Sustainable farming systems

Address by D.M. Aryaratne, secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Forestry at the opening ceremony of the 14th International Symposium on Sustainable Farming Systems at the BMICH on November 11.

The big challenge facing our countries is to find ways and means of feeding the rapidly growing population in a sustainable way. It is far from being done largely by intensification of current agriculture production which increases the possibility of bringing new lands under cultivation and thereby losing the natural environment.

This intensification must be ecologically and socio-economically sustainable. This was discussed by the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Forestry D.M. Aryaratne while addressing the 14th International Symposium at the BMICH yesterday.

Agriculture is the backbone of most countries in the developing world. A majority of its population is dependent on agriculture.

Agricuture provides our nutrition with sufficient growth to fulfill our basic nutritional needs.

When it is not taken into account, the present rapid urban migration without regard for the agriculture sector, it will lead to the employment and unemployment in only a few years.

Therefore, sustainable agricultural development is absolutely essential.

Developing countries, on the other hand, are dependent on agriculture for their growth and development.

How many of our development agencies and national governments have been discussing these concepts in recent years? Have we more than made a few speeches and write articles about the importance of sustainable agriculture?

We must also remember that "we do not own the land we only steward it". Our responsibility is not only to the present generation but also to the future generation.

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Traditional agricultural research has been carried out on disciplines like such as entomology, pathology and genetics instead of on systems analysis. FSR must move from "and about" research to "in action" research that will enable addressing the need for sustainability in agriculture. The main branch of this approach is commonly known as "farming systems approach".

The farming systems approach is a more holistic approach that looks at the whole farm system and focuses on the interactions and relationships between the farm system and the environment. The approach recognizes that the farm system is part of a larger system and that the environment has an impact on the farm system. The approach also recognizes the importance of the farmer's role in maintaining the farm system.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the farming systems approach is the recognition of the farmer's role in maintaining the farm system. The approach recognizes that the farmer is not only a producer but also a manager of the farm system. The farmer's role is not limited to producing food but also includes managing the farm system to ensure its sustainability.

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