National level Consultations held to debate challenges related to food security, nutrition and agriculture, promote regional coherence and knowledge exchange

29 January 2019, Islamabad – Youth from partner organizations, women associations, government officials, private sector entities and civil society community members and organizations (CSOs), including academia and think tanks, for the first time in Pakistan jointly participated in the preparations for and gave substantive inputs to the 35th UN FAO Regional Conference for Asia and Pacific (APRC), as part of national level consultations. The FAO Regional Conference will convene in Bhutan from 17-20 February 2020.

While the APRC is a formal meeting of FAO’s member countries in Asia and the Pacific usually attended at Ministerial and high government officials’ level, CSOs and private sector representatives participate as observers, and are invited to make interventions during the Conference. It is the forum where the 46 regional member states meet to debate challenges related to food security, nutrition and agriculture, promote regional coherence and knowledge exchange and identify areas of common priority action for partnership and FAO’s work in the Region.

This consultation was the opportunity for stakeholders to update themselves on trends and challenges on the State of Food and Agriculture in Asia Pacific, to discuss water in agriculture under conditions of water scarcity in the Region and the need to develop sustainable food systems, with reduced food loss and waste that are also nutrition-sensitive, equitable and resilient.

FAO representative in Pakistan Minà Dowlatchahi provided an overview of FAO’s 2018-19 results achieved in Pakistan and the future FAO’s regional priorities and areas of technical focus for 2020-2021 that will be discussed at the APRC. She said: “The promotion of sustainable transformation of food and
agriculture systems to end poverty and malnutrition, climate change and the enhancement of sustainable management of natural resources; and the control of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases are priorities very relevant to the Pakistan situation. FAO is looking forward to engage in new partnerships and innovation to support collective action for the accelerated development of Food and Agriculture in Pakistan.”

The participants emphasized that expanded use of data, new information, digital and communication technologies are critical for changing and monitoring food systems, water use, plant and animal diseases and biodiversity, and to enhance disaster risk reduction in Agriculture. FAO will support countries in the Region in digital agriculture strategies that ensure social equity.

The consultations also provided the space for promoting new ideas on joint action to accelerate progress towards the SDGs in Pakistan, including through existing or new coordination and partnership mechanisms within the country or in the region, which are relevant to local actors’ engagement with FAO.

With only 10 years left to achieve the Global Goals by the 2030 deadline, there is an urgent need to step up action. Everybody has a contribution to make. It is key to mobilize everyone, everywhere to take action — individually and collectively, locally and globally. It is key to get ideas to solutions — and shine a light on success stories and drive sustainable innovation, investments and technology in Food and Agriculture. This first of its kind national consultation is FAO first contribution to The Decade of Action and UN-75.

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