

SRI LANKA NATIONAL AGRICULTURE POLICY

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1. Introduction

The agricultural sector is the cornerstone in Sri Lanka's economy with more than 70% of the population living in rural areas depending on agriculture for their livelihoods. Currently this sector contributes to about 18% of the GDP and 30% of the employment. The agricultural productivity has remained relatively stable, except for rice which has reached near self-sufficiency in the recent years. This explains at least in part why poverty is proving to be recalcitrant at levels of 25-30% of the population, with large majority of the poor living in the rural areas. The low productivity of the agricultural sector also contributes to 23% of household incomes as against 60% by non farm activities. The agricultural sector was also not geared to absorb the rural unemployed compared to the other sectors of the economy. It is necessary to reverse this trend and improve the agricultural sector to meet the aspirations of the people, particularly that of the farming community. Therefore, the importance attached to the agricultural sector development by the government is to meet these formidable challenges by accelerating its growth in order to bring about socio-economic prosperity to the people of this country.

The agricultural sector will continue to play an important role in the application of strategies targeted towards a planned socio-economic development of the country. Rapid growth of the agricultural sector, particularly the domestic food production, floriculture and export crop sectors is essential to achieve self reliance at national level, ensure food security and to bring about equity in the distribution of income and wealth for alleviating of poverty.

This document presents the National Agricultural Policy Statements for the Food, Floriculture and Export Agricultural Crop sectors, with the aim of solving many problems and facilitating their rapid growth. The objectives stipulated in the policies therein have been designed to meet the basic needs of the farming community in terms of food and nutrition security, enhanced employment opportunities and incomes, through the adoption of technically feasible, socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally friendly agricultural production technologies, marketing and related strategies.

National policies relating to other sectors of agriculture, plantations, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and land use have been formulated by the concerned ministries.

Goals and Objectives

- 1) Increase domestic agricultural production to ensure food and nutrition security of the nation.
- 2) Enhance agricultural productivity and ensure sustainable growth.
- 3) Maximize benefits and minimize adverse effects of globalization on domestic and export agriculture.
- 4) Adopt productive farming systems and improved agro-technologies with a view to reduce the unit cost of production and increase profits.
- 5) Adoption of technologies in farming that are environmentally friendly and harmless to health.
- 6) Promote agro-based industries and increase employment opportunities.
- 7) Enhance the income and the living standard of farming community.

Policy Statements

1. Promoting Agricultural Production

Implement technically sound, economically viable, environmental friendly and socially acceptable programmes to promote sustainable agricultural development with efficient and effective utilization of resources.

Increase local food supply, employment opportunities, and agricultural exports by emphasizing on cultivation of rice and other field crops, horticultural and floricultural crops, roots and tuberous crops, export agricultural crops, herbal crops, other underutilized crops and bee-keeping as well as supplementary food crops such as sugar cane, cashew and coconut.

Increase productivity of water and land by enhancing crop production through the application of sustainable cultivation practices.

Promote good agricultural practices such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Integrated Plant Nutrition Management (IPNM), for sustainable agricultural development.

Promoting income generation from integrated agriculture through livestock and aquaculture etc.

Formulation of production plans that will cater to the market needs and nutritional requirements.

Cultivation of crops based on agro-climatic conditions and promoting agro-based industries.

Introduce improved and modern technologies to the village whenever and wherever possible.

2. Seeds and Planting Materials

Produce and supply high quality seeds and planting materials of commercial varieties in a competitive environment with participation of the state and private sector.

Maintain seed security by having buffer stocks of certified seeds of recommended varieties.

Strict enforcement of governmental certification and quarantine regulations with regard to seeds and planting materials.

Enact laws to ensure that the seeds and planting materials available in the market are of good quality.

Discourage the importation of crop varieties having terminator gene.

3. Fertilizers

Promote production and utilization of organic and bio-fertilizers and gradually reduce the use of chemical fertilizers through Integrated Plant Nutrition Systems (IPNS).

Ensure timely availability of chemical fertilizers in sufficient quantities, while providing soil and plant testing facilities for their rational use through site-specific fertilizer application.

Promote application of straight fertilizers.

Promote manufacturing fertilizers using locally available raw materials.

Taking appropriate actions to prevent the misuse of fertilizer subsidy.

4. Pesticides

Minimize the use of synthetic pesticides through promoting bio-pesticides and Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Provide adequate institutional and infra-structural facilities to operate pesticide regulatory system effectively in conformity with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) international code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides in order to minimize associated health and environmental risks.

Promote the production and use of environmental friendly bio-pesticides with public and private sector participation.

Strictly adhere to plant protection regulations to prevent alien weeds, insect pests and diseases from entering the country.

Strict implementation of testing and inspection regulations when importing chemicals related to pesticides.

5. Agricultural Machinery

Encourage the public and private sectors as well as the universities to develop and manufacture agricultural machinery, with appropriate technology suitable to the agricultural sector.

Promote mechanization to make agriculture more efficient and cost effective.

Encourage the state and private sectors to supply modern, low-cost, high quality machinery with improved technology in order to sustain agriculture in a profitable manner.

6. Irrigation and Water Management

Encourage the use of efficient water management and moisture retention techniques to achieve high productivity in agriculture.

Conserve the existing water resources for sustainable agricultural development.

Improve efficiency of rain-fed agriculture through water harvesting, mulching and other appropriate techniques.

Promote participatory irrigation management in maintaining and improving irrigation and drainage systems.

Safeguard irrigation reservoirs, canals, drainage systems and other structures from damage by natural calamities and usage.

Prevent pollution of water from agriculture and industries.

Promote conservation of rain water and ground water.

Increasing the water-use efficiency and promote modern and intensive irrigation technologies for water conservation.

7. Land Use

Adhere to the National Land Use Policy in allocating land for cultivation purposes.

Promote maximum use of degraded, barren and infertile lands as well as lands under shifting cultivation (Chena) to ensure higher productivity and idle lands to be used for crop/forest cultivation and animal husbandry.

Ensure joint action among state institutions dealing with agriculture and lands.

Promote land conservation within watershed areas.

Compulsion to obtain a permit for land use.

Promote mixed cropping and inter-cropping to ensure efficient use of land.

8. Soil Conservation

Enforce implementation of the provisions of the Soil Conservation Act to ensure proper soil conservation.

Create awareness among the farming communities on the importance of soil conservation for sustainable agricultural development.

9. Agricultural Credit

Strengthen rural credit institutions connected with farmers' investments, savings and risk management.

Introduce simple procedures in providing loan facilities for agricultural activities and agro-based industries.

Ensure availability of credit to farmers at concessionary interest rates.

Establish a mandatory share for agricultural credit in the state bank's overall lending for the benefit of the farming communities.

Utilize *Govi Setha* Fund effectively for the agricultural credit process.

10. Agricultural Insurance

Introduce appropriate agricultural insurance schemes to protect the farmers from the risks associated with natural calamities.

11. Agricultural Research

Focus agricultural research and development on livelihood improvement and poverty alleviation, achieving food security, enhancing agro-based industries and preparing the agricultural sector to face global challenges.

Use cutting edge technologies such as Bio-technology, Geographical Information System (GIS) technology, pre and post-harvest technology, nanotechnology for efficient agricultural production and environmental conservation.

Promote problem solving collaborative research with the involvement of the private sector, universities, farmers and producer's organizations and other relevant partners.

Promote investment by the private sector in agricultural research and development.

Formulate strategies for quick dissemination of research outputs to end users and avoid technology lag.

Establishment of a Continuing Research Process to monitor the effects and impacts from agricultural activities on environment and health.

Establishment of crop breeding program that will consider factors such as social needs and labor shortage.

12. Agricultural Extension and Education

Reorganize and strengthen existing extension system to disseminate innovation and information to the farming community.

Introduce modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) for effective information dissemination to the farming community.

Ensure active participation of farmers and other community based organizations as partners in the dissemination and use of updated technologies through an effective research and extension linkage.

Redesign and modernize the curricula and courses in the Schools of Agriculture and other agriculture-related training institutes to meet the current and future demands of the agricultural sector.

Provide opportunities for agricultural scientists and farmers for skill development through local training and foreign training.

13. Post Harvest Technology

Develop and popularize better harvesting, processing, value addition, storage and transport methods to minimize pre and post-harvest losses to improve quality to meet domestic and export market demands.

Enforce sanitary and phytosanitary measures in post-harvest processing and value addition of agricultural products.

Provide incentives for using modernized crop processing mills and other processing machinery.

14. Marketing

Minimize problems associated with marketing of agricultural products through interventions by cooperatives and other state institutions as and when necessary for price stabilization.

Promote private sector investment to improve infrastructure facilities necessary for marketing agricultural products.

Explore and promote foreign markets for crops with high export potential.

Encourage product branding, certification and use of geographical indicators for products to enter competitive markets.

Facilitate marketing information dissemination and marketing operations through the establishment of district level agro enterprise centers.

Appropriately align the agricultural sector according to the current multi and bilateral trade agreements.

Encourage farmers to produce high quality primary products.

Promote participation of community organizations in marketing process.

Identify the opportunities for agro-enterprises that may cater to the needs of small farmers and promote public and private investments in such ventures.

Promote the participation of producers in agricultural processing and marketing.

Strengthen the supply chain management to ensure an efficient agricultural marketing system.

15. Agro-based Industries

Promote agro-based industries and product diversification in collaboration with the private sector.

16. Traditional Agricultural Crops and Methodologies

Foster, preserve and disseminate traditional knowledge in agriculture relating to organic farming, pest control, and preservation and processing of food for nutritional and medicinal purposes and facilitate exchange of such knowledge among the farming community.

17. Home Gardening

Promote home gardening and urban agriculture to enhance household nutrition and income.

Promote women's participation in home gardening.

18. Investments in Agriculture

State to invest adequately on the agricultural sector for its rapid and sustainable growth. Encourage private sector investments particularly in areas of seed and planting material production, agricultural research and development, human resources development, post-harvest management, marketing, export promotion and agricultural entrepreneurship.

19. Institutional Development

Develop mechanisms for coordination among government and provincial council institutions involved in agriculture and related activities.

Ensure active involvement of all community based organizations (CBO) in agricultural development and strengthen them.

20. Utilization and Sharing of Plant Genetic Resources

Collect and conserve crop varieties and their wild relatives for future crop breeding and improvement programme.

Develop and maintain diverse farming systems for ex-situ conservation of crop genetic resources.

Use farmer participatory breeding methods for utilization of crop genetic resources.

Adopt suitable strategies to preserve national identity on utilization and sharing of benefits of genetic resources with other countries through international treaties.

21. Youth Involvement in Agriculture

Promote Youth Organizations for active participation of youth in agriculture and related ventures.

Promote high value crops and agro-based small and medium scale industries for enhancing rural employment generation and youth involvement in the sector.

Provide concessions and rewards to young entrepreneurs for promoting agriculture and related industries.

22. Agricultural Exports

Facilitate promoting all forms of agro based exports.

Establish coordination mechanisms among governmental institutions and agriculture producers, marketers and the trade sector, to promote agricultural exports.

Establish food safety and quality assurance mechanisms for crops with export potential that could meet international food safety standards.

Encourage state and private sector for exporting agro-based products.

Facilitate production of high quality finished-products acceptable to international markets.