

19th Annual Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)

Working Group on Agriculture (WGA)

21-23 June 2022

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam (Hybrid meeting – In-person and Virtual)

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

1. The members of the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) from the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), namely, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, met in person, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar virtually on 21-23 June 2022 for the 19th Annual Meeting of the WGA (WGA AM-19). The meeting deliberated on the theme "Adaptation of GMS Agriculture in the context of Climate Change and the Water-Food-Energy (WFE) Nexus".

2. The WGA noted that the GMS potential to produce safe, nutritious, and environment-friendly agri-food products can be achieved by advancing subregional cooperation in adaptation to climate change and operationalizing water-food-energy (WFE) nexus approach. Each WGA representative summarized national agricultural strategies and actions to address climate change, improve land, soil, and nutrient management, and increase water and energy productivity in agri-food systems in a holistic manner. The WGA recognized common interest among the GMS countries to collaborate further in introducing innovative policy measures and strengthening institutional and technical capacities to improve soil health and manage WFE nexus trade-offs. It stressed the need for harnessing the collective wisdom and experience of the subregion in addressing transboundary issues of agri-food resource management.

3. In view of the increasing water stresses in the GMS and associated adverse impacts on food and energy security in a changing climate, the WGA agreed on the need for improved WFE nexus assessments to inform investment decisions and enhanced monitoring of nexus trade-offs using innovative information technologies. The WGA called for improving cross-sector collaboration and coordination, and for mobilizing investments in nature-based solutions (e.g., managing water reservoirs and groundwater to ensure food security goals, establishing community fish refuges in rice fields) to manage WFE trade-offs.

4. The WGA agreed that improved soil health and water productivity are critical to enhance climate resilience in agri-food systems. The WGA called for enhanced investments in climate-smart irrigation and water management, and integrated nutrient management and other Good Agriculture Practices to improve soil health based on principles of agroecology and regenerative agriculture. The WGA called for including soil care and health in the global climate change agenda and supported the objectives of increasing organic matter in all agricultural soils through new business models for extension and adopting digital agriculture innovations.

5. The WGA expressed concern about the growing adverse impacts of supply chain disruptions due to 3Cs – (i) conflicts such as in Ukraine, (ii) coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and (iii) climate change – on food security of vulnerable populations in the GMS.

The WGA stressed that incentives must be provided to vulnerable smallholder farming communities to cope with increased costs of fertilizers, fuel and other inputs, and enhance overall resilience through targeted social safety nets and by addressing humanitarian needs. The WGA agreed that enabling policies to adapt GMS agriculture to 3Cs are needed and must be further discussed.

6. The WGA stressed the need for meaningful engagement (including cross-country learning and networking) of youth in GMS agriculture and rural vitalization and appreciated the efforts of young agripreneurs to apply innovative technologies to addressing challenges facing agriculture and making farming more attractive and profitable. The WGA received updates on 3 demonstrations (agri-food traceability, digital agri-finance, climate-smart soil and water management) and proposed activities on capacity building. The WGA was also updated on the proposed GMS regional investment framework 2025, the draft GMS results framework 2030, approaches for deepening development partner engagement in GMS WGA activities and opportunities for subregional cooperation in transboundary adaptation of agriculture and water resources in the GMS.

7. The WGA confirmed five priorities for action to be pursued and sustained beyond the implementation period of technical assistance on GMS Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security.

- (i) build institutional and technical capacities for assessing, monitoring, and managing the WFE trade-offs and for mobilizing investments in nature-based solutions to address water, food and energy insecurities in a changing climate
- (ii) enhance investments on climate smart agriculture to improve soil health and water productivity in cropping systems
- (iii) contribute to 3C recovery efforts by supporting measures to develop and adapt supply chains to improve the access of agribusinesses and farmers to higher value markets, and alternative options to lower the cost of inputs and to improve resource use efficiency
- (iv) enhance the participation of youth in GMS agriculture
- (v) engage with other development partners and the private sector on transboundary adaptation of agriculture and water resources

8. The members of the WGA extended sincere appreciation to the financing partners of the GMS Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Program: the PRC Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. The members of the WGA encouraged ADB and other development partners to continue to coordinate and support the program and strengthen shared commitment and partnership for a more integrated, prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable GMS.

9. The WGA expressed its appreciation to the Government of Viet Nam and its Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for co-hosting the meeting.

10. The WGA also thanked the Government of Cambodia and its Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for agreeing to host the 20th Annual Meeting of the WGA.