

agrifood products, and many do not have the business relationships to connect to value markets. An inclusive multistakeholder approach is critical to the development of policies that meet the small and medium agribusiness sector needs. Production and marketing of green, safe, and resilient agri-food products require a reduction of energy, carbon and waste footprint along the value chain while remaining resilient to market and climate shocks. It also requires the evolution of value chains into “value networks” where there is a much stronger relationship between the stakeholders.

Digital Development

Digital innovations in the GMS agriculture sector are in their early stages but are growing fast and have contributed to new business models being developed. The most common use by the agriculture sector members in the GMS, however, is still limited to access information on weather, market information and farming inputs². While digital technologies are having an increased impact in the GMS agrifood sector there are still many constraints to the use of digital services by small and medium agribusinesses and smallholder farmers. Access to digital services is uneven across the GMS countries: Thailand and Viet Nam have the highest use, Cambodia is quickly catching up, while Laos PDR and Myanmar trail behind³. Reasons for slow adoption include the lack of critical digital infrastructure investment, especially in more remote areas, and the low digital literacy of agribusiness operators and smallholder women and men farmers. Women agribusiness owners and women smallholder farmers are especially impacted by their lack of access to digital services and by low digital literacy. Policy actions are needed to quickly respond to opportunities that digital innovation provides to develop green and resilient agribusinesses and value chains in the GMS.

Access by the GMS agri-food sector to global markets is limited by the gaps in local enforcement of quality assurance certification and disjointed and non-interoperable traceability. Digital technologies have an important role in overcoming the challenges of stricter cross-border trade restrictions. Moreover, they promote relatively low-cost, efficient, and globally recognized traceability standards and technology solutions that can be easily adapted, and when applied they can facilitate agri-food trade and broaden links with regional and global value chains. Digital food traceability systems will ensure that GMS countries are better prepared and integrated into regional and global economies. Digital traceability systems and platforms also enable quick and targeted product recalls within agriculture value chains and distribution networks.

Climate-Friendly Agri-finance

Green finance is vital for the transformation of agri-food systems to be sustainable and climate resilient. But the flow of green investment funds to small and medium agribusinesses is low in the GMS. According to the Climate Policy Initiative the climate-finance flow to agriculture, forestry, and other land uses and fisheries is meagre at 2.5% of total fund flows in comparison to 51% for energy and 26% in the transport sector. Investment in AgriTech startups is much lower than for other technology startups.

National governments have initiated limited efforts to mainstream agri-finance into the commercial banking sector, but more needs to be done. The private sector investments in agri-food value chains have also been limited partly due to a lack of enabling policies and incentives.

The GMS countries have great potential to adopt innovative fintech applications, including digital finance innovations, blockchain and app-based lending platforms. Digital financial transactions enhance the opportunities for cash-based finance for both agribusinesses and smallholder farmers.

It is expected that the dialogue at the workshop will contribute to better identify policies and actions to enhance the development of green, inclusive, and resilient value chains that will enable GMS smallholder farmers to produce safe and climate-friendly agrifood products for higher-value GMS and export markets. The dialogue will also contribute to better green finance policies that will increase green agricultural sector investment and the fund flow for green technologies in agrifood value chains.

² GMS Digital Study of Agriculture Sector, Dr PT Hung, Mekong Institute, 2023

³ PRC was not included in the Mekong Institute study

Women Agri-entrepreneurs

Women smallholder farmers and agribusiness operators face barriers to empowerment due to a lack of access to and control over resources, finance and time allocation. They may also be constrained by lower educational, literacy, and technical knowledge levels. Digital literacy (digital divide) is an increasingly common constraint and limits women's access to real-time market information, technical information and to digital finance opportunities.

Agriculture sector policies must recognise that smallholder farmer producers, especially women, have key roles in the production, processing, and marketing of green and safe agrifood products. Innovative approaches to promote inclusion and support women agri-entrepreneurs in the GMS are thus very necessary and will be a feature at this workshop.

Target participants

- GMS WGA representatives;
- Technical department representatives from GMS Ministries of Agriculture;
- Representatives from GMS organisations for agribusiness and farmers;
- GMS private sector agribusiness representatives;
- Development partners;
- Regional organisations;
- ADB staff;
- TA9916 Consultant team.

Expected outputs

The workshop participants will contribute to proposing and recommending to the upcoming 20th GMS Working Group in Agriculture Annual Meeting:

1. Policies and actions to promote and develop green agribusinesses development in the GMS;
2. Agri finance priority actions to support green agribusiness and value chain development;
3. Policies and actions to enhance the role of women and youth agri-entrepreneurs, and;
4. Investment project priorities for green agribusiness and agrifood value chain growth and development in the GMS Annual Meeting Summary Statement with follow-up actions.

Agenda

The meeting will be a hybrid event with both in-person and virtual contributions, conducted in English.

Day 1: 26 April 2023	
Opening session	
08:00 – 09:00	Participants' registration
09:00 – 09:20	<p>Opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Vanida Khumnirdetch, Director, Bureau of Foreign Agricultural Affairs, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC), and WGA Focal Point • Dr. Srinivasan Ancha, Principal Climate Change Specialist, ADB Resident Mission, Bangkok, Thailand
Session 1: Improving agrifood value chain management in the GMS	
09:20 – 09:25	Facilitator: <i>Mr. Stewart Pittaway, Team Leader, TA9916</i>
09:25 – 10:00	<p>Agrifood value chains in the GMS: gaps and opportunities</p> <p><i>Dr. Pham Hung, Consultant, Mekong Institute, Thailand</i></p>
10:00 – 10:15	Tea and coffee break and photo
10:15 – 11:30	<p>Panel discussion “What is needed to assist agrifood value chain development in the GMS?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Wongsanga Phouchamarn, Agrinnovation Fund in ASEAN, GIZ Thailand • Dr. Dominic Smith, Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, Australia • Mr. Thavisit Bounyasouk, Director of Planning and Cooperation, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR • Ms. Ngyuen Thi Hong Thanh, Deputy Head of Unit, Trading and Investment Consulting Unit, AgrolInfo, Institute for Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development, Hanoi, Viet Nam • Mr. William Sparks, Country Director, Winrock International, Thailand
11:30 – 12:00	Comments and Q&A session
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break
13:00 – 13:30	<p>TA 9916 studies: value chain gaps and opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durian value chain - Dr. Vajiraporn Sriput, Deputy Dean of Faculty of Science and Arts, Burapha University, Thailand • Dragon Fruit value chain - Mr. Cuong Vien, Private Sector Development Specialist, TA9916
13:30 – 13:50	Comments and Q&A session
Session 2: Financing for green small and medium agribusiness and value chains in the GMS	
13:50 – 13:55	Facilitator: <i>Mr. Pramod Pandeya, Agribusiness Financing Specialist, TA9916</i>
13:55 – 14:20	Developments in the financing of agribusinesses and smallholder farmers

	<i>Mr. Arnold Tjzens, Founder and Managing Director, Kilimo Finance, Viet Nam</i>
14:20 – 15:00	<p>Panel discussion “Financing of agribusinesses-issues and lessons to developing green value chains”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Yannick Milev, CEO, Chamroeun Microfinance Plc., Cambodia</i> • <i>Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Phuong, Executive Vice President - Deputy Head Corporate Banking, The Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam Jsc., Viet Nam</i>
15:00 – 15:15	Tea and coffee break
15:15 – 15:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Omer Zafar, Principal Natural Resources and Agriculture Specialist, SEER, ADB</i> • <i>Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tung, Senior Project Officer, IFAD, Hanoi, Viet Nam</i>
15:45 – 16:00	<p>Smallholder farmers and digital credit: TA9916 Digital Finance pilot</p> <p><i>Mr. Pramod Pandeya, Agribusiness Financing Specialist, TA9916</i></p>
16:00 – 16:45	Q&A session: “What policies and actions to advance agribusiness and value chain financing?”

Day 2: 27 April 2023

Session 3: Agribusiness development and financing for women and youth

08:30 – 08:40	Facilitator: <i>Ms. Maria Theresa S. Medialdia, Director of the Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department, Mekong Institute, Thailand</i>
08:40 – 09:15	Agribusiness management and finance challenges that women agri-entrepreneurs face <i>Mr. Le Xuan Hieu, Portfolio Manager, CARE, Viet Nam</i>
09:15 – 10:15	Panel discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ms. Lida Loem, Co-founder and technical advisor, She Investments, Cambodia</i> • <i>Mr. Joseph Alaban, Senior Technical Advisor, Strengthening Financial Inclusion Programme, Lao PDR</i> • <i>Mr. Wichai Paksa, Assistant Senior Vice President, Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC), Thailand</i> • <i>Mrs. Le Thi Quynh Nga, Manager for Monitoring, Evaluation Research and Learning, GREAT Project, DFAT, Viet Nam</i>
10:15 – 10:30	Tea and coffee break
10:30 – 11:00	Q&A session: “How to improve financial services for women agri-entrepreneurs?”
11:00 – 11:30	Young agri-entrepreneurs. Series of short presentations on their experience and issues with green and agri-finance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ms. Thach Chal Thi, Owner, SokFarm, Tra Vinh, Viet Nam</i> • <i>Ms. Vera Chodsudsaneh, Owner, Natty Fresh Trade Company, Thailand</i>
11:30 – 12:00	Q&A session: “Improved access of young agri-entrepreneurs to finance services”
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break

Session 4: Digital innovations in agrifood value chains

13:00 – 13:05	Facilitator: <i>Dr. Pham Hung, Consultant, Mekong Institute, Thailand</i>
13:05 – 13:40	Digital trends and developments to strengthen GMS agrifood value chains <i>Mr. Dang Duong Minh Hoang, CEO, Thien Nong farm, Viet Nam</i>
13:40 – 14:40	Panel discussion “Agribusiness experience with digital development for agri-food value chain development” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Tharen Neak, CEO, Natural Garden, Cambodia</i> • <i>Dr. Abichartbut, Digital Economy Promotion Agency, Thailand</i> • <i>Mr. Phouthasinh Phimmachanh, Director, Lao Farmers Network, Lao PDR</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jate Sathornkich, Digital Researcher, Department of Horticulture, Faculty of Agriculture, Kasetsart University, Thailand • Dr. Vichelle Roaring-Arunsuwannakorn, Food Safety and Quality Specialist, TA9916
14:40 – 15:10	Q&A session: “What is needed to improve the adoption of digital innovation in the agri-food value chains?”
Concluding session: policies, actions and investment priorities for the 20th GMS Working Group in Agriculture Annual Meeting	
15:10 – 16:00	<p>Facilitators: <i>Mr. Stewart Pittaway</i>, Team Leader, TA9916, and <i>Dr. Srinivasan Ancha</i>, Principal Climate Change Specialist, ADB Resident Mission, Bangkok, Thailand</p> <p>Agreed policy actions and investment priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and actions to promote and develop green agribusinesses development in the GMS • Agri-finance priorities to support green agribusiness and value chain development • Policies and actions to enhance the role of women and youth agri-entrepreneurs • Investment project priorities for green agribusiness and agrifood value chain growth and development
16:00 – 16:15	<p>Upcoming activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TA9916 2023 activities to support green agribusiness and agri-finance development in the GMS • Mekong Institute – upcoming events and activities
16:15 – 16:20	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p><i>Dr. Srinivasan Ancha</i>, Principal Climate Change Specialist, ADB Resident Mission, Bangkok, Thailand</p>