

20% of Pakistan's land affected by erosion

ISLAMABAD/CHAKWAL: Around 16 million hectares of land, which amounts to 20 percent of the total area of Pakistan, is affected directly or indirectly by soil erosion.

Out of the total eroded area, 11.2 million hectares are affected by water only. A huge amount of rainwater is lost annually due to run-off in the Potohar region. This occurs due to various reasons, including high intensity and short spell of rainfalls and lack of awareness among professionals and farmers about watershed management and rainwater harvesting techniques. This loss of water also leads to loss of fertile soil, which increases flood severity in lowland areas and results in silting in dams, rivers and ponds, thereby decreasing their storage capacity.

To prevent the aforementioned problems, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Islamabad is carrying out a 'Community Based Training Programme on Watershed Management for Flood and Drought Control'. This programme has been launched under phase two of 'Strategic Strengthening of Flood Warning and Management Capacity of Pakistan' and intends to impart techniques related to agriculture extension, soil conservation and water management to farmers and relevant government and semi-government professionals, NGOs and academia in Chakwal. The programme also aims at developing flood forecasting and early warning systems for effective coordination and management during floods.

On the first day of the training session, experts gave a brief history of floods in Pakistan. They also discussed the eco-hydrology approach for addressing floods and droughts and rainwater harvesting techniques and drip irrigation system. The training session also included a field visit to Barani Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and the Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute (SAWCRI) for the participants to learn water saving techniques.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/19-Nov-16/20-of-pakistans-land-affected-by-erosion>

Published on November 24, 2016

Moot mulls over ways to ensure water, food security and alleviation of poverty

RAWALPINDI: A three-day international conference on "Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dry Regions" commenced at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University (PMAS-AAUR), here on Wednesday.



PMAS-AAUR works in collaboration with UNESCO with the support of Japan Funds-in-Trust and Malaysia Funds-in-Trust, organised the conference aimed at providing opportunity to policy makers, scientists, academicians, other experts and stakeholders for exploring new dimensions to increase water, food security and alleviate poverty in the resource deficient dry land regions worldwide, in Asia particularly in Pakistan.

Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab Ahmad was the chief guest at the inaugural session of the conference while Japan's Ambassador Takashi Kurai, High Commissioner of Malaysia Dr. Hasrul Sani Bin Mujtabar, AJK Finance Minister, Planning and Development and Public Health, Dr. Muhammad Najeeb Naqi, UNESCO Director Jakarta Dr. Shahbaz Khan, PMAS-AAUR Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rai Niaz Ahmad, UNESCO Islamabad Director Ms. Vibeke Jensen, Water Expert Dr. Shams-ul-Mulk and progressive farmer Mumtaz Khan attended the conference. Over 200 participants from Pakistan and other countries including 50 delegates from Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, China, the Philippines, Nepal, Korea, Afghanistan, Australia and faculty members and a large number of students were also present.

The minister addressing the participants said, the government had put water, energy and food security on the top development agenda in its vision 2025 because these sectors are considered to be the lifeline of any economy and the most vital instrument for socio-economic development of the country.

He said, the government was paying special attention on hydro-electric projects like Diamir Basha Dam and others to make the country self-sufficient in the energy sector.

He informed that changing climatic conditions, especially the natural disasters, resource base degradation, poverty, low education levels and high disparities in food access are major challenges for food security in Pakistan.

He informed the gathering that universities are a hub of research and innovation of new technologies positively impacting livelihood of the masses, protecting environment and accelerating growth.

He appreciated PMAS-AAUR efforts to cultivate resources in a beneficial manner like rainwater harvesting model, energy production from solid waste, initiatives to promote 21st century agriculture through hydroponic technology and development of skills of young graduates are especially commendable.

He urged the participants to discuss the thematic areas and propose policy guidelines and strategies for effective use of resources to ensure water, energy and food security.

He hoped that this conference would help in facilitating the integration of the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals into national the development plans of Pakistan and other countries of Asia Pacific Region.

Earlier, Prof. Dr. Rai Niaz Ahmad in his welcome address highlighted the aims and objectives of the conference.

The VC informed the gathering that the university is dealing in diversified areas like agriculture, forestry, range management, veterinary and animal sciences, agricultural engineering, basic, applied and social sciences along with management sciences and information technology to achieve a stipulated target of the UN Agenda 2030 and the Pakistan Government vision 2025 to respond to the ever changing socio-economic conditions and attaining the goal of development. The ambassador of Japan appreciated efforts of UNESCO and PMAS-AAUR for holding an international conference on an important topic, saying Japan has been providing assistance to Pakistan in various fields.

He said, our priorities were implementation of the universal agenda, adding, Japan was putting its efforts for quality growth, health system, education, disaster management and climate change.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/24-Nov-16/moot-mulls-over-ways-to-ensure-water-food-security-and-alleviation-of-poverty>
