



**TENTH MEETING OF THE GMS WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE (WGA-10)
Xiengkhouang, Lao People's Democratic Republic, 3 April 2013**

Summary of Proceedings

Introduction

1. The Tenth Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Agriculture (WGA-10) was held in Xiengkhouang, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) concurrently with the 19th Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment (WGE-19).
2. The Meeting was organized and sponsored by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with the cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR, and attended by participants from the six GMS countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), ADB and WGA Secretariat. Resource speakers from the public, private, and academic sectors, and representatives of development partners also attended. ADB provided secretariat support. A list of participants is in Appendix 1.

Session I: Progress Highlights and 2013 Priorities (Open Session)

1.1. Welcome Remarks and Agenda Setting

3. Mr. Xaypladeth Choulamany, WGA Coordinator for Lao PDR, and Director General, Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR, welcomed all participants to the meeting. He expressed his appreciation to ADB and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for their continued support to WGA. He noted that agriculture remained the backbone of Lao PDR's economy and that the meeting would share views and experiences and would explore collaboration among GMS countries and development partners, especially on the topic of green agriculture development. He expressed confidence that the Core Agriculture Support Program II (CASP II) would not only provide a framework for collaborative actions but also a subregional platform for exchange of expertise and experiences, and in translating policy into actions on the ground. As the meeting would discuss CASP II work program and regional investment framework for agriculture, he looked forward to the active participation of all participants, and also encouraged them to explore the sights in Xieng Khouang.
4. In his opening remarks, Mr. Javed Mir, Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, noted that the new GMS Strategic Framework for 2012–2022 called upon the GMS Program, including the agriculture sector, to accelerate the transformation of the GMS transport corridors into genuine economic corridors. CASP II faced a number of challenges that the WGA needed to address to contribute to the vision of the GMS being recognized as the leading producer of safe food using climate friendly agricultural practices and integrated into global market through regional economic corridors. Ensuring safe food and agriculture in the GMS could not be done alone by the WGA, and the working group would need to deepen understanding on how to improve the performance of the agricultural sector and how to work across sectors. Equally important would be to remind the WGA that it was part of the bigger framework of the GMS Economic Cooperation Program, and would need to show how it fitted into the overall context of the Program, how resources would

need to be allocated among the different priority sectors under the Program, and how it could deliver performance without losing sight of the bigger picture nor surrendering its individual function and responsibility. WGA would need to demonstrate how CASP II was contributing to economic prosperity, how it was contributing to the overall vision of the GMS Program in terms of overall improvement in performance and delivering desired outcomes.

5. Copies of the welcome and opening remarks are in Appendix 2.

6. Dr. Sununtar Setboonsarng, Principal Natural Resources Economist, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, introduced the provisional agenda and meeting arrangements. The meeting adopted the revised provisional agenda (Appendix 3). Included in the WGA-10 program was a field trip to agriculture conservation and production sites in Xiengkhouang.

7. Mr. Xaypladeth Choulamany and Mr. Javed Mir chaired and co-chaired the Meeting, respectively.

1.2. CASP II Progress

8. Dr. Setboonsarng, ADB, presented the progress of implementation of CASP II under RETA 8163 funded by Sida, covering the period September 2012–March 2013. Key developments included (i) the establishment of the Regional WGA Secretariat at the ADB Resident Mission in Thailand to enhance coordination between the WGA and the Working Group on Environment (WGE), other working groups, and development partners; (ii) recruitment of WGA Secretariat staff and National Secretariat Specialists; (iii) procurement of services to implement RETA activities; (iv) consultations for upgrading the GMS Agricultural Information Network System (AINS) into a more effective electronic knowledge platform for WGA; and (v) completion of a draft results-based monitoring and evaluation framework and WGA standard operating procedures for WGA's review and consideration. As of 31 March 2013, the RETA contracted amount totaled \$1.64 million, and overall RETA implementation was progressing well. Total fund mobilized from Sweden amounted to \$7.5 million. Nordic Development Fund recently gave preliminary approval that they would consider providing \$5.0 million to co-finance the project, while ADB is also considering providing additional support.

1.3. Regional Pipeline for CASP II and Other Proposed Collaboration by GMS Countries

9. Dr. Setboonsarng gave an overview of the ongoing work to prepare a proposed Regional Investment Framework (RIF) to operationalize the new GMS Strategic Framework for 2012–2022 and the agreed RIF principles as adopted at the 18th GMS Ministerial Conference held in December 2012. A clear objective of the RIF process was to come up with a pipeline of new generation multi-sector investment approaches. The RIF would consist of priority projects in the key GMS priority sectors including agriculture. She then presented the proposed pipeline for Agriculture (both investment and regional technical assistance), the comments received from the WGA, and the next steps leading to the eventual endorsement of the overall RIF at the 19th GMS Ministerial Conference (19th MC) in December 2013. She noted that the proposed pipeline included investment preparation studies and that the pipeline was not cast in stone and would continue to evolve.

Open Discussion

10. In response to representative of Viet Nam's request for ADB to reply in writing and give feedback on their proposed country projects under the RIF, Dr. Setboonsarng stated that the WGA Secretariat would need to carefully review the proposals against RIF criteria, some of which might eventually be included in the RIF as it continues to evolve, and that some project titles and scope could eventually change.

11. Representative of Cambodia said that they had provided detailed comments on the proposed pipeline which could not be presented in more detail at the meeting due to time constraints. He noted that some of the TA projects in the list were in fact associated with the proposed investment projects, and emphasized the need to mobilize and concentrate funding on investment projects, particularly those that were needed for CLMV countries. He further noted that many studies had already been done under the CASP that should be taken into consideration in designing new projects.

12. Representative of Lao PDR noted that the proposed RIF would need to go through a review process prior to endorsement by the 19th MC in December, and concurred with Cambodia's suggestion that previous research studies should be taken into account.

13. Dr. Setboonsarng suggested the desirability of getting the meeting's endorsement in principle of the agriculture pipeline so that it could be included for presentation and discussion at the upcoming GMS Senior Officials Meeting via videocon on 22 April 2013, with the understanding that the details would be developed further in consultation with the countries. She also outlined the process involved including the timeline for review (videoSOM in April), further consultations at the Fifth Economic Corridors' Forum and GMS Investment Conclave in August, and eventual endorsement by the 19th MC in Dec 2013.

14. ADB Co-chair remarked that there could be further clarification regarding the sequencing of the projects in the pipeline and rationalizing them in terms of how they could help improve the agriculture support program. The decision that WGA needed to make at the meeting was whether or not WGA wanted the agriculture investment and technical assistance priorities included and situated in the overall context of the GMS cooperation program. He emphasized that the proposed pipeline was just the starting point, that priorities and projects could change overtime, and that endorsement of the RIF pipeline did not connote a legally binding commitment on anyone.

15. Cambodia supported the ADB Co-chair's statement that the RIF was not legally binding, and that the RIF process was trying to define the country and regional priorities and sell these to development partners for possible financing. Unfortunately, the current WGA meeting did not include a development marketplace as a forum for advertising WGA priorities to development partners. Cambodia emphasized the desirability of having a dedicated agriculture marketplace as a side event of future WGA meetings to ensure that interested development partners were actively engaged in discussions concerning agriculture projects as opposed to the general investment conclave contemplated in August, in which agriculture was just one among many sectors for discussion.

16. ADB Co-chair noted that the development market place and the Investment Conclave would indeed be suitable events but more than these, WGA would need to be convinced on its readiness to engage the development partners, and more importantly, to determine that their

own countries were convinced about the agriculture pipeline and that it could fit into the overall regional pipeline for purposes of internal programming.

17. Cambodia agreed that the process could go ahead in principle and that the WGA Coordinators could help in selling the pipeline in each country and also to development partners. However, the secretariat should take into consideration the comments made at the meeting including the suggestion to simplify the terminologies used in the pipeline and refrain from using elaborate and sophisticated words so that the contents could be easily understood by stakeholders.

18. Based on the foregoing discussions, the meeting agreed to endorse the proposed agriculture pipeline in principle, subject to appropriate adjustments and modifications as suggested during the meeting. The meeting also agreed to discuss in more detail the project design and scope in subsequent consultation process with consideration of comments submitted by respective countries, and rationalizing the pipeline to make it more focused, practical with clearly defined scope and avoid duplication.

1.4. Towards Regional Agri-food Traceability System

19. Mr. Chatta Udomwongsa, FXA Group Ltd., gave a presentation on Traceability in the Supply Chain. His company developed the OpsSmart Software used in both large complex multi-billion dollar operations as well as small agriculture manufactures, and applied for all types of food using GS-1 standards (poultry, pork, beef, seafood, and produce). He explained that traceability ensured food quality and safety, provided transparency in the food chain, allowed for rapid and precise recall in the event of a problem, ensured that necessary processes were followed correctly at every stage of the supply chain, facilitated collection of quality assurance and certification information, and provided detail to identify the cause of the problem. Certain pre-conditions and pre-requisites had to be complied with (farmer registration, facility registration, stakeholder registration, identification, movement document, and health certification). The traceability system served to determine the extent of damage, reimbursement, tracking of livestock movement, early control of transmission and isolation of diseases if necessary, and address heightened food safety concerns. He gave illustrations on how the system was applied to livestock and rice products.

20. In response to Cambodia's query on which was more efficient – traceability or SPS, the resource speaker stated that SPS was applied mainly to fresh products and that it focused only one part of the supply chain, whereas traceability was applied to the whole chain and it supported SPS. It was also noted that traceability system is not a mandatory requirement under WTO as SPS measures.

21. Thailand explained that traceability system facilitate SPS but do not substitute SPS. PRC added that traceability system helped to ensure food safety in the supply chain.

22. AVRDC noted the need to not only focus on standards and certification issues but also to provide farmers with alternatives and options, for example to provide knowledge on pesticides use, improving disease resistance, and having access to quality seed varieties.

1.5. Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)

23. Mr. Christopher John May, IFOAM, gave a presentation on Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) capacity building in the GMS countries, as an activity under RETA 8163:

Implementing the Greater Mekong Sub-region Core Agriculture Support Program, Phase 2. The activity would be implemented in two phases between 2013–15, covering Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam (2013–2014) and PRC, Myanmar and Lao PDR (2014–2015), and would establish at least 2 PGS groups in each country. It would be implemented by IFOAM under guidance from the WGA Secretariat Manager and the ADB Project Officer, in coordination with the National Secretariat Specialists (NSS) in each country. Expected outcomes included: increased institutional and private sector awareness of PGS - key actors trained in the key elements and impacts of PGS; technical specialists trained; strengthened grassroots action at the farm level in agri-food certification and traceability, documentation (PGS training manual, compliance templates and operation guidelines), and policy development.

24. Viet Nam, Lao PDR, and PRC inquired about details on establishment of 2 PGS groups in each GMS country, its Terms of Reference (TOR), which agencies were to be involved, and the details of the contemplated PGS national coordinating bodies to be established. It was suggested that nomination process for training be coursed through the ADB and WGA Secretariat

25. Mr. May noted the request and will be in touch with each GMS country through WGA Secretariat. He clarified that for the PGS national coordinating bodies, he was referring to future possibilities after the TA, depending on what the countries would deem necessary as a long-term goal, if number of PGS groups will increase significantly.

1.6. GMS Agriculture Information Network Service (AINS): Proposed E-Trade

26. Mr. Tang Zhishao, Director, Asia Regional Cooperation Division, Foreign Economic Cooperation Center (FECC), Ministry of Agriculture, PRC, and AINS Focal Point for PRC, briefed the meeting about the progress of work related to maintenance and information updating. Two full-time staff for maintenance and updating had been recruited, the server was being monitored 24 hours a day, emergency maintenance was in place, and no hacking had been noted. The concept of e-Trade and the possible transformation of the AINS into the GMS e-Trade Platform were also discussed. Construction of the platform would involve 2 phases (Phase 1: e-Trade Platform Information Stream; and Phase 2 : e-Government Platform with online E-business processes. The presentation illustrated how information search and query could be done online through the platform using GIS technology application, for example, for business analysis to search for neighboring resources like seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. The system output could be in the form of statistics, thematic maps, and reports. Phase 2 would allow online to online transaction stream for e-Trade including advanced membership management, online payment, e-logistics and packing, and online customs declaration. Initially, the e-Trade Platform would be a free model with value added services charge.

27. Cambodia commended the project but suggested that it should focus on the agriculture sector.

28. Chair commented that the subject of e-Trade would need to involve the Ministry of Commerce, and that the project should in the meantime focus only on information exchange, and was not to be regarded in the same context as Amazon or eBay.

29. **The meeting supported the continued strengthening and expansion of AINS as a subregional knowledge sharing and management platform, as well as the inclusion of the workplan for GIS-related e-Trade in future the CASP II activities, subject to additional**

financing. ADB was requested to seek additional funding for RETA 8163 from the PRC Fund and other possible donors as part of the 2013 workplan.

1.7. Capacity Building for the Efficient Utilization of Biomass for Bioenergy and Food Security in the GMS

30. Mr. Kunhamboo Kannan, WGA Secretariat, gave a briefing on the progress of TA 7833 Capacity Building for Efficient Utilization of Biomass and Bioenergy for Food Security in the GMS. The TA was approved in June 2011 and would close in December 2014, with \$4 million funding from the Nordic Development Fund, and covering Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. Expected outputs included: Output 1: Enhanced regional cooperation on bioenergy development that fosters and safeguards food security; Output 2: Pilot-tested climate-friendly Biomass investment projects, for more extensive implementation; Output 3: Strengthened capacity for the efficient use of biomass; and Output 4: Developed and disseminated knowledge products. He presented the achievements that had been achieved thus far and the detailed work plan for 2013 for each output component/subcomponent.

31. Dr. Setboonsarng mentioned that while the Nordic Development Fund was supporting pilot activities in the 3 participating countries, the other GMS countries would be invited to participate in regional forum on standard harmonization and in the capacity building activities of the project. In particular, sharing of knowledge and experiences from PRC and THA to CLMV countries are further encouraged.

32. Viet Nam expressed appreciation for this project, including the recent change of consultant team leader which led to closer coordination and greater country ownership.

33. The meeting suggested collaboration with other development partners that were implementing similar initiatives and tapping the expertise and experience of PRC and Thailand.

1.8. Statements by Development Partners:

34. Representative of Sida commended the organizers for bringing together the two key working groups on agriculture and environment, as well as a large group of partners operating in the region. He expressed strong support for such approaches to be broadened in the future, and suggested the potential to work closely with the energy and tourism sectors. Sweden particularly appreciated how CASP II had been designed to assist poor farmers to access a rapidly growing market segment and getting premium prices, and how the diversification and improvement of food production were also assisting farmers in building resilience against climate change and other threats. This approach was rather unique and complemented other on-going but more mainstream agricultural activities in the region. He noted that CASP II was picking up speed and activities were starting to create results, and that the program was receiving increasing interest from around the region – from governments, the private sector, civil society and development partners. He suggested that CASP II and its partners consider working on the following issues: (i) country level commitment and ownership; (ii) partnerships and cross-sectoral coordination; (iii) poverty dimension, gender equality and rights; (iv) information dissemination and awareness raising; (v) funding; and (vi) reporting on results and risks. He requested a written response from the WGA Secretariat to this first statement from Sweden regarding CASP and suggested that this procedure be introduced for CASP after the next WGA meeting.

35. Representative of IFAD recalled that their partnership with WGA went back to CASP I and that IFAD had funded studies and completed knowledge products, copies of which had been distributed to participants the previous day. He mentioned other projects in the GMS which IFAD had supported including work with FAO Regional Office on enhancing competitiveness of rural households, with UNESCAP on pro-poor rural energy access for poor households, and World Agro-Forestry Center on investment projects in all GMS countries except Myanmar. IFAD was currently working with ADB on a Memorandum of Understanding to further strengthen partnership, and looked forward to continue working closely with the WGA on further implementation of CASP II, as well as working with Myanmar.

36. Representative of AVRDC shared the Center's mission to eradicate poverty and improve nutrition through vegetable research and development work to help farmers go into higher value fruits and vegetables, and also livestock, and to meet food safety requirements. They had the largest gene bank in vegetable resources in the world, and were also working on integrated pest management to comply with food safety requirements. He emphasized that the GMS needed to invest in horticulture, to help in giving farmers options regarding pest management and vegetable cultivation to ensure compliance with certification schemes, and to provide technical assistance to improve the vegetable sector. AVRDC looked forward to working with all GMS countries and expanding collaboration with WGA.

37. Representative of JIRCAS mentioned their on-going projects in Lao PDR on rural development and setting up of model villages, including development of technical packages.

38. Representative of ACIAR mentioned their work in five regions, including Southeast Asia. They were working with Ausaid on fisheries and livestock. For several years they worked in Thailand and had now shifted to Lao PDR and Cambodia. Their research projects were designed to be aligned with other donors' programs, and they were currently discussing with ADB and IFAD on sustainable resource management and productivity enhancement. WGA forum was important for regional collaboration, and for sharing of information on who was doing what, and what could be learned from each other.

39. CABI didn't make an oral statement but request the following notes to be included in the proceeding. CABI is focusing on food security and rural livelihoods from the angle of 'lose less, feed more'. The approach to optimise yield without incurring more/excessive demand on new land, fertilizers, chemicals, water, consistent with CASP II.

Session II: Other Matters

II.1. CASP Results Framework and Monitoring System

40. This session discussed issues related to strengthening WGA cooperation and implementation of CASP II.

41. Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, WGA Secretariat, mentioned that as a follow-up to the workshop held in October last year, ADB circulated the CASP II results framework to WGA, and that comments from the countries had not yet been received. Successful implementation of CASP II required results-based tool to evaluate how agricultural development was to be achieved. The objectives were to develop and operationalize the results-focused framework for each project in the CASP II pipeline, bearing in mind the three strategic pillars to fulfill the vision of the program. The results framework would use four sets of performance indicators to track progress overtime of priority projects and if they were providing the desired impact and

outcome, based on baseline data, changes made over time, and supplemented by secondary data to be provided by the countries. He outlined the indicative projects to implement the CASP II strategy as identified also in the RIF pipeline for agriculture and spread over 2013–2020, and described an organizational and monitoring structure to ensure effective operationalization of the results framework. He stressed that the WGA was not expected to endorse the framework at this stage but could give guidance on the basic framework and make recommendations on references and inputs to baseline survey and secondary data supporting indicators. The proposed results framework and operation plan were expected to be further discussed and finalized at the planned WGA Retreat in May.

42. PRC agreed in principle with the concept, but expressed concern about connectivity with line agencies.

43. Cambodia was interested to know who would be using the results framework in monitoring the progress of projects, which normally was done by an independent agency, and how it would be differentiated from the usual progress report. Cambodia stressed that the one who implements should not be the one to monitor; the implementer should only report the progress. Organizing just one workshop or retreat might not be adequate, and it was also important to carefully identify the participants in the planned Retreat.

44. Lao PDR remarked that the framework appeared fine but the issue was how to operationalize it.

45. Viet Nam agreed that it was timely to have a monitoring framework but added that CASP II should have very clear indicators; the report should not be voluminous and highly technical and should allow easy reading. It was most important to highlight the lessons learned, especially the problem and failure points.

46. Mr. Vichitlekarn explained that day-to-day data collection to capture the levels of targets, inputs, and outputs would be coordinated with the WGA National Secretariat and the supporting national secretariat staff, and available data from the counties would be consolidated by the Regional Secretariat. He also explained that the monitoring and evaluation of CASP II would keep track of progress made and the adjustments that needed to be done. There would also be an independent mid-term review and evaluation to provide a third party view of the progress made, and which in this case would be arranged by Sida as donor.

47. Cambodia inquired if the monitoring framework was intended to replace the ADB monitoring system and how it would work in conjunction with the monitoring framework of the donor.

48. Dr. Setboonsarng replied that these various monitoring systems would be harmonized, and there would be only one monitoring system. To effectively operationalize the system, ADB has requested during the result framework workshop in October 2013 for countries to identify secondary data available as indicators for CASP II and is still awaiting for reply from the GMS countries.

49. Sida stated that they did not have a separate internal monitoring system or specific requirements for tools to monitor the program. They hoped to be able to find a consultant to do the mid-term evaluation.

50. Cambodia suggested to just adopt the ADB monitoring system, instead of creating a new system which would still need to be harmonized with the ADB system.

51. Dr. Setboonsarng clarified that CASP II covered not only ADB-financed projects and that the ADB monitoring system would apply only to ADB-funded projects. The CASP results framework was meant to cover the universe of projects under the program.

52. In light of the comments made, **the meeting noted that the proposed CASP Results Framework and Monitoring System would be further discussed at the WGA Retreat in May.**

53. Copies of presentations under Session I are in Appendix 4.

II.2. WGA Work Plan 2013

54. Dr. Setboonsarng presented the detailed work plan for 2013, to be supported by the ongoing RETAs for CASP II, including initiation of preparatory work on the Participatory Guarantee System, initiation of pilots for e-Trade, conduct of baseline market survey on consumer preferences on agri-products, gender-responsive and climate friendly agriculture, knowledge management and dissemination, regional cooperation on agriculture including activities relating to establishment of WGA NSSUs, finalization of the results framework and WGA Standard Operating Procedures, consultation meetings with development partners, joint policy forum with ADBI on seed industry in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV), and public-private partnership (PPP) training program on agriculture sector management under the Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management. Under RETA 7833, there were also planned activities for 2013, as discussed earlier.

55. In response to PRC's suggestion that NSSU terminology be changed to national implementing units, Dr. Setboonsarng clarified that the term had been used repeatedly in documents previously circulated and endorsed by the WGA and that WGA would need to be consistent with its usage.

II.3. Proposed Additional Financing for RETA 8163 – Improving Nitrogen Use Efficiency for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in the GMS

56. Dr. Setboonsarng presented a proposal for additional financing for RETA 8163 to support a new project on Nitrogen Use Efficiency for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in the GMS, linked to Pillar 2 of CASP II. The project concept paper had been circulated previously to the GMS countries. Expected project outputs included (i) demonstration and promotion of Nitrogen-use efficiency in agricultural practices; (ii) establishment and promotion of regional carbon policies, standards and regulations; and (iii) institutional capacity building. Actual demonstration sites would be set up in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, although the other GMS countries would be invited to participate in some project activities. The project, estimated at US\$5.0 million, was being proposed for NDF funding to be administered by ADB from July 2013 to September 2017.

57. JIRCAS mentioned that they had implemented projects investigating nitrogen cycle in Lao DPR and could contribute technical inputs.

58. **The meeting agreed to endorse the proposal and requested ADB to proceed with the processing to seek ADB Board approval for NDF funding.**

II.4. WGA Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

59. Mr. Kunhamboo Kannan, WGA Secretariat, presented a Draft WGA Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to guide WGA operations. He described the WGA's Implementation Structure, the WGA Secretariat Office and the roles and responsibilities of the WGA Manager and Secretariat staff, the key tasks of WGA National Secretariat Support Units in each GMS country, the roles and responsibilities of the national focal points and technical focal points at the country level, and guidelines for financing operations, reporting lines at the WGA regional secretariat and national secretariat levels, communication modalities, channels and levels (ADB, WGA, country levels), governance, office and administrative procedures, consultant engagement, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, anti-corruption, and cooperation with development partners and non-government organizations. Copies were earlier circulated to the countries for comments. He emphasized that what the proposed SOP was trying to achieve was for the WGA Secretariat to run efficiently and effectively communicate with the countries. Guidance from the WGA was requested on how to strengthen communication between the WGA Secretariat and the national focal points. He stressed that the draft SOP was not cast in iron, and still subject to further changes, based on guidance from the WGA on how to further improve it. Based on WGA-10 discussions and additional comments from WGA, the draft would be further revised and refined and re-circulated to WGA.

60. Viet Nam suggested that the implementation chart be revised in order to clarify the role of the focal points and implementing agencies.

61. Both Cambodia and Viet Nam raised the issue on the need to clearly distinguish the RETA project implementation structure as against the GMS instructional structure for the WGA. The WGA would need to look closely at the proposed SOP in order to fully understand what was the implementing mechanism being contemplated. They emphasized that the WGA Secretariat was supposed to be at ADB HQ in Manila, as differentiated from the project implementation unit of the TA. Cambodia request for further clarification establishment of the WGA Secretariat Office in Bangkok as oppose to ADB headquarters in Manila, to manage the GMS agriculture projects. Cambodia emphasized that there should be a clear distinction between the WGA Secretariat and the TA implementing unit for the project, and that the governments should communicate with ADB and not with the Secretariat. Rather than call it SOP, it would be more appropriate to call it Terms of Reference (TOR) and implementation arrangement. Cambodia suggested that the draft SOP and its implications on government ownership and responsibility be reviewed very carefully, and to clearly distinguish the SOP for the WGA and the SOP for project implementation.

62. Lao PDR added that the reporting mechanism needed to be discussed thoroughly.

63. Dr. Setboonsarng clarified that the attachment of the WGA Secretariat to the ADB Resident Mission in Thailand was in line with ADB management decision to enhance the role of the Thai Resident Mission as the regional hub for subregional cooperation in the GMS. She stated that the term "WGA Secretariat" has been used since the establishment of the Working Group on Agriculture in 2013 and it has been functioning as the Regional Implementation Unit of all the RETAs under CASP I and CASP II. She explained that in the case of the environment sector, the EOC was effectively the secretariat for WGE, and that EOC had a much larger financing facility compared to that for CASP, located at TRM. She added that the proposed communication and reporting lines outlined in the SOP were actually intended to facilitate timely communications.

64. Cambodia remarked that the idea of the regional implementation unit was understood, however, they would want to get a clear indication of ADB's policy about promoting Thailand as the regional hub to rationalize the move to have the WGA Secretariat based in Thailand.

65. Viet Nam expressed concern about the difficulties arising from the communication lines and the establishment of individual national secretariats in light of internal organizational complications within the country line ministries. Viet Nam suggested that the matter be studied and deliberated upon very carefully.

66. ADB Co-Chair stressed that there were two primary functions of the WGA Secretariat – one was coordination and day-to-day communication with the countries, and the other was the program coordination and project implementation function. The proposed SOP could be a good entry point to further clarify these functions and the implementation and reporting system.

67. In reply to Dr. Setboonsarng's query on the form of communication considered official by the countries (whether fax or email), Thailand suggested that official letters be scanned and sent by email.

68. It was clarified during the meeting that the GMS Program was generally flexible and not rules-based. The common understanding was that communications concerning general concerns of the GMS Program and those that cut across sectors were addressed to the GMS National Coordinators, while those that were specific to individual sectors were normally addressed to the sector national coordinator, which in the case of the agriculture sector was the WGA National Coordinator. Similarly, it was recognized that certain communications such as no objection letters for ADB-financed loans and TAs were addressed to the GMS National Coordinators.

69. Cambodia wanted to be clear on how WGE and WGA could work together and what the synergies were. The important thing was to conduct consultations on the design and preparation of the project before the projects were approved, to define which ministries would be involved and their respective responsibilities, and how the synergies would be operationalized and the mechanisms involved. Dr. Setboonsarng clarified that a study on possible collaboration between WGA and WGE was conducted during the design of CASP II TA and CEP II TA and so the collaboration was planned to a certain extent. She further provided an example that one approach planned is to identify a common geographical area where there were common or related initiatives that could be pursued together with activities complementing each other toward a common goal.

70. **The meeting requested the WGA Secretariat to revise the draft WGA SOP based on the meeting's comments, for further review by the countries.**

71. Copies of presentations under Session II are in Appendix 5.

II.5. Others

72. Cambodia commented about how important the role of the WGA was, considering that key decisions for the agriculture sector were elevated to the GMS Ministers, and requested ADB to review the administrative arrangements for WGA meetings since many changes had been introduced over the years. For example, there used to be development marketplace as well as media briefings after WGA meetings. ADB should also clarify the responsibility for the final choice of venue of WGA meetings (whether it should be ADB or the host), and explore

enhanced contribution from the host government by sharing responsibility for organizing and even financing the meeting, as done in the tourism sector. Cambodia noted the inadequate hotel support for conference requirements (screen, microphones) and emphasized that the WGA, composed of senior level officials, should be accorded the appropriate amenities.

73. Dr. Setboonsarng responded that on the need for GMS Ministerial Meeting, this was discussed in previous WGA meeting when it was pointed out that since ASEAN Ministerial Meeting for Agriculture Ministers are organized annually, GMS may not need to organize it as frequently. Perhaps the countries might want to consider holding GMS ministerial meeting every three years or so. On the cost of holding the meeting in Xiengkhouang, she reported that it was double the cost of holding it in Bangkok, but the rationale of holding it in a remote location to give participants an appreciation of the situation on the ground. This came with the awareness that hotel facilities might not be at the optimum level. She extended on behalf of ADB her apologies for any inconvenience to the participants.

SESSION III: Closing Session

III.1. Summary of Meeting Outcomes

74. Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, WGA Secretariat, summarized the key discussion and decision points to be translated into the work plan and to guide the WGA Secretariat's follow-through actions. He noted that detailed points and comments made during the meeting would be reflected in the summary of proceedings.

75. Dr. Setboonsarng informed the meeting about a ThaiFex, a food trade show planned that in Bangkok in May 2013, organized by the Ministry of Commerce, and which could be timed with the planned WGA Retreat. Viet Nam requested ADB to send an email to confirm the date prior to send officially communicate the final date of the retreat to the countries.

III.2. Confirmation of Date and Venue of the 11th WGA Meeting (WGA-11) and Other Key Events

76. The Meeting tentatively suggested convening the 11th WGA Meeting (WGA-11) in Myanmar, subject to further confirmation by the prospective host country. Details about the exact venue and dates would be communicated by ADB to the WGA Coordinators later. Countries suggested to consider either the end of March or end of May, and to avoid the month of April when many activities were traditionally held.

77. The meeting agreed to hold the WGA Retreat in May 2013 in Thailand to discuss and finalize pending issues, including CASP II Results Framework and WGA SOP.

78. The Chair and Co-Chair expressed their thanks to all the participants, resource persons, and observers for their active participation and contribution to the discussions.

Summary of Key Decisions and Recommendations:

- **Proposed RIF Agriculture Pipeline:** The meeting agreed to endorse in principle the proposed RIF agriculture pipeline, subject to appropriate adjustments and modifications as suggested during the meeting. The meeting also agreed to discuss in more detail the project design and scope in subsequent consultation process with consideration of

comments submitted by respective countries, and rationalizing the pipeline to make it more focused, practical with clearly defined scope and avoid duplication.

- **Agriculture Information Network Service (AINS): Proposed E-Trade:** The meeting supported the continued strengthening and expansion of AINS as a subregional knowledge sharing and management platform, as well as the inclusion of the work plan for GIS-related e-Trade in the CASP II 2013 work plan. ADB was requested to seek additional funding for RETA 8163 from the PRC Fund and other possible donors.
- **Capacity Building for the Efficient Utilization of Biomass for Bioenergy and Food Security in the GMS:** The meeting suggested collaboration with other development partners that were implementing similar initiatives and tapping the expertise and experience of PRC and Thailand.
- **CASP Results Framework and Monitoring System:** The meeting noted that the proposed CASP Results Framework and Monitoring System would be further discussed at the planned WGA Retreat in May.
- **WGA Work Plan 2013:** The meeting noted the WGA Work Plan for 2013 prepared by the WGA Secretariat.
- **Proposed Additional Financing for RETA 8163: Improving Nitrogen Use Efficiency for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in the GMS:** The meeting agreed to endorse the proposal and requested ADB to proceed with the processing to seek ADB Board approval for NDF funding.
- **WGA Standard Operating Procedures (SOP):** The meeting requested the WGA Secretariat to revise the draft WGA SOP based on the meeting's comments, for further review by the WGA.
- **Other Matters:** Cambodia suggested for ADB to revisit previous arrangements for WGA meetings including organizing a development market place and media briefings, to clarify responsibility for the final choice of venues of WGA meetings, to explore the possibility of enhanced contribution from the host government by sharing responsibility for organizing and even financing the meeting, as in the case of the tourism sector, and to ensure that appropriate amenities were extended to all participants.
- The meeting agreed to hold the WGA Retreat in May 2013 in Thailand to discuss and finalize pending issues, including CASP II Results Framework and WGA SOP. The meeting also tentatively agreed to convene WGA-11 in Myanmar, subject to further confirmation on the exact dates and venue, to be communicated to the WGA National Coordinators later.
