

SCIENTIFIC DIALOGUE I

Sustainable Agriculture & Economy

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Sri Lanka's economic crisis has brought to the forefront of Agriculture serious concerns, especially relating to increases in Agricultural inputs, food prices and shortages in food. As a result, uncertainties have grown about whether, in the coming months, (a) required food supplies will be available, (b) the Agri-Food sector will be able to sustain the livelihoods of those engaged in crop, livestock and poultry farming, fishing, food manufacturing, food distribution and allied activities and (c) the Agri-Food sector will be able to provide food security for those most affected by the crisis. Within this context, the members of the Faculties of Agriculture of the State Universities of Sri Lanka, recognize that following concerns are of particular significance to the most vulnerable communities, the country needs to immediately develop and implement a plan of action to address several key areas to sustain agriculture in-order to improve food security of the island nation –

1. Provide the basic food needs of the population through direct administrative/regulatory interventions, including but not limited to rationing of scarce supplies to the most vulnerable across the country.
2. Ensure the availability of raw materials/inputs at affordable prices to sustain those engaged in the Agri-Food sector, including crop, fishing, food manufacturing, food distribution, and allied activities.

its Agri-Food sector, using scarce but available resources. The document submitted by the members of the Faculties of Agriculture of the State Universities of Sri Lanka addresses the entire food system, considering all economic actors and priority sub-sectors in the agriculture value/supply chains and identifies short and medium needs and interventions, also considering long term requirements., it is noted, have already been discussed and implemented, suggesting that the government is taking these concerns seriously and is attempting to address them to some extent.

The Ministry of Education should facilitate students and teachers to attend schools in their neighborhood till there is improvement in the economic situation. Schools should initiate activities that can provide joy and relaxation to children instead of focusing too much on the traditional curriculum. They should also function as social spaces where students, parents and teachers can get together and chart mechanisms of survival and resilience. Students could take the lead in cultivating vegetables in their **School Gardens (Kitchen Gardens)**. **School kitchens**, established with the help of the wider community, may ensure that future generations get the necessary nutrients for their growth. Apart from the above suggestions for a national agricultural policy, Sri Lanka's vulnerability to the effects of climate change will continue to threaten food security and nutrition. Therefore, these precautionary measures and prioritized strategies should be undertaken for Sri Lanka to overcome the grappling issues and emerge as a stronger nation.

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