

SAPLING Dialogue 2026, Highlights, Objectives, Theme, Role

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Why in the News?: Recently, the SAPLING (South Asian Policy Leadership for Improved Nutrition and Growth) Dialogue 2026 was jointly organized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and the World Bank Group.

About SAPLING Dialogue 2026

- **Location:** The SAPLING (South Asian Policy Leadership for Improved Nutrition and Growth) Dialogue 2026 concluded on **10 June 2026 in Ahmedabad**.
- **Organised by:** It was jointly organized by the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and the World Bank Group**.
- **Theme:** “Unlocking Value: Advancing Food Processing for Employment Generation and Sustainable Growth in South Asia.”
- **Participants:** Around 200 participants attended the event, including policymakers, industry leaders, startups, researchers, development partners, financial institutions, and representatives from South Asian countries.

About SAPLING

- SAPLING (South Asian Policy Leadership for Improved Nutrition and Growth) is a **regional multi-stakeholder platform** led by the World Bank Group to promote resilient, inclusive, and nutrition-focused food systems in South Asia.
- It brings together governments, investors, development partners, research institutions, private-sector stakeholders, and innovators to **address challenges related to agriculture, nutrition, food processing, and food security**.
- The platform **focuses on policy reforms, investment mobilization, and scaling of innovative solutions** to strengthen agricultural value chains and food systems across the region.
- SAPLING facilitates **regional cooperation and knowledge sharing among South Asian countries** to promote sustainable agricultural and economic development.
- It supports the development of efficient food processing ecosystems, improved market linkages, and technology-driven solutions for reducing food losses and enhancing value addition.
- SAPLING is **aligned with the World Bank Group's AgriConnect Initiative**, which aims to connect 300 million farmers to markets by 2030 through infrastructure development, policy reforms, and private capital mobilization.
- The platform **seeks to transform food systems beyond primary agricultural production** by promoting processing, logistics, storage, and value-chain development.
- Its ultimate **objective** is to improve nutrition outcomes, strengthen food security, enhance farmer incomes, generate employment opportunities, and support sustainable economic growth across South Asia.

SAPLING Dialogue 2026 Key Highlights

- The discussions emphasized that the next phase of agricultural transformation in South Asia must move beyond increasing farm production and focus on food processing, value addition, logistics, storage, and market linkages.
- Participants highlighted food processing as a key instrument for generating employment, enhancing farmer incomes, reducing poverty, strengthening food security, and promoting sustainable economic growth.
- A major focus of the dialogue was addressing **post-harvest losses**, which **account for over 30% of food production in South Asia**, through improved cold-chain infrastructure, storage facilities, smart packaging, and integrated supply chains.
- The dialogue promoted a **"Farm to Factory" approach** to ensure efficient movement of agricultural produce from farms to processing units, thereby reducing wastage and improving value realization for farmers.
- Discussions also focused on **integrating small and informal food processing enterprises into formal value chains** to improve their access to markets, finance, technology, and quality standards.
- **Technology and innovation** emerged as important themes, with emphasis on **digital traceability, smart processing systems, and modern food-processing technologies** to improve efficiency and competitiveness.
- Participants **highlighted the critical role of MSMEs, startups, women entrepreneurs, and rural enterprises** in expanding the food processing sector and creating inclusive growth.

- The dialogue **underscored the importance of regional cooperation among South Asian countries** in areas such as food safety standards, investment promotion, technology transfer, and value-chain integration.
- A key outcome of the event was the release of the **report “Assessment of the Level of Food Processing in India,”** which noted that **India’s food processing level increased from around 10% in 2016 to nearly 17% in 2023.**
- The report **identified significant untapped potential for value addition in fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and other perishable commodities,** highlighting opportunities to increase farmer incomes and boost exports.
- The dialogue concluded with a **call for deeper collaboration between MoFPI and the World Bank Group** and the preparation of a concrete action plan for accelerating food-processing-led growth across South Asia.

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