

# **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT**

Division: SEAE

Division: SEAL

<b>TA 6110-REG: Promoting Partnerships to Accelerate Agriculture Development and Poverty Reduction in the Greater Mekong Subregion</b>			<b>Amount Approved:</b> \$300,000	
			<b>Revised Amount:</b> N/A	
<b>Executing Agency:</b> Asian Development Bank		<b>Source of Funding:</b> TA Funding Program	<b>TA Amount Undisbursed</b> \$20,159.30	<b>TA Amount Utilized</b> \$279,840.70
<b>Date</b>			<b>Completion Date</b>	
<b>Approval</b> 9 June 2003	<b>Signing</b> N/A	<b>Fielding of Consultants</b> 10 Sep 2003	<b>Original</b> 30 Jun 2005	<b>Actual</b> 30 Jun 2006
			<b>Account Closing Date</b>	
			<b>Original</b> 30 Sep 2005	<b>Actual</b> 31 Aug 2006
<b>Description</b>				
<p>Agriculture sector plays a vital role in reducing rural poverty in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) countries<sup>1</sup> and is considered a priority sector under the GMS Economic Cooperation Program. In July 2002, with the assistance from ADB, the GMS countries established a working group on agriculture (WGA) as a forum for identifying and realizing opportunities to increase cooperation in the agriculture sector among GMS countries. The subject TA was designed to provide initial support and strengthen the momentum for implementation of these initiatives in response to the priorities agreed upon by the GMS countries.</p>				
<b>Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs</b>				
<p>The intended impact of the TA is accelerated agriculture growth facilitated by the following outcomes: (i) enhanced partnerships (ii) expanded business opportunities and (iii) reduced barriers to agricultural development. The TA envisaged the following outputs: (i) establishing mechanisms for regular dialogue among GMS agriculture experts, and a GMS agricultural information system; (ii) providing opportunities for GMS cross-border movement of agricultural and agro-industrial products; (iv) providing support for training and seminars to share knowledge, information, and experience; (v) conducting high-level dialogue to develop subregional strategies; (vi) organizing joint applied subregional agricultural research and dissemination of results; and (vii) increasing business opportunities in the agriculture and agro-industry sectors. The TA design is considered relevant to the circumstances.</p>				
<b>Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities</b>				
<p>The main inputs envisaged were (i) planning and implementing WGA work programs, (ii) mobilization of additional resources, (iii) conducting special studies, surveys, workshops and seminars on high-priority WGA concerns, (iv) conducting working-level and high level meetings on policy and technical issues, (v) facilitating the establishment of a GMS agriculture information system (AIS). The TA funds allocated for the various activities under the TA were found to be inadequate. For instance, the establishment of AIS was estimated to cost \$1.3 million while the total TA amount was only \$300,000. However, ADB was able to satisfactorily carry out most of the TA activities by jointly organizing workshops and seminars with Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other Centers of Excellence. By this means, the TA was able to finance a greater number of workshops than originally planned. The TA successfully conducted a total of 15 WGA workshops in the GMS countries: (i) agricultural investments and cooperation (in PRC) (ii) aquaculture (in PRC), (iii) agriculture biotechnology (regional workshop in Thailand, national workshops in Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam, and Laos) (iv) innovative practices for sustainable sloping land and watershed management (in Thailand) (v) Mekong rice conference (in Viet Nam) (vi) Cambodia Business Initiative in Rural Development (in Cambodia), (vii) impact of emerging zoonotic diseases<sup>2</sup> on Animal Health (in Viet Nam) (viii) strategies for development of agricultural production systems in the highlands of the GMS (ix) high level public private sector consultation meeting, (in Thailand) (x) GMS agriculture information network (in PRC) and (xi) prevention and control transboundary animal diseases in the GMS (in Viet Nam).</p> <p>Since ADB managed to mobilize part of the required technical and financial resources from other development partners, the TA used only 4 person-months (pm) of international consultancy inputs (2 experts), as against the envisaged 17 pm of international (3 experts) and 12 pm of domestic consultancy inputs. The two international experts, engaged as individuals, satisfactorily completed their specialized tasks within a short period of time allocated. The TA helped planning and implementing WGA activities including the high level meetings on policy and technical issues, and carried out activities essential for the achievement of the TA objectives. ADB and the GMS countries satisfactorily delivered the required inputs and conducted the activities of the TA.</p>				

<sup>1</sup> Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic [Lao PDR], Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China [PRC]),

<sup>2</sup> Diseases that normally exist in animals but can infect humans.

### **Evaluation of Outputs and achievement of Outcome**

The workshops provided opportunities for the GMS countries, development partners and other stake holders to conduct regular dialogue on several agriculture sector issues and helped build institutional linkages and mechanisms for consensus based decision making. The workshops generated a number of reports that were used in the preparation of strategic framework for subregional cooperation in agriculture. By jointly organizing workshops with international Centers of Excellence, the TA was able to pool and disseminate information from applied subregional research studies and surveys conducted by those organizations which were already present in the GMS with disparate set of objectives and agenda. They also provided an excellent opportunity for training and sharing of information, knowledge and experience. The workshops made useful recommendations and proposed action plans for the GMS governments.

The high level public-private sector consultation meeting and the workshops on (i) agricultural investments and (ii) control of transboundary animal diseases explored opportunities for increased cooperation in agriculture and agro-industry sector. The discussion included cross border movement of agricultural and agro-industrial products in the GMS and the enhanced involvement of the private sector. Overall, they helped to build confidence for investment in the subregion and strengthened networking among public and private sector partners. The workshop on biotechnology helped promote cooperation on molecular marker technology and identified PRC and Thailand as the nodes for capacity building. The workshop on emerging zoonotic diseases on animal health was timely when the GMS countries were facing the threat of avian influenza and it provided a forum for information exchange and for the development of policies and methods for the control of disease emergence. The workshop on information technology conducted in PRC, helped in the design of the AIS. Later, the government of PRC, mostly using its own resources, developed a prototype model of AIS. A fully fledged AIS is yet to be developed as there was inadequate financial resources and time. The meetings and workshops helped in the preparation of several concept papers which resulted in the financing of 4 agricultural projects- 2 under Japanese Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR)<sup>3</sup>, and 2 TAs<sup>4</sup>. These projects will help in meeting the TA's overall goal of fostering agricultural growth in the GMS subregion.

Two of the major outputs of the TA were (i) the draft strategic framework for subregional cooperation in Agriculture (2006-2010) and (ii) the draft Core Agriculture Sector Program (CASP) (2006-2010). The discussions at the WGA meetings and the workshops formed the building blocks in the preparation of the strategy. The timely preparation of the framework and the CASP were well received and appreciated by the GMS countries and the development partners. The WGA proposes to obtain Ministerial endorsement of the Strategic Framework and the CASP, in October 2006, to ensure greater ownership among the GMS countries. The implementation of CASP will help further expedite the achievement of anticipated outcomes of the TA.

### **Overall Assessment and Rating**

The objectives of the TA were relevant; however, the scope was very wide and the depth was largely undefined. The TA has achieved its objectives. It was implemented with active participation from GMS countries, development partners and civil society groups. It managed to coordinate a number of similar activities undertaken by other development partners and institutions in the GMS countries and helped avoid duplication of efforts. It helped prepare a draft GMS strategy for agriculture and the CASP. The extension of the TA by 9 months was due to the complexities of the tasks involved in preparing the Strategic Framework and the CASP. Overall, considering the limited funds provided by the TA and tasks accomplished, the TA is rated successful.

### **Major Lessons**

The workshops that were conducted were relevant for subregional cooperation in the agricultural sector. However, it will be better to have narrower and more focused TA, with a more well defined scope to ensure in-depth treatment and resolution of issues.

### **Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions**

There is a need for ADB to continue to play a catalytic role in regional agricultural cooperation in the Mekong region. Continued support is recommended for (i) operationalization CASP and (ii) identification and implementation of flagship programs.

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Designation

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<sup>3</sup> ADB. 2003. *Grant Assistance on Improving Poor Farmers' Income through Post Harvest Technology*. Manila. (TA No. 9036-REG); ADB. 2004. *Grant Assistance on Improving Poor Farmers Income through ICT*. Manila. (TA No. 9047-REG).

<sup>4</sup> ADB. 2004. *Technical Assistance on Strengthening Capacity and Regional Cooperation in Advanced Agricultural Science and Technology in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Manila (TA 6214-REG); ADB. 2004. *Technical Assistance to Cambodia, Peoples' Republic of China, Lao Peoples' Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam for Transboundary Animal Disease Control in the Greater Mekong Subregion* (TA 6192-REG).