



The Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka

THE APEX BODY OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SRI LANKA

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05 July, 2021

His Excellency the President
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Your Excellency,

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SRI LANKA TO ESTABLISH A GREEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC MODEL FOR SRI LANKA AGRICULTURE SECTOR

The Organization of Professional Associations (OPA) of Sri Lanka comprising 52 Professional Associations appreciate the decision taken by the Government to establish a 'Green Socio-Economic Model for Sustainable Solutions to Climate Change' including the agriculture sector of Sri Lanka. Sir, whilst appreciating the effort to use organic fertilizer, we wish to draw the urgent attention of the government to crucial issues that should be immediately addressed in the effort to realize the objectives of the decision.

We are aware that agricultural professionals have informed the government on technical details of the necessity of use of fertilizer, both chemical as well as organic fertilizer, in the agricultural system.. Hence, from the OPA point of view, we do not wish to repeat what these professionals and the Department of Agriculture have conveyed to the government.

The government's decision to go for environment-friendly agriculture is appreciable. It will certainly have positive outcomes for people in Sri Lanka. However, we must be clear about the negative effects of such a move as well, in order to curb the foreseeable impact. The process of transformation to environment-friendly agriculture must be designed and implemented with adequate emphasis upon increasing positive outcomes while managing the negative effects to the minimum. This would augur well with your statement, which we consider as a well thoughtful statement in the "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour". i.e. "Building up a community of citizens who are healthy and productive, we need to develop the habit of consuming food with no contamination with harmful chemicals. In order to guarantee the people's right to such safe food, the entire Sri Lankan agriculture will be promoted to use organic fertilizers during the next ten years"

Accordingly, we would like to recommend the following as the Road Map to expedite the Action Plan for transforming from Chemical Fertilizer to Organic Fertilizer

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1. Encourage all categories of farmers to register for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification program with a strict time limit and facilitate them to be conversant with ecological practices. The GAP is focused on the basic environmental and operational conditions necessary for the production of safe, wholesome food as per recommendations of the Department of Agriculture. This is considered as the best scientifically proven process for integrated plant nutrient systems (IPNS) and integrated pest management (IPM) for enhancing productivity of agricultural systems.
2. Initiate a program to identify the good practices in ecological farming including the use of locally available inputs and encourage the farmers to apply those by imparting the knowledge.
3. Introduce a subsidy scheme to encourage farmers adopting organic and ecological practices.
4. A Regulatory framework to compel farmers to use available organic fertilizers to the optimum level as required.
5. Devise and adopt a mechanism to forbid genetically modified (GM) seeds and strengthen the existing ecological farming practices including production of seeds and planting material.
6. Devise and adopt a mechanism to replace the present chemical fertilizer subsidy to the farmers with a subsidy for Organic Fertilizer.
7. Prepare a comprehensive system to produce organic fertilizers within the country sustainably with the availability of government funding.
8. Permit importation of organic fertilizers only when it is really necessary with relevant approvals as per existing regulatory measures, while initiating a mechanism to monitor and analyze the entire process. If organic fertilizer imports without any quality check is allowed it could lead to other issues as they contain heavy metals, in addition to the threats of antibiotics, micro-plastics, poly aromatic hydrocarbons, weed seeds and even pathogens (if not correctly produced).
9. Introduce strict measures to prevent harmful chemicals being used as preservatives for grains, vegetables and processed food at all levels of food chain.
10. Initiation of a scheme to compensate farmers for any reduction of harvest due to proposed banning.
11. Introduce licensed operators of equipment and tools when necessary (as an example spray machine operators, when necessary, to avoid wastage and overuse and monitor them by the Agricultural Extension system).
12. In order to avert a food crisis, the growers should be encouraged to grow more and a market to sell their produce should be created and managed.

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13. Encourage to grow crops suitable for particular climatic zone, which would enable proper utilization of available water, reducing water wastage & water pollution.
14. Take necessary steps to make the public aware of the benefits of ecological farming and home gardening.
15. Initiate a mechanism to have better coordination among Department of Agriculture, Provincial Departments of Agriculture and the Universities to start collaborative research on Ecological Agriculture Models.
16. Initiate Institutional and capacity building programmes for the Department of Agriculture and the Provincial Departments of Agriculture giving special emphasis to develop accredited laboratories at provincial level to Increase the facilities for nutrient testing, pesticide residue testing, heavy metal and microbial testing, soil samples and water sample testing while introducing mobile testing facilities.
17. Take steps to identify goods, which are healthy & nutritious, but not commonly utilized currently unknown or underutilized food and promote as a remedy for impending food security issues.

We at the OPA are at your disposal for a discussion on this matter in order to provide more details and recommendations.

Thank you,

Yours truly,

ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SRI LANKA



Eng. Shantha Senarath

PRESIDENT

Copies: Hon. Prime Minister
Hon. Minister of Agriculture
Hon. State Minister of Agriculture
Secretary to Ministry of Agriculture
Hon. Minister of Health
Hon. State Minister of Health
Presidential Task Force for a green socio-economy
President, Sri Lanka Institute of Agriculture
President, Govt. Medical Officers' Association

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