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## Around a quarter of SL undernourished: IPS

July 16, 2015, 6:27 pm



by Sanath Nanayakkare

Household food insecurity is an issue in the country. About 5.2 million people or the equivalent of a quarter of the population were estimated to have been undernourished in 2014. Meanwhile, the depth of food deficit was about 216 Kilocalories per person per day in 2014, Dr. Saman Kelegama Executive Director- Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) said Thursday.

"By virtue of the fact that none of these parameters is static, any policy or strategy to solve the food security problem has to be dynamic in nature. Hence, a successful country-led policy framework that addresses the underlying determinants of food security has to be designed and implemented, Dr. Kelegama stressed.

The IPS executive director made these comments while delivering the welcome address of a two-day national consultations workshop held at the Institute's conference room.

The workshop titled 'Key Challenges and Opportunities for Food Security Policies in Sri Lanka' was organized by the IPS and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

IFPRI provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.

The workshop brought together different teams composed of professionals from agriculture, trade, health, finance, and nutrition sections from various ministries, universities, private sector, NGOs and civil society, to develop roadmaps for achieving the goal of food security.

The event facilitated a dialogue on the key challenges and opportunities for food security in Sri Lanka and provided the basis for the formation of a successful food security policy framework for the country.

Speaking further Dr. Kelegama said, "Food security is achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

"This definition provides the basis for the four components of food security widely adopted today: availability, accessibility, utilization and stability.

"Availability is determined by food supply, primarily at the national level, while accessibility depends on the individual's capability to purchase food (income) at the household level, and utilization depends on intra-household distribution of food and the nutritious use of food by the individual. The fourth dimension of food security, food stability ensures the access to food at all times and covers the physiological, economic, social or political vulnerabilities of the population to food security, the IPS executive director explained.

B. Wijayarathne, Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture said that the government is formulating a new agriculture policy which will address the four components of food security in order to create a fair standard of living for everyone without any discrimination.

Dr. Rohan Wijekoon, Director General, Department of Agriculture and Dr. P.K. Joshi, Director- South Asia-IFPRI also made highly informative presentations.

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