



# দক্ষিণ এশিয়া খাদ্য অধিকার সম্মেলন ২০১৫

## South Asia Right to Food Conference 2015

Dhaka, Bangladesh

### **DHAKA DECLARATION**

**30th May - 1st June 2015 | Dhaka, Bangladesh**

The first South Asia Right to Food Conference was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on May 30-June 01, 2015. More than 2000 Activists, Citizens, Civil Society representatives, NGOs, Academia, Bilateral and Multilateral development partners, Researcher, Policy makers, Law makers, Trade unionist, Political society, Youth, Peasant's organizations, Rural and urban poor, Small holders, Farmers, Women organizations and indigenous people and their organizations from across South Asian countries and beyond participated in the conference. Participants from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar and Bhutan putted their conscientious efforts to conceptualize the meaning and standard of Right to Food vis a vis other tenets of human rights, had widespread and threadbare discussions about different challenges and opportunities towards establishing a legal framework and its proper implementation. The deliberations spanned across twenty one sessions including opening and closing sessions, four plenary sessions, two special sessions and thirteen parallel sessions.

The delegates of the Conference envisioned various aspects of sustainable development and right to food, nutritional security and food sovereignty for this region at the soonest possible. Sustainable investments and development based on self-reliance and people's sovereignty leading to sustainable livelihood, decent quality of life, respect for culture and practices and just lasting peace and emancipation are the foundation of peoples' level development framework. The conference observed and expressed deep concern on the fact that people of South Asia, especially small producers suffer intersectional violations based on their gender, class, caste, ethnicity and religion and they face worsened situation due to neo liberal atrocities.

South Asia is one of the most food vulnerable areas in the world. The conference opined that in this region farming must be based on the livelihood needs of small and marginalized producers including fisher folk, peasants, women, indigenous people, pastoralists and agricultural workers. All production engagement must lead to safe, nutritious, culturally and socially acceptable food production rooted in biodiversity-based agriculture systems. It was emphasized that the rights of communities over locally grown nutritious food and natural potable water for people must be central to the practices. The ideas of right to food and food sovereignty can never accept land tenure for grabbing and bio-devastating corporate investments in agriculture. The conference concluded that agriculture and food systems in the South Asian Region must respond to the above crises.

Corporate investment in agriculture led to land grabbing as well as control over water bodies and forest. In addition, it is a certain conduit to hazardous technologies such as genetically modified seeds and other bio-technologies detrimental to genetic resources. In South Asia, these policies and processes have been affecting the livelihoods of small producers, poisoning land and other natural resources and ultimately pushing communities towards debt, misery which consequently leads to displacement or forced migration and suicides of the hapless.

Discussions at the Conference also included the SAARC Food Bank and Seed Bank. It was clarified that the stock building must work to provide the people easy access to supplies at times of emergencies and this being a sovereign people's right to get the food supply from the existing market. It should be unimpeded and no artificial crises resulting from hoarding or such other manipulations can overtake it. The nation must produce enough to provide adequate coverage of right to food and food sovereignty for all its people. Any large scale import of food grains

meaning import dependence can't promote right to food and sovereignty. The participants emphasized that the paradigm of negotiation amongst the stakeholders has to be based on right to food, nutritional security and food sovereignty ensuring access and control over natural and productive resources including markets in the hands of small and marginalized producers. Regional agricultural and food production discussions were held aligned with the context. The Conference stressed that food systems of production and distribution must contribute to peace and security and those cannot become the reasons for conflict and animosity in the region.

The delegates of the South Asian Right to Food Conference emphatically declared in unison the following position and conscious vision for future South Asia ensuring Right to Adequate Food, Nutritional Security and Food Sovereignty for attaining a poverty and hunger free South Asia:

1. A South Asian canopy network on 'Right to food and nutrition' comprising civil society, NGOs, social movements, academia, researchers, policy makers, law makers, trade unionists, political society, youth, peasants' organization, urban poor, small holders, farmers, women organizations and indigenous people and their organizations across South Asian countries and all relevant participants will have to be developed . The Conference reassures that as a consequential platform it will work together to establish and turn into reality the right to adequate food, nutritional security and food sovereignty in the South Asia region.
2. We reassert in this conference that will be steadfast and dedicated to be the part of the relentless struggle of the millions of people against the deprivation of food and multifaceted poverty existing in the South Asia region.
3. We will work together to develop a regime of legal framework and regulatory provisions for ensuring the food and nutritional rights of the people of the region considering the demographic, ethnic and locational marginality and vulnerability.
4. We will facilitate and act together with all social movements and learn from existing experience in the region to ensure provisioning of legal framework and proper implementation of right to adequate food and nutritional security.
5. We will take stand to ensure elimination of all sorts of violation, discrimination and oppression against smallholder producers of this region based on their gender, class, caste, ethnicity and religion and other grounds.
6. We urge that any investments in agriculture must be based on the livelihood needs of small and marginalized producers and will also complement the provision of safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable food production in a sustainable development environment which follows the biodiversity based, agro-ecology community based climate resilience.
7. We are against the aggressive commodification of agriculture and extortion of resources in the context of imperialist neo liberal discourses and regime where transnational governmentality has been used as a tool providing safe guard the interests of the corporate sector than the marginalized small producers.
8. We commit to hold the relevant national governments, policy makers, political societies and pertinent stakeholders accountable to adapt appropriate measures for right to food, agriculture and food systems in the South Asian region which must respond to the crises and nutritional security issue and relevant policy reforms at national level.
9. We demand for ensuring participation of poor rural and urban communities, farmers group & their networks, indigenous people, fisher folks, people with disabilities, elderly, children and women in different dialogues and decision making processes in the formulation of regulatory framework and legal provision for ensuring the food and nutritional rights of the people of the region
10. We urge the regional and global leaders and actors to act on their promises and foster regional cooperation to ensure right to food and nutritional security at all the times including in situation of natural disasters.
11. We demand for promoting social protection systems considering rights of poor communities, regional special poverty zones, indigenous people, and people with disabilities, elderly, children and women.

12. We emphasize that the right of communities over naturally potable water in any process and urge to address water as common regional resources as part of water democracy and riparian rights linked to right to food.
13. We commit to support and facilitate the farmers led participatory process to establish seed banks for preserving agrological bio-diversity, and support farmers with free flow of seeds across the region in farmers' necessity.
14. We seek renewed commitment from SAARC leaders and relevant stakeholders to set a realistic mechanism for food banks. They are promise-bound to facilitate a farmers led participatory process to enable food banks for free flow of foods to the people in this region in any emergencies consonant with right to food and sovereignty.
15. We demand for the formulation and implementation of agrarian reform in a participatory and transparent manner considering the national food security realities'. We reassert a people-centered, rights-based land and agrarian reform in regional countries with policy inevitabilities' that will ensure tenure security and uphold the rights of citizens and people as well as recognize them as equal partners of development.
16. The Conference delegates assert that trade agreements such as those of the World Trade Organization and other 'free' trade and investment treaties at the bilateral or regional level should not be allowed to undermine people's food sovereignty.