

A smiling woman wearing a pink headscarf and a pink sweater is holding two green corn cobs in her hands. She has a red tilak on her forehead. The background is blurred, showing other people and greenery.

Theme:

Smallholder and Climate Change

Hotel Greenwich, Kathmandu, Nepal
February 22, 2019

Caritas | **safobin**
For Small Farmers Future

South Asia Smallholder Policy Dialogue

Mainstreaming smallholder policies and practices

South Asia

Smallholder Policy Dialogue

Smallholder Farmers (SHF) are big in numbers, largest targetable group among the poor and farmers, majority of the food producers, with evidences of doing it more efficiently and with less ecological footprints. They are also arguably the most resilient and best adapters to climate change while being the finest conservers of agro-biodiversity and effective seed-savers. Their food production systems are relatively more sustainable, producing majority of local, bio-diverse and nutritious foods.

However, they have **poor access to land and water resources with highly insecure land tenure**. They operate in geographies usually more vulnerable to climate change with limited access to extension services and other public service entitlements. Public and private sector research priorities and technology development often miss out integrating and prioritizing small-farm needs and problems. In the present economy, their **access to and competitiveness in the agri-input and output market is highly curtailed**. While, they are almost excluded from formal credit and financial services as well as public price support systems, their isolation is also evident around value addition opportunities for their scattered, diverse and small surpluses, with the focus on economy of scale. **They also continue to face the maximum disaster risks and are the worst sufferers in the ongoing farm distress and agrarian crisis, figuring in the most of unfortunate suicides in India.**

Policy attention towards (small) farmers has been mostly reactive and is largely focused on technologies, subsidies, loan-waivers, to some extent on their collectivization. Of late there is an impetus on supporting their traditional farming, sustainable agriculture and also promotion of small-farm crops like millets, tubers etc.

As the policy and development priorities shift more towards urbanization and service sectors with an increasing intent to using land and labour for maximum economic return, **small farmers are fast expelling out of rural farming systems.**

However, **South Asia has the largest number of smallest farms in the world** as a result of myriad of demographic, geographic, historical and economic factors. **Present situation compels to work towards small-farmer sensitive, proactive and inclusive policy regime can improve the status of small farmers and economically-sustain these ecologically, socially and culturally important food-production systems.**

SAFBN envisions centre-staging smallholder farmers, small farming and small-farm-agrifood in the mainstream discourses, policies, research and actions around FNS, sustainable livelihoods and marketing and consumption of agriculture products. Along with enabling small-farmer-led local actions and meso-level research, extension market partnerships, it seeks to also engage at macro and regional level policy environment and stakeholders through a comprehensive approach. **Such multi-level and multi-stakeholder engagements are critical to mainstream SHF agenda to achieve relevant SDGs (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 12).**

South Asia Small Farmer Policy Dialogue will be a series of stakeholder dialogues organized with national and regional experts and leaders around farming research, extension and market in these four implementing countries involved at interfaces of policy and practice. The deliberations would be around SAFBIN outcomes areas including nutrition, climate change, sovereignty, resilience, land tenure, market, partnerships etc.

Goal	Smallholder agenda is mainstreamed in the policies and regional cooperation mechanisms in South Asia
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build a collective appreciation on the vulnerabilities, potentials and need of engagements with smallholders ● Identify opportunities for mainstreaming smallholder agenda in regional and national policies ● Influence the policy discourse with right evidence and knowledge on small farming and perspectives of small farmers
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organise a series of national and regional level policy dialogues around smallholder farmers ● Build a collective of stakeholders working on and cooperating on promoting smallholder agenda ● Publish and disseminates small farmers policy briefs

Smallholder and Climate Change

South Asia is a land of smallholder farmers and climate change has an evident impact on smallholder farming systems in the region. Climate change is manifested in small farms in the form of phenological changes, disease pest incidences, yield and at times crop failures. It has also influenced, along with the market, the cropping patterns, varietal choice, input and labour investments, gender balance in farming, among other things.

The region has faced climate extremes in the recent years, which has caused major damage to the farm environment, resource base, cropping system efficiency and socio-economic condition of the SHF. **Variations in temperature and precipitation is likely to have a big impact on agricultural production, as 70% of food production in South Asia is linked to monsoon rains.** Per capita water availability also has declined by 70% in the region since 1950. With demand for water growing faster for different competitive activities, current water-intensive agricultural practices (viz. paddy cultivation) are unlikely to be sustainable in the long run. With these effects, a **15-30% decline in productivity of rice, wheat, and cereal varieties across South Asia is expected.**

Climate change will have significant effects on nutrition and nutritional quality of foods. Increasing

exposure to **disaster like floods also will affect malnutrition.** With more adaptive crops like millets or pulses side-lined, local agro-biodiversity with traditional varieties almost vanished and indigenous coping mechanisms weakened, **smallholder farmers will be highly vulnerable to climate change contexts.**

While climate change increases vulnerability of already vulnerable small farmers disproportionately, **they remain also the best adapters to climate change.** Ironically, in the climate justice angle, these affected net-handprint communities, also are resilient enough, to further stretch themselves with **local innovations to demonstrate innovative adaptation mechanism.** From flood plains in Bangladesh to the Nepal mid-hills, where SAFBIN works, we find and literatures report, such ingenious adaptation skills ranging from climate prediction, crop/varietal adjustment through local agro-biodiversity, natural resources management adjustments to local technology and collective actions.

SAFBIN, while engaging with small farmers and planning the policy dialogue series, sees a strong merit in organising the first event with this theme to **reiterate and invite attention of policy makers, researchers, practitioners and donors to this unique aspects of small farming:** its weakness around vulnerability and its strength around its adaptation, more so in South Asian context.

While, inadequate policy instruments at the national and regional levels have sidelined smallholder communities from mainstream development, **the climate change dimension also provides opportunity to mainstream their concern with increasing attention, allocation and SHF potential in the context of Nationally Determined Contributions.**

This policy dialogue, by bringing together the key policy makers and stakeholders in the region, seek to underline this connection, analyse the regional and global farming and climate change policies through smallholder lens and attempt to trigger a dialogue towards smallholder farmers inclusive and sensitive policy pathways at regional and national levels

The major areas of discussion would be:

- Vulnerability contexts and Adaptation potentials of SHF in South Asia in the context of Climate Change
- Relevant policies around farming and climate change in South Asia and how they integrate SHF concerns
- Evidence of good practices and critical policy gaps
- Potential areas of improvements in existing / new polies to mainstream the smallholder agenda
- Pathways for integrating SHF concerns in the policy arena: Low hanging fruits and long term engagements



Caritas Nepal

Caritas Nepal, is part of the global confederation of Caritas Internationalis was founded in 1990. It operates in 50 of the 75 districts in Nepal with an aim to empower the poor, women, marginalised, and disadvantaged people to reduce poverty, secure humanitarian assistance to refugees and in times of emergency and conflict, and realise social justice and peace. One of the main intervention areas of Caritas Nepal is to promote sustainable agriculture to enable small farmer households to realise food security and sustainable livelihoods, as about two thirds of the population in Nepal depends on agriculture for livelihood. Caritas Nepal has been supporting small farmers and economically poor to have options for sustainable livelihoods through agriculture development and micro-credit management across the country. The organisation has made remarkable contribution in the field of agriculture especially for small farmers in Nepal.

SAFBIN

SAFBIN is an action research programme from Caritas organisations of Caritas India, Caritas Bangladesh, Caritas Nepal and Caritas Pakistan with the support of Caritas Austria and Caritas Switzerland that came together to address the issues of climate change and food security of smallholder farmers in South Asia. The programme aims to achieve SDG 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture in South Asia".


SAFBIN follows a multi-stakeholder partnership approach from community level to the regional level where various stakeholders of the smallholders are brought together to generate a favourable knowledge system and policy environment. Such partnerships provide platforms for cross learning and collective initiatives to influence the policy in favour of smallholder farmers. It also helps in avoiding duplicacy of efforts and act complimentary to the national development goals of the countries and the region.

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