

**SPEECH OF HON'BLE AGRICULTURE MINISTER AT THE 35TH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR ASIA AND PACIFIC ON 3RD SEPTEMBER 2020 THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCE.**

1. Your Excellency, Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director General of FAO, Chairperson of FAO Council, Hon'ble Ministers from other Asian and Pacific countries, Heads of various international organizations, ladies and gentlemen

2. I bring to you all warm greetings from the people of India. My thanks to Royal Government of Bhutan and FAO for convening this important meeting of Agriculture Ministers of the Asia Pacific region to deliberate on various challenges facing agriculture sector, addressing national and regional needs in the face of the current unprecedented pandemic compounded by climate change, and consequent challenges of maintaining supply chains of safe nutritious food. This meeting gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our resolve to continue to work together to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger together with ensuring livelihoods for the farmers and assisting supply chains across borders. Our Prime Minister has been spearheading assistance to other countries in this time of need and I can assure you that agriculture sector will not falter in any way.

3. The current crisis presented many challenges to us as it did to the world. But I am extremely proud to share that we in India, with supportive policies and determination of all stakeholders completed all farming and related activities as per our seasonal requirements, of course with strict adherence to SOPs of health protocols and social distancing. The progressive agriculture marketing reforms and IT enabled processes initiated were taken up in right earnest by the States, since the first priority was to decongest wholesale markets. Our main focus has been to empower our small farmers through a cluster approach, harness their joint potential and bring to their door step appropriate infrastructure so as to transform Indian agriculture into an enterprise.

4. We recognize our responsibility in a closely connected global space. A flexible approach has been adopted for facilitating imports from other countries – digital copies of phytosanitary certificates are being accepted. Consistent with the needs of our citizens, we reaffirm to

contribute to our shared efforts to ensure food security for all. India took care not to disturb the world food supply chain and continued to export agri commodities as earlier.

5. The Asia Pacific region contributes immensely to the fisheries resources in the world. The interest of small scale fisheries farmers within the context of future of fisheries roadmap has to be protected for food security and poverty reduction.

6. I would also like to highlight that Asia Pacific Region has been affected by trans boundary pests like locusts and Fall Army Worm. India took up timely control operations on a massive scale, helping and offering help to other affected countries too, due to which a potential calamity was averted in the country. We are the first country to use drones for spraying pesticides for control of locusts after finalizing the required protocols. India is willing to share her experiences and work with FAO to assist other countries in the event of a recurrence of such attacks.

7. I further urge FAO to find innovative solutions, evidence based analysis and partnership to develop multi sectoral solutions to the challenges of water scarcity, climate change, hunger and nutrition.

8. “Neighbours First” is a policy of our Govt and I take this opportunity to reaffirm that agriculture sector will live up to the aspirations of the region. We will collaborate in exchange of best practices in R&D and programmatic interventions to step up production and productivity of agri produce, with sustainable use of natural resources and develop robust agri value chains for the benefit of the people of our countries.

Thank you and Jai Hind