

**Greater Mekong Subregion
3rd Meeting of the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA-3)
Hue City, Viet Nam, 15-17 February 2006**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. The 3rd Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Agriculture (WGA-3) was held in Hue City, Viet Nam from 15 to 17 February 2006. The meeting was co-hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and the Asian Development Bank. Over 70 participants attended, comprising 34 delegates from the six GMS countries, 27 representatives from 18 development partner agencies including multilateral and bilateral donors and international research organizations, 1 representative from the NGO sector, and ADB staff and consultants.

2. The theme of WGA-3 was “*Strengthening GMS Cross-border Collaboration in Agriculture*”. The objectives of the meeting were to: (i) review the progress of GMS cooperation in agriculture; (ii) identify new/emerging subregional issues/needs; (iii) determine opportunities for resource mobilization; (iv) discuss and agree on a proposed comprehensive strategic framework for subregional cooperation in agriculture and action plan for endorsement to the GMS Agriculture Ministers; and (v) agree on the agenda and initiate preparations for the GMS Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting. The agenda included: a progress report on the GMS work plan and related policy pronouncements; presentations on current WGA projects and related initiatives by partner institutions; a review of and reactions to a Draft Strategic Framework on Subregional Cooperation in Agriculture; and agreements on a proposed Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting to be hosted by the People’s Republic of China.

3. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Le Van Minh, Director General, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam, and Mr. Urooj Malik, Director, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division, Mekong Department, ADB.

Highlights of the Meeting:

A. *Opening Session*

4. In his opening remarks, Dr. Minh extended his warm welcome to all the participants and expressed his thanks to ADB for co-organizing the meeting. H. E. Dr. Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, keynoted the meeting and observed the many opportunities for cooperation in the GMS that could lead to mutual benefit among the GMS countries. He underscored the need for the countries to work together to enhance the competitiveness of the subregion’s agricultural exports. For his part, Mr. Malik welcomed everyone to the meeting in behalf of ADB. He mentioned a number of global and regional challenges confronting agriculture that included rapid population growth and the demand for increased food production, decreasing available arable land compounded by increasing stress on the environment and natural resources, requirements for more productive

agricultural technologies, globalization and trade barrier issues for agricultural products, and the threat of transboundary animal diseases.

B. WGA Progress Report

5. Ms. Flor S. Melendez, Consultant, GMS Unit, MKOC, presented a Progress Report on the WGA Work Plan and related policy pronouncements. She recalled the highlights of previous WGA meetings and decisions of high-level GMS meetings that provided policy directions relating to subregional agriculture cooperation, notably those of the 13th GMS Ministerial Meeting held in December 2004 and the 2nd GMS Summit held in July 2005. Ms. Melendez mentioned the various initiatives in the form of technical assistance projects that the ADB, in collaboration with other development partners, has pursued to support WGA and the implementation of its work program.

C. Current WGA and Related Initiatives.

Special Presentations

6. Four resource persons presented current WGA initiatives while two resource persons from GMS development partners presented related initiatives.

7. Dr. Sivramiah Shantharam, Team Leader of ADB-funded RETA 6214 briefed the meeting on the components of the technical assistance and discussed a strategic framework for advanced agricultural science and technology for the GMS that emphasized science and technology applications to address problems in agricultural systems. The framework will focus on policy development and priority setting, human resource capacity building, infrastructure, biosafety and food safety standards, and public acceptance.

8. Mr. David Shires, Team Member of the LEARN IT Project under ADB JFICT Grant 9047, discussed the Rice Knowledge Bank (RKB) of IRRI as the leading ICT-based repository of rice extension and training knowledge and the potential for using IT to improve research-extension linkages. The RKB is designed as a demand-driven system, focused on the needs of extension workers and farmers. IRRI is working to expand the content, application and network coverage of RKB.

9. Mr. Patrick Durand, CIRAD¹, presented a concept paper on the proposed Agricultural Knowledge Platform Initiative (AgriMek Regional Platform Initiative) for the GMS. AgriMek is expected to stimulate the sharing of operational means and information within the GMS region among National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES), universities, professional organizations, farmers and local communities, local NGOs and other stakeholders.

10. Mr. Lu Xiaoping, PRC Delegation, presented the status of the GMS Agriculture Information Network Project which involves the establishment of a GMS agriculture information website in the internet and cooperation network in the GMS countries; publicity for WGA activities; and provision of a platform for enterprises to develop economic and trade activities in the GMS countries. With comments and inputs from the focal points of GMS countries, the website started trial operation in November 2005

¹ CIRAD – Centre de cooperation internationale en recherche' agronomique pour le developpement

under domain name: www.gms-ain.org. PRC plans to hold an inauguration ceremony for the GMS agriculture information website during the GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting.

11. Dr. Subhash Morzaria, FAO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, presented a Progress Report on the Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) in GMS countries. He discussed the economic impacts of TADs, notably foot and mouth disease, avian flu, SARS, classical swine fever, mad cow disease, and NIPAH virus. He mentioned the Global Framework for the control of Transboundary Animal Diseases under the OIE² Initiative. He emphasized the importance of TAD control in SEA due to the following reasons: livestock constitute 15 percent of agricultural GDP and a strategic part of small farms in the region, rising demand for livestock, great opportunity for poverty reduction, and high morbidity and mortality rates of as much as 50-80%. He highlighted the impact of avian influenza where millions of birds have been killed or culled resulting in huge socio-economic losses.

12. Mr. Ganesh Thapa, Regional Economist, Asia and Pacific Division of the International Fund for Agricultural Development presented IFAD's subregional strategy for rural poverty alleviation in the GMS, with focus on risks and vulnerability. He described the elements and programs of the strategy, and identified possible areas of collaboration with the WGA.

Reactions on Current GMS Initiatives.

13. Delegations from Cambodia, PRC, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam reacted to the above presentations, sought clarifications and raised relevant issues, among them: complementation with similar projects in the subregion; translating these initiatives into concrete gains at the farmers' level; the need for institutional strengthening and capacity building particularly among the less-endowed GMS countries; emphasis on poverty reduction, cross-border trade issues; and evaluating the performance of the WGA. Representatives of development partners discussed complementary initiatives, suggested ways and means of improving GMS projects, and identified areas of collaboration. Other priority concerns identified included: cross-border agricultural trade and issues related to food safety and development and harmonization of standards; rural renewable energy and need for cooperative programs on biomass and biofuels, particularly ethanol from cassava; systems interoperability among information networks; monitoring and evaluation of project impacts; project ownership; and harmonization of donor initiatives.

D. Draft Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture.

14. Dr. Alexander Flor, ADB Consultant for Regional Strategic Planning, presented the draft strategic framework that was developed based on the overall GMS Program Framework and contained elements that were agreed upon in earlier GMS Ministerial and WGA meetings. The Framework encapsulates the vision statement of the GMS, the WGA mission statement, and the original objectives set for the WGA. It covers five strategic thrusts consistent with the strategic thrusts of the overall GMS Program and presents a Core Agriculture Sector Program (CASP) consisting of four core programs each addressing one of the strategic thrusts. The CASP situates current initiatives and

² OIE – Office International des Epizooties

proposed activities into the four core programs, namely: *Core Program 1. Cross-border Agricultural Trade*; *Core Program 2. GMS Knowledge Network*; *Core Program 3. Capacity Building in Agriculture*; and *Core Program 4. Emergency Response for Agricultural Crises*.

15. The consultant clarified that his task mainly involved collating existing decisions and initiatives into a coherent framework within set parameters of the GMS Program, with due consideration given to priorities among member countries and the current development assistance environment in the subregion. Country delegations were invited to present their reactions. Development partners were likewise requested to identify entry points of collaboration within the proposed core programs.

Country Reactions.

16. The six GMS countries endorsed the draft strategic framework in principle. To improve the document further, suggestions were proposed which may be categorized under the following: specifying the mechanisms for strengthening the WGA Secretariat (Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam); giving special attention to rural renewable energy and the adoption of agricultural products standards for the entire GMS (China, Thailand); inclusion of water resources management in the core programs (Lao PDR); ensuring the bridging of the human resource development gap among member countries by widening the scope of Core Program 3 to include, among others, capacity building for sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) and food safety (Myanmar, Thailand); having a more proactive stance on agricultural emergencies and crises situations (Thailand); formulating a flagship program on poverty reduction (Thailand); specifying the funding mechanism for the core programs (Vietnam); and instituting a robust M&E system for the WGA (Vietnam).

Entry Points for Collaboration.

17. Representatives from development partners took turns in suggesting improvements to the core programs and identified possible entry points for collaboration. IFAD pledged financial support for Core Programs 1 and 3 in grant funds.

Next Steps.

18. It was agreed that based on the additional comments/inputs discussed at the meeting, an improved version of the draft strategic framework will be prepared and circulated to the member countries. The final version of the strategic framework will be presented to the Agriculture Ministers Meeting for endorsement.

E. Proposed Agriculture Ministers' Meeting.

19. In a closed executive session, the delegations of the GMS countries and the ADB discussed the forthcoming Agriculture Ministers' Meeting and agreed on the following:

- The Agriculture Ministers' Meeting will be co-hosted by ADB and the People's Republic of China.
- The meeting will be held in Beijing to coincide with the China International Agribusiness Trade Fair in mid-October 2006; the exact dates will be communicated later by PRC.

- The international trade fair will have a distinct **GMS Agribusiness Trade Fair** to showcase agricultural products from the **GMS countries**. The **GMS countries**, upon internal consultations with relevant national agencies, shall give firm indications of participation in the trade fair to **ADB and PRC** by early **March 2006**.
- A meeting of **GMS senior agriculture officials** will be held one day before the **Agriculture Ministers' Meeting** to review the final agenda/program and fine-tune the draft joint ministerial statement and press statement. The draft joint statement of the ministers and other relevant documents will be circulated to the **GMS countries** for comments two months before the event.
- Upon the explicit request of the host country, **PRC**, and notwithstanding the other ministerial events such as the **GMS Ministerial Meeting** and the **ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry** scheduled immediately before or after the **GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting**, every effort shall be taken by the countries to ensure the attendance of their respective **Agriculture Ministers**.
- A formal communication from **ADB** on the agreements made regarding the **Agriculture Ministers' Meeting**, including a tentative agenda will be sent to the **GMS countries** through the **WGA focal points** by early **March 2006**.

F. Closing Session

20. The Co-chairmen individually expressed thanks to the **GMS delegates** and the representatives of the development partners for attending the meeting and for their substantial comments and active contributions to the discussions.

G. Conclusion

21. The crucial role of agriculture in the development of the **Greater Mekong Subregion** has been reaffirmed by the keen reception and active participation of the **GMS countries** in the meeting and the intense interest that **WGA-3** has generated among the development assistance community. The four-pronged agenda of **WGA-3** was sufficiently discussed and its objectives were fully met.

**Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS):
Third Meeting of the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA-3)
Hotel Saigon Morin, Hue City, Viet Nam, 15-17 February 2006**

Theme: “Strengthening GMS Cross-border Collaboration in Agriculture”

Annotated Meeting Agenda/ Program

(All sessions will be co-chaired by Viet Nam and ADB)

Tuesday, 14 February 2006

Arrival of Participants

1900- 2100 Working Dinner for Heads of GMS Delegations hosted by ADB, Royal Room,
Hotel Saigon Morin

Day 1

Wednesday, 15 February 2006

0830- 0900 Registration

I. Inaugural Session

Session 1

0900- 0930 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Welcome Remarks by:

Mr. Le Van Minh

Director General
International Cooperation Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Remarks by:

Mr. Urooj Malik

Director
Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division
Mekong Department
Asian Development Bank

Opening Speech by:

H.E. Cao Duc Phat

Minister

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

0930- 1000 Group Photo and Coffee Break

1000- 1010 Brief Introduction of Delegates

1010- 1030 **Progress Report on WGA Work Plan and Related Policy Pronouncements**
*(Presenter: Ms. Flor S. Melendez, Consultant, GMS Unit, Operations
Coordination Division, Mekong Department, ADB)*

Participants will be briefed on (i) progress of various initiatives/activities undertaken since WGA-2 held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in March 2004; and (ii) new developments and policy pronouncements related to cooperation in Agriculture made at the 13th GMS Ministerial Conference held in Vientiane, December 2004 and the 2nd GMS Leaders' Summit held in Kunming, PRC, July 2005.

1030- 1050 Open Discussion

II. Special Presentations

Session 2

1050- 1110 **Strengthening Capacity and Regional Cooperation in Advanced Agricultural Science and Technology in the GMS** *(Presenter: Dr. Sivramiah Shantharam, Team Leader, ADB RETA 6214)*

*The presentation will cover the issues involved in promoting regional cooperation and strengthening capacity in the use of advanced agricultural science and technology, and in related food safety in the GMS countries. These issues include (i) awareness and application of agricultural biotechnology; (ii) appropriate policy and regulatory framework; and (iii) institutional capacity for advanced technology. The **Inception Report** for the regional technical assistance project funded by ADB and a **Draft Strategy for Advanced Agricultural Science and Technology** will be discussed. The presentation will discuss recommendations that could feed into the agenda-setting process for the GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting.*

1110- 1130 Open Discussion

(Active participation of Development Partners in this discussion and all other subsequent sessions, particularly in identifying forward-looking areas of partnership and collaboration, is most welcome.)

1130- 1330 Lunch

Session 3

- 1330- 1350 **Improving Poor Farmers' Livelihood Through Information Communication Technology** (Presenter: **Mr. David Shires**, Team Member, LEARN-IT Project, IRRI, ADB JFICT Grant 9047)

The presentation will discuss the Rice Knowledge Bank of IRRI, the potential for using IT to improve research-extension linkages and the status of the LEARN IT Project. It will also discuss the application of IT in disseminating information on rice technology, integrated pest management, and best practices that could be replicated for wider use in the GMS as well as a model for other crops. The presentation will also discuss recommendations that could feed into a preliminary strategic framework for regional cooperation and the agenda-setting process for the GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting.

- 1350-1410 Open Discussion

- 1410-1430 **Agricultural Knowledge Platform for the GMS** (Presenter: **Mr. Patrick Y. Durand**, Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific, European and International Relations, CIRAD)

The presentation will discuss CIRAD's concept document on an Agricultural Knowledge Platform in the GMS (AgriMek Platform Project) that aims to facilitate capacity building, training, on-farm research, technology transfer and information dissemination related to agriculture development across the GMS. It will also discuss the three priority areas of focus, namely: (i) innovative and sustainable crop production systems in the mountainous regions of the Mekong Corridor using agro-ecological approaches; (ii) innovative livestock systems and biodiversity; and (iii) sustainable quality food chains for urban areas.

- 1430- 1450 Open Discussion

Session 4

- 1450- 1510 **Agricultural Information Network in the GMS** (Presenter: **Mr. Lu Xiaoping**, Deputy Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, PRC)

The presentation will discuss progress achieved regarding the proposed establishment of an Agricultural Information Network in the GMS since the Workshop held in Beijing in December 2004. It will also present the next steps to be taken, including the mobilization of resources, to move the project forward)

- 1510- 1530 Open Discussion

- 1530-1545 Coffee Break

1545-1605 **Transboundary Animal Disease Prevention and Control** (Presenter: **Mr. Subhash Morzaria**, FAO, Team Leader, ADB RETA 6192)

The presentation will discuss the progress of the ongoing RETA 6192 for Transboundary Animal Disease Control in the GMS and, urgent concerns regarding avian flu and other issues related to livestock. It will present ideas for the operationalization of the Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation to Prevent and Control Transboundary Animal Diseases in the GMS signed in Kunming, PRC, during the 2nd GMS Leaders' Summit. It will also discuss the international dimension and context, in particular highlighting the joint FAO/OIE global framework on the control of transboundary animal diseases (GF-TADs), the role of other players in the field, and the long term needs and requirements for capacity in TADs control. The presentation will also provide relevant inputs to the agenda-setting process for the GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, particularly in the context of a strategic framework for subregional cooperation in Agriculture.

1605-1625 Open Discussion

Session 5

1625- 1645 **Subregional Strategy for Rural Poverty Alleviation in the GMS** (Presenter: **Mr. Ganesh Thapa**, Regional Economist, Asia and Pacific Division, International Fund for Agricultural Development)

IFAD's presentation will address issues of risk and vulnerability through risk reduction investments, risk transfer mechanisms, social and other safety nets; the role of agriculture and the productivity and competitiveness challenge for the small farmer. A new paradigm for these issues based on partnerships with countries, donors, and the private sector will be introduced. A concrete proposal for technology transfer in the context of South-South cooperation in the Mekong will also be discussed.

1645-1705 Open Discussion

Adjournment

1900-2130 Welcome Dinner hosted by Mr. Nguyen Xuan Ly, Chairman, Thua Thien Hue People's Committee, Royal Restaurant, Huong Giang Hotel.

Day 2

Thursday, 16 February 2006

0830- 0845 Summary of Day 1 Discussions (Presenter: ADB Co-Chair)

III. The Way Forward

Session 6

0845-0915 **Presentation of Draft Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture (2006-2010)** (Presenter: **Dr. Alexander Flor**, ADB Consultant)

The Draft Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture (2006-2010) together with the background Consultant's Draft Final Report will be presented by an ADB-commissioned consultant. The presentation will give an overview of findings and recommendations arising from a round of consultations with the GMS countries done prior to the WGA-3 meeting. The presentation will also discuss the highlights of a Core Agriculture Program under the proposed Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture covering the period 2006-2010. New inputs and insights to be derived from the discussions during the WGA-3 Meeting will later be incorporated into the revised final document.

0915- 1015 **Country Reactions** (maximum 10 minutes each)

Cambodia

PRC

Lao PDR

Myanmar

Thailand

Viet Nam

The country reactions would ideally respond to the recommendations contained in the Draft Strategic Framework, including the issues and concerns that could be best addressed through subregional cooperation approaches as outlined in the accompanying action plan. The country reactions will also provide additional inputs/suggestions for subsequent incorporation in the revised Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture.

1015-1030 Coffee Break

1030-1200 Open Discussion

Open discussion will follow after the country reactions. As in the previous sessions, active participation and substantive contribution to the discussion by all participants are encouraged to ensure that the Draft Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture is inclusive of the views of interested stakeholders. Interventions towards the identification of forward-looking areas of partnership and cofinancing/resource mobilization opportunities are most welcome.)

1200- 14000 Lunch

IV. Closing Session

1400- 1500 Summary of Meeting's Recommendations

Closing Remarks by Co-Chairs of the Meeting

1500-1515 Coffee Break

1515- 1700 Closed Executive Session for GMS Delegations and ADB regarding preparations for GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

Exchange of views regarding:

- a. Venue/Host Country
- b. Possible Dates
- c. Suggestions for Theme and Objective
- d. Tentative Agenda Items

The Executive Session will arrive at tentative recommendations on administrative and substantive preparations, including possible agenda items for and expectations from the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting. Recommendations arising from the Executive Session will be subject to further consultations within and among the GMS countries and between the GMS countries and ADB.

Evening FREE

Day 3

Friday, 17 February 2006

0830- 1200 Field Visit (Optional)

1200- 1330 Lunch

PM FREE

Saturday, 18 February 2006

Departure of Delegates

**Greater Mekong Subregion
Third Working Group Meeting on Agriculture (WGA-3)
15-17 February 2006, Hue, Viet Nam**

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