Pakistani people are facing as a result of economic policies and the strict conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He remarked upon the challenge posed by catastrophic climate changes, the emergence of new levels of poverty, and the impact of anti-people neoliberal policies. He underscored the necessity for democratic space, extensive agrarian reforms and land distribution to landless peasants.

The solution to hunger and climate crisis lies in food sovereignty, agroecology, and solidarity economy.

Discussion of the Panellists



Bidur Subedi, representing the National Alliance for Human Rights & Social Justice in Nepal, delivered his insightful viewpoints as a panellist. He emphasized Nepal's history of armed tension and the country's 2015 transition to a Federal Democratic Republican Constitution, which entrenched fundamental rights, including the right to food. He elaborated on the right to food and the Food Sovereignty Act of 2018, which protects people from food insecurity while upholding human rights principles.

Atty. Joy Angelica Doctor from SEARICE, Philippines spotlighted on three critical aspects of right to food: availability, accessibility, and adequacy. She further talked three approaches to food security-technological, market, and business and how they disregard farmers' fundamental rights and environmental concerns. She argued that market approach focused on increasing food access through market mechanisms without addressing unequal resource distribution and aggressive profits, while the technological approach focused on increasing food production without considering the environmental damage caused by technology reliance. Similarly, the corporate model aims to alleviate hunger by pushing industrial agriculture, which results in malnutrition, biodiversity loss, and health risks.

Balaram, former Food Secretary Advisor to the Supreme Court of India, highlighted the critical aspects of food security and legal entitlements. He emphasized India's initiatives in addressing hunger, starting with the establishment of the Buffer Stock in 2000. Referring to legal measures, he discussed the implementation of schemes to monitor and ensure food distribution, drawing from a 2001 Supreme Court case. He delved into the intricate web of schemes aimed at various segments of society, such as pregnant women, vulnerable tribal groups, lactating mothers, and school children.

Nepal's struggle for the right to food is enshrined in its constitutional provisions and legal framework

We need to come up with a human rights-based approach because the right to food, the right to a sustainable and healthy environment, and farmers' rights are inextricably and intimately intertwined

Production, storage, distribution – you need to address all of these to ensure sustainable food entitlements

Open Discussion

A comprehensive analysis of the challenges and solutions around food security and poverty was presented in the plenary session. It brought attention to the severe food crisis which has been made worse by the pandemic's effects on vulnerable communities. The importance of using agroecology, food sovereignty, and the solidarity economy to confront the climate challenges was underlined. It underscored the intricate relationship between food security, human rights, and sustainable development to ensure a right to food for all in this region.



Small and Marginal Farmers Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region to Promote Zero Hunger

The first technical session of the conference delved into the crucial topic of "Small and Marginal Farmers' Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region to Promote Zero Hunger." Amidst the challenges posed by food insecurity and the goal of achieving sustainable development, this session placed a spotlight on the rights and welfare of small and marginal farmers, who play a pivotal role in ensuring food security for millions across the Asia-Pacific region.

Keynote Speaker



Dr. Ganga Acharya, Senior Program Specialist (PSPD), SAARC Agriculture Centre, as the keynote speaker, highlighted the critical role of Sustainable Development Goal 2 in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, with the aim of ending all forms of hunger by 2030. He stated that achieving zero hunger is not merely a matter of increasing production or improving distribution; rather, it requires addressing the root causes associated with food insecurity. He argued that the existing profit-driven agrifood systems, monoculture, and yield maximization, neglect the well-being of smallholder farmers and local food system.

Achieving zero hunger demands a holistic transformation of our agricultural systems

Small and Marginal Farmers' Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region to Promote Zero Hunger

26 July, 2023

Special Seminar Room, Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Discussion of the Panellists



Seema Luitel, Head of Advocacy, Welthungerhilfe, Nepal emphasized the importance of stakeholders in tackling the challenges encountered by small and marginal farmers. She emphasized that access to credit is a major obstacle for farmers, impeding their growth and productivity.

Stakeholders play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our small and marginal farmers

Sandeep Chachra, Country Director of ActionAid, India, provided essential perspectives on the current agricultural landscape. He pointed out that despite the feminization of agriculture, rural peoples' ownership of property is not rising, and landlessness has significantly increased. He added that people working in agriculture are migrating to cities, which may affect the sustainability of smallholding farming.

The resilience of smallholding farming is evident, but it is imperative to analyze public expenditure and ensure that it aligns with the needs of the primary producers

Zayed Iqbal Khan, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Krishok Federation, emphasised the resilience and significance of the agriculture sector for sustaining the economic wheel turning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Farmers' sovereignty over production and access to resources are vital for sustainable livelihoods and food security

Monir Ahmed, President of Kendrio Krishok Moitree raised concern over the unequal distribution of resources and support caused by the government's propensity to give big farm owners privileges and priority. He pointed out that the marginal and small farmers, who are the prime producers, receive comparatively insignificant government investment.

Family farming forms the backbone of our agricultural sector

Pavel Partha, Director of BARCIK, underlined the importance of developing a system to measure farmers' on going losses and harms as a result of climate change. He expressed concern about the domination of the seed market by large agro-tech companies in engaging youth in agriculture and encourages family farming for future safeguard.

To combat climate change, a shift towards agroecology is essential

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Abdul Awal, Executive Director, NRDS, the chair and moderator, underlined the value of learning from the first-hand experiences of farmer communities dealing with corporate sector challenges. He reiterated the criticality of addressing farmer access to credit, enabling sustainable local market growth, and raising agricultural practices' knowledge of climate change.

Open Discussion

Participants voiced concerns over the fact that large company like PRAN gain access to water resources while denying farmers the same right to use those resources for irrigation. In addition, they proposed for equal employment opportunities in agriculture for women and transgender community, highlighting the need for diversity and inclusion along with applying technology for growing more on less land.



The Impact of Climate Vulnerabilities on the Agrifood System and Food Security

The session was amidst the challenges posed by climate change and neoliberal policies; let us sow the seeds of collaboration. By uniting experts and farmers, we can nurture sustainable growth and resilience, transforming vulnerabilities into opportunities for a greener and more secure agrarian landscape.

Keynote Speaker



Pramesh Pokharel, Member, International Coordinator Committee of LVC, South Asia, as key note speaker focused on climate change and its impact on the environment and agriculture. He emphasizes that family farming, which provides up to 60% of the world's agricultural food, plays a significant role in the agrifood system. He is likely recommending family farming to promote for a more sustainable and environmental friendly approach to agriculture.

Discussion of the Panellists



Dr. Susanta Kumar Das, Retired Professor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, argued that neoliberal policies and climate change impede sustainable agriculture and food security. He emphasised the impact of climate change on poor farmers in Bangladesh's southern coastline region, where saline water intrusion is prevalent. In response to the challenges posed by neoliberal policies and climate change, he advocated for the creation of a forum for expert and farmer collaboration.

Shamiran Biswas, Madina Tech's Dr. Chasi (AI) project's chief agriculturalist, strongly supported the use of artificial intelligence and technology in agriculture to address climate change and ensure food security. He prioritized technology and AI in order to find data-driven sustainable agriculture solutions that will transform agriculture.

Dr. Md. Shahid Uz Zaman, Executive Director, ESDO placed a higher importance on indigenous knowledge above expert systems that do not disregard farmers' knowledge systems and prioritize farmers-based pragmatic approaches. He believes that in order to ensure sustainable agriculture, farmers must be involved in decision-making process.

Jib Nath Sharma, Senior Manager, CARE Nepal, highlighted climate justice while revealing climatic vulnerabilities and agricultural malpractices. He is concerned about climate change's impact on the agrifood system and food security, particularly in vulnerable areas. Crop yields and production are threatened by extreme weather, fluctuating rainfall, and rising temperatures.

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director, BCAS, noted that Bangladesh is one of the most susceptible countries to climate change and the agrifood system. The rainfall and crops patterns have shifted. It has an impact on farmers' revenue and affordability. Coastal regions are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels, which cause saline intrusion in agricultural fields and restrict the supply of fresh water. There has been an increase in the frequency of cyclones, droughts, flash floods, and storms. He presented data indicating that climate change could cause annual losses in the agricultural food system of roughly \$7.7 billion USD.

Open Discussion

The participants voiced concern about industrialization encroaching on agricultural land, recognizing the value of fertile soil for food production and livelihoods. They stressed the necessity of involving farmers in policymaking and decision-making process and the steps taken to reduce structural inequality.



Right to Food and Social Protection in South Asia-A Policy Mapping Study and Gap Analysis

The session sheds light on the critical intersection of food security and social protection measures in the South Asian region. This session aims to present a comprehensive policy mapping study, providing a detailed overview of existing initiatives and frameworks that address the right to food and social welfare.

Keynote Speaker



Dr. Asif M. Shahan, Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, as a key note speaker presented relevant contemporary statistics for a deeper understanding of the current state of food security in South Asia. He explored the impact of inflation and socioeconomic conditions on food security, as well as the role of social protection strategies in mitigating vulnerabilities. He identified prominent trends in food security policies, while also highlighting gaps that hinder their effective implementation. These gaps included inadequate monitoring and evaluation, limited focus on smallholder farms, climate change adaptation, insufficient investment in research and development, and a lack of emphasis on nutrition.

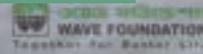
Food Security in South Asia faces a daunting challenge, demanding a concerted effort from policymakers, stakeholders, and communities alike

Right to Food and Social Protection in South Asia -A Policy Mapping Study and Gap Analysis

Discussion of the Panellists

abban, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Organizer:



Dr. Jagat Bahadur Basnet, a founding member of the Community of Self-Reliance Centre, Nepal, expressed concerns about policy-making processes that often neglect the needs of the cultivating class. He vehemently opposed the corporatization of agriculture, highlighting how policies tend to favour market systems and commercial companies, disadvantaging small-scale farmers. He emphasized the urgent need for land reform to counter the commodification of land and stressed the significance of community resistance to protect the interests of farmers.

Mohammad Khaled Hasan, Joint Secretary, Cabinet Division of the Government of Bangladesh, shared valuable insights into the government's proactive approach towards monitoring and policy formulation. He conveyed the government's commitment to utilize every inch of land for cultivation and reduce food wastage significantly. The incorporation of household surveys into policy-making showcased the government's dedication to inclusive policy design and allows excluded populations to voice their concerns and seek support.

Anowarul Haq, Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP Bangladesh, highlighted the challenges posed by rural-to-urban migration and the lack of robust urban social protection systems. He warned that while COVID-19 presented significant challenges, more complex issues may emerge in the future.

Balaram, an Ex. Food Security Advisor to the Supreme Court of India and Right to Food India, offered a comparative analysis of right to food and policy landscapes between India and Bangladesh. He emphasized the criticality of ensuring proper social protection for farmers to prevent youth migration to other occupations, which can increase vulnerability in the agricultural sector.

Policies should prioritize the well-being of cultivating communities

The government's commitment to monitor and formulate policies is commendable

Let us view social protection as an investment that yields not only economic benefits but also nurtures sustainable livelihoods for small farmers and vulnerable communities

Only by empowering the agricultural workforce can we stem the tide of youth migration and strengthen food security

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Aamanur Rahman, Director, CARE Bangladesh, highlighted the urgent need to address policy gaps and prioritize small farmers' welfare to ensure equitable access to food and essential social support. He also advocated to fostering a collaborative and informed approach to safeguarding the right to food and promoting social protection in the South Asian context.

Open Discussion

During the engaging technical session the audience actively participated, sharing their valuable insights and perspectives on the presentation and discussion. They highlighted the importance of inclusive policy-making, urging policymakers to actively involve marginalized communities and small farmers in the decision-making process. This session clarifies how social protection policies and food security are crucially intertwined in the South Asian region.



Effect of Food System in Nutrition Security

This session aimed to unravel the intricate relationship between the food systems and the broader landscape of nutrition security. It explored the multifaceted impact of food production, distribution, and consumption on the nutritional security of the people.

Keynote Speaker



Md. Mamunur Rashid, Head of Program at Welthungerhilfe Bangladesh, in his presentation titled "Effect of Food System in Nutrition Security," provided an in-depth look into the intricate nexus between the food systems and the component of nutrition security. He looked at the factors that have recently influenced the fundamental components of food systems and nutrition security. The ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic fluctuations like inflation, geopolitical tensions such as the Ukraine-Russia conflict, and the spectre of climate stresses emerged as formidable influencers that have reshaped the very foundations of food security. His suggestion to incorporate a range of foods and diets into the global food basket reverberated with pragmatism and promise, presenting a tangible path toward a more stable future with nutritional security.

Effect of Food System in Nutrition Security

26 July, 2023

Special Seminar Room, Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Discussion of the Panellists



Dr. Manzur E Khoda, a voice of authority in the field, took the stage to share his insights on the pivotal subject of 'Dhaka Food Agenda 2041' in relation to nutrition security. His spotlight fell on the often-overlooked aspect of consumer perspective and their tendency to bypass nutritious options in favour of less wholesome choices, particularly concerning the younger generation's inclination toward junk food.

Dr. Razu Ahmed, Deputy Secretary and Component Director of the Department of Agriculture Marketing in Bangladesh, seamlessly took the baton, unravelling the intricate threads of the food system. He illuminated the critical interplay between supply chains and consumer behaviour, two linchpins that determine the fate of nutritional security.

Jib Nath Sharma, Senior Manager, CARE Nepal, delved into the structural barriers that impede the realization of nutritious food goals. In particular, he shed light on the gender disparity in nutritional intake, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to empower women in this regard.

Bazle Mustafa Razee, Executive Director of FIVDB, highlighted that while production might be on an upward trajectory, the emphasis should shift to the actual sufficiency of food. Climate-resilient crop production took centre stage in his discourse.

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Acknowledging the significance of the discourse ahead, **Pankaj Kumar**, Country Director, Welthungerhilfe Bangladesh, provided a succinct yet insightful introduction to the central theme of the session – the intricate interplay between food systems and nutrition security. His words set the tone for a discussion that promised to unravel the dynamics shaping the accessibility, quality, and nutritional value of the food we consume.

Open Discussion

Participants focused on raising nutritional knowledge and comprehension through the use of social media, media involvement, and information exchange.



Transforming Agrifood System and its Governance for Realizing the Right to Food

The technical session delved into the critical intersection of government regulations and sustainable agroecological practices. The session spotlighted the challenges agroecological farmers face within stringent regulatory frameworks designed for conventional industrial agriculture.

Keynote Speaker



As a keynote speaker, **Dr. Mirella C Gavidia**, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA), presentation titled "Agroecological Practices and Government Regulations: A Case Study in Australia" drew light on the issues faced by agroecological farmers in the Australian context due to strict government rules. The case study revealed the significance of better collaboration between regulators and agroecological farmers, as well as appropriate legislation and support for agroecological farming. Farmers were not included in the top-down strategy, which undermined their trust. Farmers' poor communication led to instability and panic.

In the realm of agroecological systems, the intersection of government regulations and sustainable practices is vital for realizing the right to food

Discussion of the Panellists



Kiran Rupakhetee, *We must recognize the imperative for participatory engagement between regulators and agroecological farmers to effectively manage animal health crises.*

- Joint Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal

M. Badrul Alam, emphasized the importance of traditional agriculture, the need for transformative governance, and the critical role of smallholder farmers in dealing with the challenges posed by multinational corporations. *Small-scale farmers are the backbone of food security. Shifting from chemical-intensive to sustainable practices is essential for our agricultural future.*

- President, Bangladesh Krishok Federation.

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Professor Mahmudul Hasan, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, who served as the session's moderator and chair, expertly steered the discussion and bridged the gap between complex ideas and the local audience.

Open Discussion

The need to reconsider agricultural governance in order to promote inclusive and sustainable food systems was stressed by attendees. They focused on enhancing knowledge of agroecology, fostering participatory governance, supporting small-scale farmers, embracing holistic approaches to food security, and reforming regulatory frameworks to achieve equitable outcomes for both farmers and consumers.



Digitalization of Agriculture from the Perspective of Small-scale Food Producers

This session delves into the transformative impact of digital technologies on agriculture, particularly from the lens of small-scale food producers. It seeks to explore how digitalization has revolutionized agricultural practices, value chains, and market access for small farmers. By examining the opportunities and challenges arising from this digital transformation, the session aims to uncover strategies that empower small-scale food producers to harness the full potential of technology for sustainable and inclusive agricultural development.

Keynote Speaker



Professor Dr. Ranjan Saha Partha, Department of Anthropology at Jahangirnagar University. He outlined crucial ideas concerning social stratification, land ownership, and the growing rural economy using ethnographic evidence from his fieldwork in the Shibpur village of Tangail. It also highlighted how technology has sparked social change, causing modifications to the market economy and the development of rural markets' infrastructure. The paper underlined the need of empowering farmers with the knowledge and skills they require to interact with consumers directly and secure fair prices.

Through ethnographic research in rural communities, we unveil the complexities and potentials of technology-driven transformation for small-scale farmers. Emphasizing inclusive measures, we can empower farmers to thrive in an ever-evolving agricultural landscape

Discussion of the Panellists



Dr. Mirella C Gavidia, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) provided a comparative review of digitalization in agriculture using lessons learned from Australia and South Asian countries. She highlighted the importance of promoting more local markets and advocating "technological justice" to guarantee farmers' equitable access to digital technologies.

Promoting more local markets and ensuring technological justice are crucial steps in empowering small-scale food producers

Irish P. Baguilat, Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) highlighted the challenge faced by small-scale farmers in accessing and affording digital tools, particularly those innovations designed for more affluent countries.

Developing tailor-made digital solutions that consider the specific conditions and challenges faced by small-scale farmers is crucial for ensuring their successful adoption of technology

Sultan Ahmed Biswas, a farmer leader, underlined the importance of educating marginal farmers about emerging technology and keeping them engaged in agriculture.

A socialistic system is needed to counter discrimination and ensure equitable opportunities for all farmers



Chief Guest **Dr. F. H. Ansarey**, Managing Director and CEO of ACI Agribusiness categorized farmers into three groups based on their approach to technology adoption.

Our commitment to empowering farmers through digital initiatives reflects the belief in the transformative power of technology in agriculture.

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Md. Amirul Islam, Operations Manager for South and Central Asia of Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), expressed deep appreciation for the valuable contributions of all panellists. He emphasized the collective commitment to empowering small-scale food producers through digitalization, promoting equitable access, farmer-centric solutions, and a supportive policy framework.

Open Discussion

Participants during the event provided insightful comments that reflected the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in the agricultural sector. According to the participants, just a small percentage of farmers, roughly 1-2%, have the essential knowledge and skills to effectively use the internet in their agricultural practices. Furthermore, farmers are less interested in adopting modern machines and tools due to their lower durability.



Participation of Youth and Women in Agriculture Value chain

The seventh technical session of the conference focused on a pivotal topic, "Participation of youth and women in agriculture value chain." With a shared recognition of the vital roles that youth and women play in shaping the agricultural sector, this session delved into insightful discussions aimed at harnessing their potential and fostering inclusive growth within the agricultural value chain.

Keynote Speaker



Nasefa Ali, Deputy Executive Director of WAVE Foundation, delivered a presentation titled "Participation of Youth and Women in the Agriculture Value Chain." She spoke about the urgent concerns that have come to define the modern agricultural landscape. She focused on the intricate linkages between urbanization, climate change risks, market access constraints, and disconnected value chains, all of which have an impact on food production, processing, and distribution systems. Even in the face of these challenges, she argued, a pattern of hope has begun to emerge as a result of technical breakthroughs, the constant search for innovation, and ever-shifting preferences of customers .

Brief of JANO project



Mizanur Rahman, Ph.D., Senior Team Leader, Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome (JANO) project, CARE Bangladesh, gave his thoughts regarding nutrition work. He revealed the key initiatives of the JANO initiative, which is devoted to establishing a greater awareness of nutritional sustenance. He emphasized that the JANO project's footprint covers two districts, seven upazilas, and 64 unions, because of dynamic collaborations with various governmental agencies and organizations.



Discussion of the Panellists

Md. Humayun Kabir, Professor of Horticulture of Sher-E-Bangla Agricultural University, emphasized a fundamental principle – the imperative of maximizing utility at every step of the agriculture value chain. Youth, as he aptly noted, constitutes the vibrant pulse of this system, possessing the potential to reshape the very trajectory of crop production. *Strengthening the value chain isn't just about connecting links – it's about forging an unbreakable chain of progress that empowers both production and stability.*

Insights from Special Guest. **Ashik Billah**, reiterated the profound importance of women's integration into the value chain. His words carried a profound conviction, underlining the transformative potential that lies within tapping into the talents and energies of women at every stage of the agricultural journey.



Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Nurun Nahar, Country Director, Heifer International, the adept chair and moderator, in the symphony of voices we've heard today, we find the harmonious chords of youth, women, and knowledge intertwining to compose a narrative of transformation in our agricultural landscape. Let these stories inspire us to cultivate a future of empowerment and inclusion, where every thread contributes to the vibrant tapestry of progress.

Open Discussion

The young change makers as students from JANO's "Pusti Bagan" initiative shared their transformative experiences. They narrated the journey of planting their own garden, an endeavour sparked by the encouragement of the "Pusti Bagan" project. This session focused on shared recognition of the vital roles that youth and women play in shaping the agricultural sector particularly in agricultural value chain. It explored innovative strategies and practical approaches that can empower both youth and women to contribute meaningfully to sustainable agricultural development.



Family Farming in Climate Resilient Agrifood System

The session convened experts and practitioners from diverse fields to deliberate on strategies to enhance the resilience of family farming systems in the context of climate change. The keynote speaker emphasized the urgency of climate financing in supporting family farmers' adaptation efforts. The discussion highlighted the transitioning nature of agriculture, marked by a shift from subsistence to market-based systems, placing smallholder farmers at the forefront of challenges stemming from external crises.

Keynote Speaker



In the framework of family farming and agrifood systems, **Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan**, Manager, ActionAid Bangladesh, outlined the complex issues and potential solutions related to achieving climate resilience. He underlined food security risks, particularly in local populations and revealed the catastrophic effects of rising food costs for vulnerable populations. He emphasized the necessity of government backing, evidence-based policy formulation, and collaborative efforts among NGOs, academics, and local communities.

In the face of escalating climate challenges, our duty is clear – to fortify family farming, the bedrock of resilience and sustenance for our societies

Discussion of the Panellists



Jib Nath Sharma, Senior Manager of Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security, and Resilient Livelihoods at CARE Nepal, provided an insightful perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by family farmers in the context of climate resilience. *The transition in agriculture from subsistence to market-based systems is impacting both producers and consumers, magnifying challenges beyond their control. Climate financing must reach vulnerable family farmers to sustain the resilient farming system.*

Sazzad Hossain, Secretary of National Alliance, Jatiya Krishok Jot, stressed the dire consequences of climate change on farmers worldwide, particularly in Bangladesh. *Climate change disrupts the essence of family farming, but we can reclaim its essence. By prioritizing small farmers, revitalizing traditional practices, and fostering financial support, we can rejuvenate the heartbeat of our rural communities.*

Sasmita Jena, the Welthungerhilfe representative for India, illustrated how urban people primarily reliant on external food supply chains suffered vulnerabilities, while family farmers in rural areas proved resilience by feeding themselves and their communities. *In a changing world, family farming serves as a lifeline. As rural households shift and adapt, women's participation and climate-resilient practices become indispensable for securing local food systems.*

Dr. Md. Saidur Rahman, a prominent Professor from the Department of Agricultural Economics at Bangladesh Agricultural University, presented a thought-provoking perspective. He underlined the importance of crop diversification as a strategy to mitigate food insecurity. *Through strategic diversification, technological innovation, and empowering women, we can bridge gaps in our food system. Collaboration, both within our nation and beyond, will shape the landscape of sustainable agriculture.*

Dr. Sikandar Khan, SAAC, discussed how the preference for education over traditional agriculture is growing in the region. He noted challenges like distance to farmland and cultural restrictions for women. He suggested that promoting kitchen gardening within family farming could be transformative, leading to lower vegetable prices.

Anwar Farooq, former Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture highlighting pressing challenges in the agricultural landscape of Asia, particularly Bangladesh. He underscores the vulnerability of the region's food supply due to factors like rice export bans and rising wheat prices. He emphasizes that despite being among the largest producers of key crops, distribution inefficiencies prevent adequate nourishment.

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



Amit Ranjan Dey, Deputy Manager, ActionAid Bangladesh chair & moderator for this Technical Session-8 said served as a platform for dynamic discourse, emphasizing the centrality of family farming in achieving food security and addressing climate change impacts. The session's collective insights and recommendations will undoubtedly guide policies, initiatives, and actions aimed at bolstering the resilience of family farmers worldwide.

Open Discussion

The session convened experts and practitioners from diverse fields to deliberate on strategies to enhance the resilience of family farming systems in the context of climate change. They expressed their sorrow due to lack of recognition for the female farmers. They shared female farmers have to go through lots of unfriendly terms and conditions whenever they need a loan from banks and other financial institutions which is creating a barrier for them to move forward with their family farming projects. Farmers from Patuakhali, expressed his concern for the lacking of homogenous seeds in the market & the rise of hybrid seeds. They also suggested that in every local Bazar committee, a female member should be included. It would make the path way smoother for female farmers and sellers to move forward.





Future Trajectory of Agroecology in Agrifood System and its Governance

This plenary session addressed the evolving agroecological landscape and its significant implications on agrifood systems. It highlighted the critical role of governance in shaping the future agroecological narrative. It revealed the complex dimensions of agroecology's trajectory and governance in the agrifood domain.



Keynote Speakers



The first keynote paper, "Food Import Dependency and Future Trajectory of Agro-Food System," was presented by **Shahanuare Shaid Shahin**, Secretary General, Bangladesh Agriculture Journalist Forum, that included an in-depth analysis of Bangladesh's food security scenario. It also looked into the country's numerous producing sectors, including cereals, fish, and livestock. It emphasized that despite advances in production, self-sufficiency remains elusive.

The road ahead demands not just policies, but a transformative paradigm shift. Let us be catalysts of change, fostering a union between farmers and consumers, fortifying the vulnerable, and redefining the contours of food security.



Md. Shamsuzzaman, Emergency Coordinator, Christian Aid Bangladesh, delivered the second keynote paper, "Agroecology and Disaster Risk Reduction: A Pathway to Sustainable Agrifood Systems for Cox's Bazar District," which focused on the unique challenges faced by the Cox's Bazar district, with its distinct vulnerabilities, exacerbated by the influx of Rohingya refugees and the looming threat of climate change. The paper revealed the inadequate agricultural infrastructure and climatic challenges lead farmers to deal with a wide range of issues such as insufficient irrigation water, inconsistent electricity supply, and Illegal River dredging and unpredictable flash floods.

Discussion of the Panellists



Dr. Sikander Khan Tanveer, Senior Program Specialist (Crops) from the SAARC Agriculture Centre, focused on the intricate challenges that surround the realm of agroecology. He shed light on the reality that the embrace of agroecology has yet to achieve universal acceptance. The knowledge gap looms large, presenting a formidable barrier to its widespread adoption.



Abdul Hamid, PhD, Chairman, Agrarian Research Foundation (ARF) and Professor, Department of Agronomy, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agriculture University, championed the cause of joint farming and echoed the sentiment of implementing agro ecological policies as a strategic means to foster sustainable growth and resilience.



Reforming Subsidy Policies: A fundamental overhaul of existing subsidy policies is needed. Aligning subsidies with the needs and priorities of farmers can encourage sustainable practices, bolster productivity, and channel resources more effectively.

Sultan Ahmed Biswas, Convener, Progotiseel Krishok Sangram Parishad, Bangladesh

Sajneev Kumar Karn, Joint Secretary of Nepal's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, navigated the path toward achieving this vital goal, illuminating the multifaceted journey that lies ahead. Mr. Karn's perspective extended to Nepal's own challenges within the agrifood system.

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



As Chair and Moderator of the session, **Nuzhat Jabin**, Country Director, Christian Aid Bangladesh, emphasised the crucial need to bridge the gap between production and sufficiency, recognizing the underlying challenge faced not only by Bangladesh but also by countries dealing with import dependency. She emphasized on the significance of robust infrastructural development, adaptive market connections, and sustainable and resilient farming practices as the cornerstones for Cox's Bazar's journey toward food security and sustainability.

Open Discussion

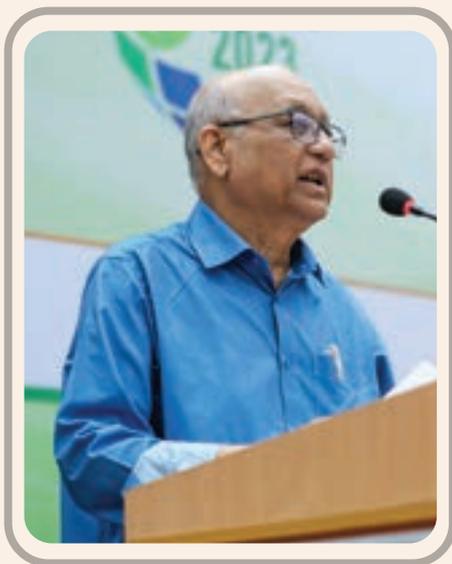
As we navigate the intricate terrain of shaping the future trajectory of agroecology within agrifood systems, it becomes imperative to translate insights into actionable recommendations that can propel us towards a more sustainable and resilient future. By working collectively to implement these strategies, we can chart a course that not only nourishes nations but also cultivates a future where sustainability, resilience, and prosperity converge.





Closing Ceremony

The APRAC 2023 conference ended with a declaration intended to persuade policymakers and the media to focus on the right to food and agrifood systems. The declaration was a reflection of the collective knowledge shared by the conference participants.



Mohsin Ali, the General Secretary of RtF Bangladesh and the Executive Director of WAVE Foundation announced the Declaration of the Conference with his brief closing remarks. He appreciated the role of participants representing different institutions and countries in Asia and the Pacific to make this two days conference productive and enlightening. He thanked the participants, distinguished guests joined in the conference actively both in person and online. He contends that the numerous functions of the agrifood system and the government's role in realizing the right to food are inevitably intertwined. He argued that family farming and agroecological methods play key roles addressing climate change as well as hunger and malnutrition. He anticipated future collaboration with participating organizations and individuals to promote agroecology, climate justice, small-scale family farming, and food sovereignty in order to realize everyone's right to food and nutrition in Asia and the Pacific while following to the principles of leaving no one behind.

Speech of Guests of Honour



Md. Ruhul Amin Talukder, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh, delivered a speech highlighting the government's commitment and various steps undertaken to achieve sustainable agricultural development under Articles 15 and 18 of the Constitution in ensuring food and nutrition security.



Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee, Joint Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal shared Nepal's agricultural and nutritional experiences and underlined the need for collaborative efforts in transforming Agrifood systems. He mentioned Nepal's focus on enhancing the use of inputs and technology and dealing with resource constraints.



Sasmita Jena, Country Representative, Welthungerhilfe, India, highlighted the necessity of reviewing food systems from both macro and micro perspectives, promoting the "think globally, act locally" approach. She proposed establishing a forum, similar to Africa's AFSA coalition, where governments might engage on regional food sovereignty and nutrition issues.



Dilip Bhandari, Senior Director of Programs at Heifer International, and One Health Asia Region underscored the mission of Heifer International and stressed the value of working together to create an equitable and sustainable food system that included climate-resilient agriculture and livestock farming.



Speech of Chief Guest



Chief Guest of the Closing Ceremony emphasised the country's advancements towards achieving food security. He cited the conference declaration as an important document that highlights the importance of a healthy diet and the effective use of existing resources. He emphasised the crucial role that smallholder farmers played, particularly during the challenging years of the COVID-19 outbreak, in ensuring food security.

Advocate Md. Qamrul Islam MP

**Chairman, Standing Committee on Ministry of Agriculture
Bangladesh National Parliament**

Speech of Special Guest



The special guest of the closing ceremony stressed the importance of leaders' actions and policies, which have resulted in a significant rise in food production compared to prior decades. He emphasised that the effort should go beyond just production and incorporate strong food safety standards.

Md. Ayeen Uddin MP

**Member, Standing Committee on Ministry of Food,
Bangladesh National Parliament**

Remarks of the Chair and Moderator



As the chair and moderator of this closing ceremony, **Farha Kabir**, Country Director, ActionAid Bangladesh, underscored the need of sharing the ideas and insights generated during the conference with decision-makers and a larger audience. She underlined the need of developing partnerships and forums for discourse and collaboration, as well as the crucial role of such events in promoting fruitful conversations among numerous stakeholders.

Conclusion



This two-day Asia Pacific Right to Food and Agrifood System Conference (APRAC) highlighted the way acute hunger and poverty are on the rise, and the right to food is being undermined across the Asia-Pacific region, in the midst of a spiral of issues threatening the corporate-led agrifood system. Furthermore, it demonstrated the growing and major barriers the world need to be overcome in addressing systematic impediments, climate change, and economic downturns in order to achieve SDG 2 by 2030. The conference made recommendations for promoting agroecology, climate justice, small-scale family farming, and food sovereignty to realize everyone's right to food and nutrition in accordance with the principles of leaving no one behind. These recommendations stemmed from a spiral of issues that included ecological and climate crises, supply chain disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine as well as persistent poverty, hunger, and inequality. Finally, this conference broadened the networking and solidarity space for Asia-Pacific-based movements, organizations, networks, and CSOs committed to achieving the right to food and transforming the agrifood system by promoting an equitable, resilient system for defending the rights of small-scale family farmers.

Declaration of the Conference



It's crucial to support climate resilient and agroecological approaches and defend family farmers in order to protect the small and marginal farmers;



Ensuring the legislation on the right to food for all in Bangladesh and other Asian and Pacific countries;



We want agricultural services and support (subsidy) that are justified to small and marginal farmers as well as for large farms;



We demand that the state take the initiative to strengthen people-centered agrifood systems in order to create sustainable and equitable systems, rather than corporate-led agrifood systems;



We call for ensuring right to food and nutrition for the most marginalized members of society after analyzing the social protection program;



We call for accessible, affordable community-based digital technology as well as platform in place to scaling up the digitization in agriculture;



We call for robust monitoring and assessment procedures in social protection programs to enhance accountability and transparency in the provision of services and to provide service receivers with a clear path toward graduation;



To strengthen multi stakeholderism, we highly advise forming partnerships with smallholder family farmers, fishermen, CSOs, farmers' organizations, youth, women, academia, researchers, and policymakers in order to raise the voice of small holders and other stakeholders;



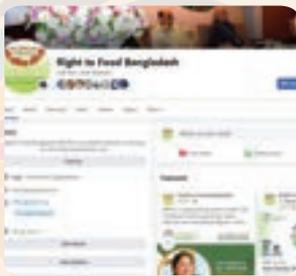
It is highly recommended to provide training to the small and marginal farmers on agroecological tools and techniques as well as digital literacy;



We call for a separate act and regulation for the farmers/ producers organization as a vehicle of operating a system to assure their participation in all stages of agriculture value chain and fair price of their products.



Photo Gallery







Organizer

খাদ্য অধিকার বাংলাদেশ
RIGHT TO FOOD BANGLADESH

Co-Organizer



Event Support Organizations

