

## Round Table Discussion

### **“A Smooth Transition to Strengthen Food Security Through the Use of Organic Fertilizer”**

25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 from 1000hrs- 1200hrs

Organized by Institute of National Security Studies

Institution of National Security Studies: The premier think tank on National Security established under the Ministry of Defense, Sri Lanka organized a virtual Round Table Discussion titled “A smooth transitioning to strengthen food security through the use of organic fertilizer” on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 2021 from 1000hrs to 1200hrs. The session was focused on encouraging the society to identify the consequences of the use of chemical fertilizers and to encourage the use of organic fertilizers and assemble an intellectual dialog to identify the strategies to ensure food security of the country.

The Guest Speakers for the discussion was Dr. Ajantha De Silva, Additional Secretary (Agricultural Technology) to the Ministry of Agriculture, Sri Lanka, Prof. Gamini Senanayake, Chairman at the Sri Lanka Council for Agricultural Research Policy, Dr. Venura Herath, Senior lecturer at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, and Mr. Janath S. Vidanage, Chairman at the Ceylon Fertilizer Company. Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena RWP\*\*, RSP, VSV, USP, nswc, psc, (Director Communication and Publication), INSS Chaired and moderated the event. He initially welcomed the guest speakers and opened the floor to a comprehensive dialogue on the current transitioning to the use of organic fertilizer. The audience was enriched by 70+ researchers, academics, representatives from agricultural institutions, military officers representing the Sri Lankan armed forces, and Civil Defence who joined the event virtually.

Dr. Ajantha De Silva, commenced with a detailed account of the Government’s strategy to promote and popularize organic agriculture during the next ten years as per the “Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor” policy and its practicality. He elaborated on the role played by the Ministry of Agriculture with the Government’s supervision in actualizing eco-friendly cultivation practices and paving the way to people-centric agriculture. He also recognized the close associatory nature of the agriculture sector with food security, while shedding light on the current context and the challenges that the Ministry of Agriculture was aiming to surmount.

Prof. Gamini Senanayake spoke in-depth on the “Comparative analysis of the effects between chemical and organic fertilizer”. He brought into light the manner in which food security is impacted through factors such as population growth, climate changes, cost of production, unemployment, and pests and diseases. The term “Food Sovereignty” was emphasized as the right of people to access healthy food produced through sustainable and eco-friendly cultivation.

Elaborating on Sustainable Agriculture and the way forward with science was discussed extensively by Dr. Venura Herath . He opened his remarks by debunking several myths related to organic fertilizer. He stated that sustainable agriculture is a balance that should be struck between economic profitability, environmental health, and socio-economic equity. He reiterated the importance of evidence-informed policymaking which requires a combined effort by researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers.

A practical approach to using organic agriculture was the topic discussed by Mr. Janath S. Vidanage, He elaborated on the challenges of producing and supplying sufficient amounts of organic fertilizer, to meet the current demand and in particular the challenge of convincing farmers to deviate from the use of chemical fertilizer, a practice that they have internalized over the years and are heavily dependent upon. The discussion concluded with a very informative and interesting Q and A session where many challenging questions were posed at the panelist who answered them eloquently.

The event was yet another discussion to reiterate how food insecurity will have major impacts on National Security if related components are not managed successfully leading to a country being dragged away from self-sufficiency.