

35thFAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Statement from Government of Nepal

Chairperson of 35thFAO regional Conference for Asia and Pacific,

Excellences,

Director General of FAO,

Assistant Director General of FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen

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Participating as head of the delegates in this 35th FAO regional conference for Asia and the Pacific, I have the honour to make a brief statement on agriculture and food security status, priorities collaboration and emerging issues of Nepal.

Agriculture sector is central to food security, livelihood, and employment and contribute around 27% of the country's GDP. This sector employs 66 % of its labor force that implies improvement in this sector will have broader effect on food security and poverty reduction. In Nepal, more than 80% of population resides in rural areas characterizing higher incidence of poverty, low labor productivity, hidden unemployment and food insecurity. Since last decade, remittance coming from foreign employment mainly of the Nepalese youth, has been major contributor to GDP, however, it is

now severely affected due to the impacts of Covid -19 pandemic forcing migrant youths returning home.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may be aware that Nepal has recently gone through political restructuring adopting three tier system of governance i.e. federal, provincial and local level governments. Among these, local level governments are on driving seat, made responsible for agriculture development programs, agriculture extension services delivery and ensuring constitutional rights of right to food and food sovereignty.

Nepalese agriculture sector is moving towards commercialization mode and competing with other sectors for labor and investment, however the speed of commercialization is slow. Rural connection with urban centers, digital world and high end consumers has opened new avenues for agriculture commercialization and diversification in the country.

However, this sector is facing numerous challenges such as high impact of climate change characterized by water scarcity, increasing frequency of adverse climatic events and outbreak of new insect, pest, diseases which have strong negative impact on small holder farming and livelihood. In addition to the above, the consequences of recent Covid -19 pandemic have hit the sector hard. Input and output supply chains and extension delivery system are completely disrupted which will have negative impact on food and nutrition security among rural and urban poor in days to come. Large numbers of youth migrants are returning home. Now the challenge is, how to engage them in agriculture sector and create opportunities for them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nepal has prioritized agriculture in different policies and programs with special focus on building resilience against climate change, food and nutrition security, robust pluralistic extension delivery system with digital technologies, and promotion of climate smart agriculture technologies, promotion of community storage, value addition facilities, cost of production and women's drudgery reduction technologies, increased value chain efficiency and e-marketing. In addition to these, increased agriculture production, rural employment and income through reconstitution of agriculture under post pandemic situation to maintain food security and absorb returnee youth including women are focused.

Implementation of all these priorities to achieve national goal of agriculture development and food security, a pluralistic institutional and support mechanism is envisaged. Integrated efforts, investment and intervention from all stakeholders are reliable pathways to this end. We need to reinvent integrated agriculture development approaches/strategies in context of digitalization, global connectivity to address the challenges posed by climate change and ongoing and unforeseen future pandemic situations.

A single agency cannot bear all resources, expertise and institutions required to address the gamut of challenges in agriculture development and harness emerging opportunities. Thus we need more coherent integrated and synergistic approaches/strategies and programs. In this regard we appreciate FAO' Director Generals' Hand in Hand (HiHi) initiative which has been already started and being

piloted, will be an important avenue in days ahead to address the challenges.

Chairperson,

Nepal being active member of FAO, has been receiving continuous technical support in the area of agriculture and rural development through policy and strategy development, technical assistance and advisory services in the implementation of various projects and programmes.

In future, we need more concentrated and collaborated efforts in the field of building resilience against climate change, establishment of robust, pluralistic extension system at newly established local levels of current governance system, food and nutrition security and food safety, post harvest loss reduction, hill farming and women farmer friendly mechanization technologies, achievement of sustainable development goals and zero hunger challenges and invention for future farmers. Similarly, networking of public, private and community institutions will help to share knowledge, innovation and experiences to cope with new emerging challenges in agri and food systems in Asia Pacific region.

Chairperson,

I would like to conclude that Nepal is focusing on strategies and approaches to ensure the food and nutrition security rights of citizens, build resilience against shocks and vulnerabilities at national and local level, sustainable commercialization of agriculture through national efforts as well as regional and international cooperation. Towards

this, we fully support the agenda set forth by the 35th Regional conference directed towards addressing the above issues.

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, before I end, allow me to express on behalf of the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, a very successful Conference.

Thank You for your kind attention!