

Pakistan to attain growth in Agriculture Sector

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistan intends to reposition its agriculture to achieve 4-5 growths rate per annum, ensure food security and to alleviate poverty in a swift way.

Speaking at the inaugural session of first ECO Workshop on harmonization of seed regulations here Wednesday, Federal Secretary for Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Muhammad Ismail Qureshi said that the measures like investment in agriculture and water infrastructure, productivity enhancement through hi-tech based technologies, diversification to high value agriculture especially livestock, horticulture & fisheries, improved access to agriculture support services, inputs and credit and private sector – led investments to make markets more competitive, are required to make agriculture productive, profitable, competitive and sustainable.

The contribution of agriculture to the ECO countries exports fluctuates around 8 percent while imports are around 10 percent with GDP growth rate 8 percent during 2004 while world growth rate is 5 percent.

Although intra-regional trade among ECO countries is still very low at around 5 – 6 percent of the total exports but the share of agriculture in intra-regional trade is quite significant at about 21 percent, he informed.

He emphasized on the need to devise the agriculture sector for the enhancement of agriculture productivity, quality and safety, for responding to the challenges of the global markets in the field of agriculture.

The workshop is organized jointly by Government of Pakistan, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations.

This workshop has brought together senior delegates from ECO member countries, FAO and ICARDA to deliberate on effective ways of harmonization on seed regulations and achieve its objectives successfully, thereby ensuring that farmers in the region have unfettered access to seed, suitable for their various specific agro-ecological needs, he concluded.

Later on addressing on the occasion, Director General, Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC and RD),

Dr. Muhammad Ikhtlaque said to make the agriculture product more competitive, various seed regulatory frameworks are being developed and amended to make it friendlier to private sector.

This Regional Workshop on Harmonization of Seed Regulations will give an opportunity to discuss various issues to harmonize seed regulatory frame work among member states. So that quality seed and potential varieties could be conveniently traded with in the region.

Dr. Memed Gunawan, FAO representative to Pakistan, Dr. Michael Larinde, Seed Project Incharge, FAO of the United Nations, Dr. Zewdie Bishaw, Head Seed Unit, ICARDA, Syria, Metin Genckol, Director, ECO Secretariat, Tehran and delegates from Turkey, Iran and Central Asian State also attended the workshop.●