



South Asia

Smallholder Policy Dialogue

Mainstreaming smallholder policies and practices



Theme:
Land Policy Reforms
to Double Small Farmers
Income and achieve SDG

India International Centre, New Delhi
March 13, 2019 | 14:00 – 15:30 hrs

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 cultivating 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 unsecure 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 use 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. This can improve the status of small farmers and economically-sustain these ecologically, socially and culturally important food-production systems.

SAFBIN envisions centre-staging smallholder farmers, small farming and small-farm-agrifood in the mainstream discourse, policies, research and action around food and nutritional security, 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 Smallholder Policy Dialogue will be a series of stakeholder dialogues organized with national, 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 outcome areas including nutrition, climate change, sovereignty, resilience, land tenure, market, partnerships, sustainability 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 |

Land Policy Reforms to Double Small Farmers Income and achieve SDG

South Asia is known as the land of smallholder farmers. The definition of smallholder farmers itself underline the characteristics of their possession of small land holdings. The fact that this 'possession' and 'holdings' connotes different policy and practice interpretations of land tenure in different socio-cultural and legal landscapes, engagements with small farmers is never complete without understanding and addressing their tenure security. However, in policy and practice, there has been limited attention and actions on this key structural dimension of small farming.

Constrained access to productive land remains one of the most challenging vulnerabilities of small farmers in South Asia. Most of the SHFs are concealed sharecroppers and tenants, with unrecorded rights. In South Asia, tenancy is on rise. In Bangladesh 57% of farmers are tenants and 13% of rural households are landless. In India, 6.5% land is under tenancy with 11.5% of rural households leasing in land and another 10% landless. While tenancy also is often under-reported, these numbers reflects inherent and inevitable dimensions of South Asia small farming that must be factored in the policy discourses, appropriately.

Lack of formal contracts disincentivise tenants to invest in farmland resilience. Most of the farmers' committing suicides in India are tenant farmers. They also remain outside public service entitlements, relief and insurance safety nets as well as out of purview of election-freebies like loan-waivers. Tenancy, under the existing legal

framework substantially reduces access to formal credit, insurance, market, access to minimum support-prices and subsidies.

Fortunately for small farmers, most of whom are also de-facto women, two of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators clearly advocates their land tenure security:

Indicator 1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure

Indicator 5.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

Post-independence, South Asian countries, have reformed land policies aligning with welfare intention of democratic state, equality provisions in the constitutions as well as the prescriptions in international conventions to improve agriculture production. However, South Asia continue to have a significant numbers of small farmers, including women who remain tenure insecure; this number is threatening to grow with fast land-use changes and agricultural shifts, unfavourable to them in the neoliberal policy regime.

SAFBIN, while engaging with small farmers and planning policy dialogue series, sees a compelling need in organising the second event of the series around land tenure reform. ILDC2019, provides an excellent convergence platform to jointly organize this event in partnership with Caritas India, ICRISAT and Centre for Agricultural Policy. This Policy Dialogue seeks to reiterate the land tenure dimensions of small farming in the context of South Asian Policy Landscape and engage with policy makers, researchers, practitioners and donors on the need, challenges and options to mainstream smallholder agenda.

The major areas of discussion would be:

- Why securing tenure is critical for Smallholder Farmers in South Asia?
- Land policy reforms in South Asia and how they integrate Smallholder concerns
- Whether tenure matters in the pre-election declaration of farm-schemes (viz. PM-Kishan, KALIA etc.) in India? Can their impact be more targeted and improved with tenure- integration?
- Potential areas of improvements in existing / new policies to mainstream the smallholder agenda
- Pathways for integrating SHF concerns: Low hanging fruits and long-term engagements



Caritas India

Founded in 1962, Caritas India is a member of Caritas confederation of more than 160-member organizations working in nearly 200 countries, making it the second largest humanitarian network in the world. With its pan India presence, Caritas India is working in the areas of livelihood security, climate change adaptation through natural resource management and sustainable agricultural practices, disaster risk reduction and emergency response, good governance through political participation, anti-human trafficking, peace-building and health care.

Smallholder Adaptive Farming & Biodiversity Network (SAFBIN)

SAFBIN is a regional action research programme from Caritas organisations of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan with the support of Caritas Austria and Caritas Switzerland to support 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". It 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

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)

ICRISAT is a non-profit, non-political organization that conducts agricultural research for development in the drylands of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Covering 6.5 million square kilometers of land in 55 countries, the semi-arid or dryland tropics has over 2 billion people, and 644 million of these are the poorest of the poor. ICRISAT and its partners help empower these poor people to overcome poverty, hunger and a degraded environment through better agriculture.

Centre for Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The Centre for Agricultural Policy Dialogue (CAP), New Delhi, is a think tank actively engaged in research and policy dialogue on issues related to agricultural development. The key findings/ recommendations are shared with the central and state governments and other stakeholders.


Contact Us

Caritas India
CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place, New Delhi 110001
M: +91-9546974478
pradipta@caritas.org

South Asia Regional Enablers
Smallholder Adaptive Farming & Biodiversity Network (SAFBIN)
M: +91 9958534848
safbin.caritas@gmail.com

 www.safbin.org

 [Safbin-Caritas](https://www.facebook.com/Safbin-Caritas)

 [@safbin_caritas](https://twitter.com/safbin_caritas)

Co-Organisers

Caritas
Austria

CARITAS
Schweiz
Suisse
Svizzera
Svizra

Caritas
ASIA



Caritas
INDIA
The Joy of Service...



Caritas
SOUTH ASIA

ICRISAT
INTERNATIONAL CROPS RESEARCH
INSTITUTE FOR THE SEMI-ARID TROPICS

NRMC

