

Toxin Free Nation Programme; Sri Lanka take the lead in launching

Sri Lanka is ahead of many other countries in the world and probably the first one in South Asia in launching the three years Toxin Free Nation strategy/programme aiming at eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticide from agriculture. This unique human health programme owned by the state was introduced during the “Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture” seminar on 7th March 2-16 at the BMICH in Colombo. The panelists highlighted the importance of organic food and dangers associated with toxin loaded agricultural products. The Speaker of the parliament of Sri Lanka; Hon Karu Jayasooriya chaired the session and appreciated the Government for launching this useful initiative and informed the audience about its far reaching health impacts.



Toxins are now found everywhere in the biosphere and has greatly increased the health burden of the citizens. Air, water and land are increasingly loaded with tones of toxins by human activities. Emission from vehicles, factories and construction comprise of heavy metals and as we inhale them, they settle and deposit in the lungs and may find its way into other vital organs like heart leading to various fatal diseases. Similarly, water quality is also polluted by dumping untreated industrial

effluents, sewage and other waste which may find its way into human body directly or enter the food chain thereby affecting human health. Land resources are polluted by dumping various toxic chemicals, solid and sewage waste, which without any adequate recycling system may affect the life on earth.



Agricultural inputs including chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides pollute the ecosystem and enter the food chain. Most of the agricultural products are grown using chemical fertilizers and are sprayed with various toxins to control pests aiming at increased production. As toxins are usually so heavy and complex that the available body enzyme or hormone cannot decompose it and thus they deposit in parts of the body organs leading to chronic diseases like heart attacks,

paralysis and even they may prove carcinogenic. The World Health Organization (WHO) has already warned about the increased health burden of environment pollution and is working closely with countries and regional organizations in reducing the pollution in air, water and land.

Environment pollution has now reached to a level that it is hard for the public sector institutions in developing countries to control on their own. Weak capacities and lack of awareness are two important factors that make the situation even more difficult to handle. This was also the opinion of the panelist and participants attending the Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture at Colombo the other day. To improve capacity, there is a need to devise capacity development programmes at national and regional level and awareness about the issue must be part of the future interventions at all levels using the information and communication technologies, social media, dedicated blogs and other such internet tools. The South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) is already pursuing harmonized capacity development and environment awareness programme for the public sectors institutions in South Asia, which offer suitable platform for any such intervention in future.

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