

## **Working Group on Agriculture: Terms of Reference**

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### **Initiation**

The Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) was initiated under the GMS Tenth Ministerial Conference in November 2001 to serve as an advisory body to GMS Ministerial-level Conferences on agricultural issues. An Inception Workshop was held in July 2002 to define the framework and the scope for regional cooperation in agriculture. The GMS Eleventh Ministerial Conference held in September 2002, confirmed the need to establish a working group on agriculture (WGA). The WGA reports to the Ministerial Conference and the respective governments.

### **Rationale**

The goal of GMS cooperation in agriculture is to help rural communities in the GMS reduce poverty through partnerships aimed at promoting food security and increased commercial income generating opportunities in agriculture. To this effect the WGA aims to improve sub-regional cooperation in agriculture and serves as an advisory body to GMS Ministerial-level Conferences on agricultural issues.

### **WGA's Mission Statement**

*"To help poverty reduction in the GMS through partnerships with rural communities to promote agricultural trade, food security, and sustainable livelihoods."*

### **Main Objective**

WGA's main objective is to provide a forum for identifying and realizing opportunities to increase GMS cooperation in the agriculture sector with the aims of:

- reducing poverty;
- promoting equitable economic growth;
- promoting sustainable use of natural resources in GMS agriculture; and
- ensuring that the benefits of other GMS initiatives reach rural communities.

### **Strategic Focus:**

- Markets and market institutions
- Transfer of know-how, experiences and technology
- Public-private partnerships in the following subsectors: crops, livestock, fisheries, and forest and water resources.

### **Guidelines for Selecting WGA Initiatives:**

- Policy, institutional and/or technical issues that contribute to poverty reduction
- Improvements in the sustainability of agriculture
- Benefits accruing to two or more GMS countries, and
- Opportunity to address a given issue on a subregional basis.

### ***Criteria for Prioritizing WGA Projects:***

- Ownership and commitment
- Potential for reducing poverty and development impact
- Value contribution to agriculture
- Markets/market development
- Capacity building: training and education
- Contribution to regional integration
- Cooperation with private sector
- Information sharing
- Relieving policy constraints
- Linkages to other GMS initiatives
- Avoiding duplication of efforts
- Contribution to sustainable development

### **Membership**

Membership of the WGA consists of senior GMS government officials from the respective Agriculture Ministries of the GMS countries. Additional representatives may be invited to attend WGA meetings, depending on the issues to be discussed. The private sector, the Consultative Group of International Agriculture Research Institutions (CGIARI), relevant United Nations institutions, other international and bilateral agencies, and civil society may be consulted in planning and implementing WGA activities.

GMS countries have designated their respective focal points for WGA activities and have established national committees to coordinate national consultations on WGA issues and priorities.

WGA activities are being closely coordinated with other GMS working groups and other regional and international organizations.

### **Chairperson and Venue**

The venue (host) for WGA meetings is determined by the WGA members following the practice of alphabetical rotation. The Chairperson of the WGA meeting is a member of the WGA core group of the host country. The Chairperson provides the necessary technical, administrative, and coordinating support for WGA activities. ADB is assisting in facilitating WGA deliberations.

### **WGA Meetings**

The WGA in principle meets at least once a year, but may meet more frequently, depending on its work program. WGA meetings provide opportunities to help:

- Identify and discuss emerging GMS agriculture issues.
- Establish priorities for WGA activities.
- Mobilize resources to implement activities.
- Facilitate implementation of studies.

## **WGA Meetings Held**

- Inception workshop, 4-5 July 2002, Vientiane, Lao PDR.
- First meeting, 21-22 January 2003, ADB HQ, Manila, Philippines
- Second Meeting, 22-23 March 2004, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- Third Meeting, 15-17 February 2006, Hue City, Viet Nam