



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Sri Lanka and FAO

Partnering to achieve sustainable food security and nutrition

Sri Lanka joined FAO in 1948. Since then, FAO and the Government have forged a strong partnership towards developing the agriculture sector, including livestock and fisheries, sustainable management of the country's natural resources, and improved nutrition standards. Cooperation has included emergency relief at times of natural disasters and the rehabilitation of agricultural communities following the civil conflict. Through capacity building and the sharing of technical expertise and knowledge, FAO's assistance will gradually transition to upstream support for Sri Lanka to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN SRI LANKA

Established in 1979, the FAO Representation in Sri Lanka is pleased to be celebrating its 40th anniversary.

The partnership between FAO and the Government of Sri Lanka was strengthened with the establishment of a country representation in Sri Lanka in January 1979. The overarching goal of FAO's programme in Sri Lanka has been the reduction of food insecurity, malnutrition and other sources of vulnerability, and the sustainable management and use of natural resources. With its mandate aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), FAO remains committed to ensuring that Sri Lanka is food secure as the country moves up the development ladder in a time of peace.

Promoting sustainable land management

Sri Lanka has a variety of soils that allow a wide range of crop cultivation. Yet with an estimated one third of the country's land subject to soil erosion, careful soil management is crucial. FAO and the Government are therefore rehabilitating agricultural land in the Central Highlands, where 50 percent of the land is degraded.

Matching FAO's expertise to Sri Lanka's development priorities

The FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) for Sri Lanka (2018-2022) guides FAO's partnership with the Government – bringing together innovative international practices and standards with national and regional expertise. It is focused on three priority areas:

- **Food systems and food security**, through an increased contribution of food systems to food and nutrition security and income generation
- **Climate change and resilience**, with natural resources managed sustainably and increased resiliency to shocks, natural disasters and climate variability
- **Increased capacity of stakeholders to undertake policy formulation** and to collect, analyse and utilize data and information for evidence-based decision-making

The CPF is aligned with Sri Lanka's Vision 2025 and other national priority-setting documents as well as the UN Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022. It sets the path for FAO to transition towards more upstream assistance in building national capacities, enabling informed policy interventions and scaling up of good practices and lessons learned.

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With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), FAO is strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks for sustainable land management (SLM), implementing identified restoration technologies and innovative funding systems, and promoting SLM best practices and knowledge management.

Integrating food into urban planning

The Western Province of Sri Lanka – including the country's commercial capital, Colombo – is experiencing rapid population growth, with approximately 30 percent of the total population residing in the province as of 2012. The population is expected to increase from 5.8 million to 9 million by 2030.

"A more sustainable approach to food production would help us protect the environment and build the resilience of our communities in the face of disasters."

José Graziano da Silva,
FAO Director-General

Urbanization results in new food behaviour and consumption patterns, making the links between production and consumption more complex and demanding more sophisticated and sustainable food supply

systems. Hence, the need persists to make food systems more resilient and inclusive, to strengthen rural-urban linkages through sustainable crop production and food systems, and to integrate food systems into urban development planning frameworks.

FAO is currently providing technical support to ensure that stakeholders have the ability to integrate food systems into urban development, formulate policy frameworks, strategies and action plans for food systems in urban planning and enable educators to incorporate food system modules into urban planning curricula. Building on the findings from FAO's City Region Food System project implemented in Sri Lanka, the Organization is promoting nutrition-sensitive agricultural production and consumption, while helping the country to achieve its 2030 food security and nutrition goals.

Resilient livelihoods

With three decades of civil conflict in northern Sri Lanka having ended in 2009, many farming and fishing communities returned to their lands to resume agricultural activities. These communities faced a multitude of changes in the socio-cultural and economic aspects of their lives. As part of the country's efforts to facilitate the resettlement process, FAO has been creating an enabling environment for agribusiness by transforming subsistence farmers into agribusiness entrepreneurs, improving productive infrastructure and strengthening the capacity of local producer organizations.

In addition, the country's agriculture sector is vulnerable to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, extreme weather events and other effects of climate change, as witnessed by the continuous cycles of drought and floods over the last 10 years.

A priority for FAO's field assistance therefore has been to help rural communities become more resilient to climate shocks through innovative agronomic practices and diversification of agricultural production and livelihoods. With UN partners, FAO will continue to work on disaster risk reduction and disaster management, assisting the Government in prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

Supporting the sustainable use of agricultural biotechnology

In 2004 Sri Lanka ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB), which aims to ensure the safe transfer, handling, and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs). Although the advancement of modern biotechnology is still at an early stage in Sri Lanka, the Government has been taking several steps to ensure the safe use of LMOs. Recognizing the need to ensure the regulation of biotechnology research and development activities, the National Biosafety Framework Development Project was implemented in 2005, leading to the formulation of the National Biosafety Framework and the National Policy on Biosafety.

FAO is supporting implementation of the National Biosafety Framework, by developing Sri Lanka's capacity to make greater use of the benefits of modern agricultural biotechnology in a safe and sustainable manner. This includes strengthening related policy, institutional and regulatory frameworks, re-establishing the information management and sharing system on biosafety, and strengthening the national Biosafety Clearing House. FAO's support also aims to:

- Strengthen the technical capacity of the relevant institutions to conduct risk assessments, risk management, and risk communication.
- Help upgrade the infrastructure of key laboratories so that they can effectively carry out biosafety-related activities required for the reliable identification and detection of LMOs, in line with Sri Lanka's obligations under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
- Raise awareness about biosafety and enhance public participation in decision-making by supporting targeted education and outreach campaigns conducted across the country.

