

## Poverty & Food Security

### **Food Security: New Initiatives in Offing to Increase Agri Productivity**

Pakistan is going to face water shortfall and to overcome the issue, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has taken new initiatives for improving agriculture productivity that will result in food security. PARC Chairman Dr Zafar Altaf expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of federal secretaries who visited the National Agricultural Research Center (NARC) here at Chak Shehzad, Islamabad. He said the detail of new initiatives includes bio-remediation of used water, organic agriculture, small holder bio-processing machinery, integrated farming, bio-prospecting, home pharmacy and medicinal herb culture, urban agriculture (kitchen and container gardening), high density low stature fruit production, hedgerow fruit and vegetable production, tunnel vegetable culture, bio-saline agriculture, bio-diesel, alternate energy, bamboo production, dairy product diversification, backyard indigenous poultry production, endangered wildlife breeding, ornamental fish culture, under-utilised crops initiative, dry rice culture, colored gm cotton production, hybrid rice, wheat, cotton and oilseeds culture, wheat wide crosses, microbial genetic resources, gender mainstreaming initiative, and agricultural polytechnic institute. Work on majority of the above mentioned initiatives has been started and results shall start coming very soon resulting in improved productivity increased income of the farmers. Dr Altaf apprised the federal secretaries that in Pakistan, rice was traditionally grown as manual transplantation of 30 days old rice seedlings in the well flooded and puddle fields. Farmers keep standing of water continuously up to the maturity of rice crop and aerobic rice does not need growing of nursery, transportation, transplant and puddling operation. Alternative aerobic rice addresses to such issues and saves water, labour, time and improves stand establishment of the following crops. During a visit to Livestock Research Station Dr Altaf apprised the federal secretaries that PARC brought Achai cow and Azakhaili buffalo from Bajaur, who give milk like cream. Achai cow and Azakhaili buffalo were selected from Swat and further studies were underway crossing with local buffaloes and cattle to develop the offspring which are of medium size but give high production with minimum feed, under extreme environmental condition and are also resistant to many local diseases, he added. He also informed that work on sennen goats was also in progress. Federal secretaries were taken to witness bio-remediation of water, hybrid crops, farm machinery institute, fruit and vegetable programme, honey bee institute, plant genetic resources institute, livestock research station, essential oils development and also developed bio-pesticide to avoid pesticides which are dangerous and polluting water, environment and human health.

[Daily Times – April 14, 2010]

### **Land Reforms Can Avert Food Crisis**

Leaders of public opinion at a seminar on '**Food Crisis and Role of Political Parties**', on April 14, said that unless true land reforms are undertaken to empower peasantry and ensure food security, the present food crisis would continue to persist in the society. It was organised by South Asia Partnership (SAP)'s Sindh chapter. General Secretary, PPP, Sindh chapter, Taj Hyder advocated land reforms and management of water for better per-acre yield while disagreeing with speakers that only peasant revolution would solve problems. "We shouldn't wait for it. We should endeavour to ameliorate the lot of the peasantry", he said. He was critical of Federal Shariat Court's judgment against land reforms and said scientific approach was needed instead of emotional one to address issues. He said China was getting four times higher per-acre yield with good agricultural practices, but in Pakistan its quite contrary as every farmer is in debt. He said that Sindh has to enter industrial era, therefore, every district has to prepare a report, listing respective industrial potential to end poverty. Earlier, he had to listen to sharp criticism of the PPP government by nationalist leaders for pursuing policy of reconciliation and failure to end corruption and offering nothing in constitutional package. Sindh Taraqqi Pasand Party chairman Dr Qadir Magsi said Sindh used to be rich and people were never worried about food security. "They were producers of honey, milk, ghee, meat, livestock and crops. Today fishermen don't have access to fresh water sources as water bodies and lakes have been illegally occupied by influential people. Today we can't even serve a hen to guests," he said. Yet, he said, Sindhis are branded as lazy notwithstanding the fact that they stood deprived of sources of livelihood. It was due to greed of man who played havoc with nature that people are reaping what they had sown, he said. River Indus has lost its glory and water inflows downstream remained nil to check sea intrusion with the result that agricultural land of coastal areas had been hit badly, he said. Secondly, he said, Sindh is home to illegal immigrants which put additional burden on already shrinking food

[Dawn – April 15, 2010]

## **Economists Say Nation to be Poorer in Two Years**

The Panel of Economists, headed by Dr Hafeez A Pasha on April 17 unveiled its final report by disclosing that the poverty was expected to rise in Pakistan during the upcoming two years rule of the PPP-led remime and after ward would start decline when growth trajectory would revive in the range of over 5 percent. The renowned economist, Dr Hafeez A Pasha , reeased the final report of Panel of Economists titled "Medium term Development Imperatives and stategy for Pakistan ",a copy of which was handed over to Deputy Chairman planning Commission Dr lshfaque Ahamed. According to the forecast done by the Panel of Economists, the country would achieve an average growth rate of 5.5 percent over the next five years. The growth rate would be 3 per cent in first year (2010-11) and in medium term it would be 5 percent. In the last year there would be 7per cent growth rate and average rate for five year would be over 5percent. The panel of Economists had not given any number of exact levels of poverty in Pakistan in its final report .It is relevant to mention here that the interrirm report of the Panel had indicated poverty level in the range of 38 per cent in the country. Dr. Pasha conceded that there were indeed some professed disappointments during the last two years as despite repeated reminders the government did not act upon some key recommendation of the Panel such as cutting cost of government including large number of cabinet ministers.

The priorities, according to Panel of Economists, should be given to ongoing development projects and then to the water and power sector projects. The panel of Economists recommended to the government to distribute 2.6 million acre state owned land among the landless small farmers. The panel of Economists did not target 7 to 8percent growth, said Dr. Pasha and added that it was their contention that there was a need to remove bottlenecks frist in areas of power shortages and then growth trajectory could be revived on sustained basis.

The strategy for sustainable growth includes, removal of infrasture bottlenecks, balance regional growth with more focus on Balochistan and NWFP,investing in people and rural development.

"There should be 20 per cent jump in development expenditure, as it must increase to 564 billion from this year's 460 billion".

According to the Panel's findings,energy crisis emerged due to absence of medium- to long-term implementation startegic planing .

"The 10th year plan should target a modest growth of around 5 to 5.5per cent to overcome binding infrastructure constraints,"he added.

In order to overcome structural constraints of low investment and low saving two pronged strategy has been advised. "The government should shift emphasis to agriculture and livestock and focus on enhancing competitiveness and encourage savings".

After 18th amendment,the political situation has apparently stabilised and the government can now focus on economic development,Pasha said.

"The Panel suggests the measure including land for landless and setting up small Farmer Development corporation, equity stakes for the poor in large corporations for milk,milk products,livestock and marine fisheries".

To a question,he said the sindh government had already begun the process of allotting land to small-scale farmers and the Punjab government was also considering the option.

It recommends launching "employment generation schemes in war-hit areas and thewe areas are to be declared as nation building regions".

[The News – April 18, 2010]

## **CPI Inflation to be 12 percent Against Targeted 9.5 percent: IMF Informed**

Pakistan has informed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that CPI inflation would be 12 percent, against 9.5 percent targeted in the budget for the current fiscal year, it is learnt. Sources said that the government in the Supplementary Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (SMEFP) has informed the IMF that electricity tariff adjustments and higher food prices would push the annual consumer price inflation up. The headline inflation in June, 2010 will be 12 percent. The government said that State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) monetary policy will continue to focus primarily on price stability and would tighten if inflationary pressures persist, while the lower inflation will support the nascent revival in economic activity and pave the way for lower interest rates, they added. The CPI inflation was recorded 11.29 percent during July-March 2009-10 and analysts believe it could go up well beyond 12 percent if the government decided to increase, before budget, the due 6 percent electricity tariff as agreed with donors.

According to economists, double-digit inflation in the prevailing economic situation is already too high for the people and could substantially increase the number of people below poverty line. They anticipate that more inflationary pressures could be seen in the next two months due to the increasing trends in oil prices. The CPI for March rose

by 12.91 percent as compared against the same period of last year largely because of increase in food and oil prices. The increasing trend was also seen in March over the previous month by registering 1.25 percent increase. The food inflation was pushing the CPI up. The component of food inflation was recorded 14.54 per cent in March 2010.

[Business Recorder – April 26, 2010]

### **Most Commodities' Prices Declined in March**

Declining trend was witnessed in the prices of a substantial number of essential kitchen items during March spelling some financial relief to an overwhelming segment of the population already groaning under heavy inflation during the last one-year. Continuous decline was registered in the rates of a majority of pulses and white peas following their reduced demand in the international markets coupled with their improved yield reported by some major pulses producing countries, which largely helped bringing their prices down in the local market as well. Despite the plunging sugar prices in the international markets which has recently nose-dived to \$560 to \$570 per metric tonne as compared to a few months old prices of over \$700 to \$750 per metric tonne, wholesalers and retailers of the commodity have squarely failed to pass on the benefits of its declining prices to domestic consumers as a majority are compelled to buy at higher rates.

The items that recorded increase in their average prices included chicken meat, mutton, beef, onion and potato. The essential items with decline in their rates included wheat majority of the pulses, wheat sugar, eggs and white peas. The items with no change in their average prices included some pulses and rice, chakki flour, ex-mill flour and fine atta, tomato, cooking oil, black peas, tea, garlic and ginger. Currently sugar is available at a majority of city's retail outlets in the range of Rs 60 to Rs 62 per kilogramme (kg) against previous month's Rs. 64 to Rs 65 per kg indicating an inadequate decline of Rs 2 to Rs 3 per kg. Wheat prices during March continued to be in the range of Rs 2,450 to Rs 2,500 per 100kg bag in the open market, which is lower than previous month's rate of Rs 2,700 for the same weight. Prices of ghee and cooking oil continued to be on the higher side on account of higher import prices. Chicken meat rates started surging during the previous month and currently they are sold at a price ranging from Rs 250 to Rs 260 per kg as compared to previous month's rates of Rs 230 to Rs 240 per kg. Similarly, prices of live chicken bird currently stands at Rs 140 to Rs 150 per kg as against previous month's prices of Rs 130 to Rs 140 per kg. However, egg prices have declined considerably during the last one-month and it is currently available to buyers at Rs 50 per dozen from its old prices of Rs 60 to Rs 62 per dozen. The decline in wheat rates had a little impact on prices of all kinds of flour, which continued to be sold at old inflated rates. The ex-mill price of flour continued to hover around Rs 30 to Rs 31 while chakki flour was sold at around Rs 34 to Rs 35 per kg. Similarly, fine atta was available at Rs 33 to Rs 34 per kg at retail outlets. Prices of quality colonel rice and other varieties remained unchanged in the wholesale and retail markets of the city spelling relief for its consumers. The price ranges from Rs 80 per kg to Rs 100 per kg. Retail prices of dal masur declined to Rs 105 to Rs 108 per kg as compared to the previous rates of Rs 115 to Rs 120 per kg manifesting a substantial decline in its rates during the last one-month. Similarly, prices of dal moong (sabit) also declined to Rs 105 per kg, which is lower as compared with old rates of Rs 110 per kg. City retailers have termed the declining trend in moong pulse rates as a good omen for the buyers majority of which belong to the lower segment of the population. Black peas (kala channa) price remained unchanged as it is currently available at Rs 50 to Rs 52 in the retail markets while the rates of quality white pea (kabli channa) declined to level of Rs 90 per kg in the retail markets as against its previous price of Rs 100 to Rs 105 per kg. Dal mash rates during the last month continued to be in the range of Rs 105 to Rs 110 per kg showing stability in its prices. Retail price of basen, a byproduct of dal channa, kept hovering around Rs 58 to Rs 60 per kg. Dry milk prices also surged in the retail and wholesale markets of Karachi, which was attributed by importers on account of increased rates in the international markets. Vegetables: Prices of fine quality onion in the wholesale markets surged to Rs 24 to Rs 25 per kg, which is higher compared to previous rates of Rs 18 to Rs 20 per kg. Price of potato, another vital commodity of every kitchen continued to surge during the last one month, as it is currently available at Rs 23 to Rs 24 per kg as against previous price of Rs 10 to Rs 12 per kg in the wholesale markets. Retail price of garlic, a vital food ingredient, continued to remain unchanged at Rs 125 to Rs 130 per kg. Retail price of tomato continued to be at low rates of Rs 10 to Rs 12 per kg providing immense financial relief to the consumers. Fruits: Prices of all fruits continued to be on the higher side. Price of banana regarded as one of the fruits of all season is available in the range of Rs 20 to Rs 40 per dozen depending on its size. Prices of all kinds of apple continued to be on the higher side as it is currently available in the range of Rs 40 to Rs 50 kg, which is apparently beyond the purchasing ability of a large segment of the population. One of the most demanding fruits of the winter season, citrus fruit is hardly visible in the market but the scant quantity can be purchased at whooping

rates of Rs 130 to Rs 150 per dozen. : Prices of tea remained high during the last few months as rates of one kg of all branded and open tea including Lipton and Tapal stand in the range of Rs 430 to Rs 450.

[Daily Times – April 2, 2010]