



**GMS Working Group on Agriculture  
14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
13-14 July 2017, Siem Reap, Cambodia**

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Introduction**

1. The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Agriculture (WGA AM-14), held on 13-14 July 2017 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, was chaired by H.E. San Vanty, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF), Cambodia, and co-chaired by Mr. Pavit Ramachandran, Senior Environment Specialist, Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Division, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB). The meeting was attended by representatives from the agriculture ministries of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam; the GMS National Secretariats; co-financing and development partners; private sector; ADB; experts of NIRAS Finland Oy and Agrifood Consulting International, consulting firm engaged to manage the Core Agriculture Support Program Phase II (CASP2) and comprising the WGA Secretariat. The list of participants is in [Appendix 1](#).

2. The meeting (i) was briefed on the highlights of CASP2 implementation progress, achievements, issues, and challenges in 2016 to first half of 2017 and the work plan for the second half of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018; (ii) reviewed the final draft GMS Strategy for promoting safe and environment-friendly agro-based value chains as well as the action plan to implement the Strategy including a consolidated project pipeline, investment framework and policy and institutional measures; (iii) was updated on the upcoming GMS Economic Cooperation Program events and findings of the GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022 Midterm Review; and (iv) agreed on the next steps including preparations for the Second GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM-2) and preparations for the next phase of CASP.

3. A Development Partners' Dialogue, technical working sessions on the Agriculture Information Network Service version 2.0 and Mekong Agribusiness Technology Challenge (MATCh), and Public-Private Dialogue on geographical indications (GI) and its implications on food safety were held on day 2. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Preparatory Meeting for AMM-2 was also organized back-to-back with WGA AM-14. The program is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

**Opening Session**

4. In his opening remarks, Mr. Pavit Ramachandran, ADB, welcomed all GMS delegates and participants to this important and crucial 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the WGA as GMS agriculture is at the crossroads – with the conventional pathway using intensive agriculture practices on one hand, and promoting inclusively sustainable and modernizing agriculture approach on the other. He noted that with support from the TA 8163, CASP2 pilot tested novel approaches on sustainable environment-friendly farming practices and producing low to zero agrochemical input agriculture products. With the support of CASP2, GMS governments have been taking proactive measures in fostering this sustainable development pathway: one that will address food security by ensuring safe as well as environment- and climate- friendly agro-based products. He emphasized that such a holistic approach will ensure the attainment of many important sustainable development goals especially through the lens of safe and climate-resilient agro-based value chains. Under this TA, the program had recently participated in the THAIFEX 2017 that provided enhanced opportunities to collectively market GMS products. He

noted that the meeting will discuss and agree on the **GMS Strategy and Action Plan for Promoting Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-based Value Chains for 2018-2022 (GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan)**, a move affirming explicitly the second pathway by providing policy, investment, and institutional measures for bolstering and accelerating the up-scaling of safe and environment- and climate- friendly agro-based value chain development. He underscored for WGA the objective to raise the bar of agriculture development in the subregion by first, taking stock of CASP2 progress; second, reviewing and finalizing the **GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan** and identifying the priority areas for the first year of implementation; third, distilling the lessons learned from the **GMS@THAIFEX** event; fourth, ensuring that the Agriculture Ministers are properly briefed and prepared for AMM-2; fifth, planning for the follow through activities under the TA; and sixth, mobilizing additional resources for the TA to support implementation of the **GMS SEAP Strategy**.

5. His Excellency San Vanty, WGA National Coordinator for Cambodia, extended his warm welcome to all participants. He noted the great honor for Cambodia to host two special events this year, the WGA AM-14 and AMM-2. He emphasized that this year is very important as agriculture ministers will convene after a decade since the First AMM in 2007 in PRC. This is a good opportunity for the WGA to take stock of CASP2 results and other agriculture-related issues in the GMS in order to inform the GMS Agriculture Ministers and for them to provide guidance on how to move CASP forward. He acknowledged the hard work of the WGA Secretariat and MAFF team during the preparations made for the WGA AM-14 and the ongoing work for AMM-2 in September 2017. He urged the WGA members to do their best to get the **GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan** delivered and approved at AMM-2. He reminded the WGA that the endorsement of the **GMS SEAP Strategy** is the main reason for organizing the AMM-2. Finally, he expressed his appreciation to the development and implementing partners for their continued support and thanked the GMS delegates for their participation in the WGA AM-14.

## **Session 1: Highlights of the GMS CASP2 Implementation Progress and Work Plan**

### **Country Report: Cambodia**

6. Dr. Prum Somany, Director of the Department of International Cooperation, MAFF, and WGA National Focal Point (NFP) for Cambodia summarized the outcomes from 5 key activities: (i) implementation of 6 subprojects under the first round of the letter of agreement (LOA) with successful results, including improving capacity of 1,882 farmers, 289 government officers, and 64 private company staff; establishment of 83 demonstration farms, 54 model farmers becoming farmer leaders in their community; enhancing market access for safe and environment-friendly agriculture products (SEAP), etc., (ii) implementation of 4 subprojects under the second round of LOA with initial results including 500 farmers trained in green water management (GWM), 300 farmers trained in nitrogen use efficiency (NUE), 6 participatory guarantee system (PGS) groups established, etc., (iii) supported formulation of the **GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan**; (iv) supported 6 private firms and farmers to join the GMS Pavilion at THAIFEX 2017; and (v) successful preparation for the AMM-2 to be hosted by Cambodia in September 2017. He then identified lessons learned from the previous year in the areas of project management, procurement, financial management, best climate friendly agriculture (CFA) practices and PGS pilots and these have all been applied to the current project and design of future projects. As to issues and challenges, he identified delay in fund disbursement, market and price issue, and lack of policy support. The key priorities for 2017 to the first quarter of 2018 are: completing the second round of LOA, organizing AMM-2, supporting the implementation of the **GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan**, reactivation of the Agriculture Information Network Service (AINS and now being called AINS version 2.0), and design of the next phase of CASP. A copy of the presentation is provided in [Appendix 3](#).

### **Country Report: PRC**

7. Ms. Zhang Bin, Programme Officer, Asian Cooperation Division, Foreign Economic Cooperation Centre, Ministry of Agriculture and WGA NFP for PRC, summarized 4 major outcomes arising in 2016 to first half of 2017: (i) successful completion of the first round of LOA projects; (ii) well established mechanism for capacity building and technical cooperation; (iii) increased engagement of the private sector in regional cooperation; and (iv) contribution to the formulation of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan. Among the key lessons learned include: expanding program impact through innovative public-private partnership models, strengthening regional coordination of common issues through WGA and more focus on improving market access for smallholders. She identified 5 priorities for the remainder of the TA implementation: (i) continue to support development, launching and operation of AINS 2.0; (ii) support finalization and endorsement of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan; (iii) support organization of the AMM-2; (iv) mobilize resources and coordinate with line ministries to start formulation of prioritized investment projects in the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan; and (v) prepare to organize the 15<sup>th</sup> WGA Annual Meeting (WGA AM-15) in PRC in 2018. Her full presentation is in [Appendix 4](#).

### **Country Report: Lao PDR**

8. Mr. Vinoth Vansy, Director of Economic Integration Division, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), and WGA NFP, delivered the country report on behalf of Lao PDR. He highlighted the successful establishment and adoption of the PGS in the government system within MAF, capacity building for 288 farmers in farm inspection and assurance using PGS standards, production of 75 tons of organic fertilizer per farmer group, increased vegetable yield by 20-30%, and establishment of 12 green houses. Local staff had become trainers for farmers in soil management, and 10 certified soil doctors trainees became soil volunteer doctors in the villages. Some of the most notable lessons for Lao PDR are: strong and organized LOA of GWM institutional arrangement at all levels to enhance capacity building; a clear benchmark study is key to the success of the implementation of the LOA projects (GWM and NUE); country hands-on project management has fostered and enhanced country ownership of the TA activities giving a more sustainable impact with high potential for upscaling. Among the issues and challenges encountered are: delays in reporting; lack of monitoring and evaluation and capacity building activities; lack of long-term plan and follow-up activities to ensure sustainable impact of LOA; lack of reporting skill of grass-root partners and officials; lack of knowledge on SEAP, GWM and NUE. Finally, he identified the priorities for 2017 and first quarter of 2018 to include maintaining and upscaling completed LOA activities; implementing GWM and NUE; finalizing the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan; upscaling the good outcome and applying the experiences and lessons learned from the THAIFEX 2017 activities related to food safety and market access; preparation for the AMM-2 and implementation of the GMS Strategy and Action Plan. [Appendix 5](#) provides more details on the presentation.

### **Country Report: Myanmar**

9. Dr. Thanda Kyi, WGA National Coordinator and NFP for Myanmar delivered the progress report with focus on the LOA activities funded by ADB completed in June 2016; the implementing agencies funded their own activities up to June 2017. The second round of LOA on green water management will be implemented in Myanmar with target completion date by end of February 2018. LOA project implementation in Myanmar contributed to all outputs under TA-8163 such as establishing PGS pilots under output 1; promoting regional and global market access for smallholders through the THAIFEX trade fair in 2017 under output 2; establishing demonstration farms including 2 PGS, 3 CFA, 3 nitrogen cycle management, and 1 GMW under the first round of LOA implementation (LOA-1) and 6 GWM and 4 NUE demonstration farms for LOA second round (LOA-2); producing pamphlets on various agriculture knowledge topics such as on vermiculture, Em Bokashi, postharvest technology, good agriculture practices, etc.,

for output 4 and participating in all regional meetings organized by the WGA to strengthen regional cooperation under output 5. Projects carried out under LOA-1 have been well received and sustainably continued by farmers. Meanwhile, agriculture extension staff in the project area has been trained to assist farmers in CFA and GWM practices. Key issues encountered during LOA implementation were insufficient water pumping system, farmers' lack of knowledge and experiences etc. and have been resolved accordingly. However, many challenges remain including farmers reluctant to adopt new technology; lack of awareness on good agricultural practices (GAP); organic agriculture and market; food safety; knowledge shortage on rain water harvesting and efficient water management. Key priorities in the 2017-Q1 2018 work plan include building farmer knowledge centers, market access for CFA products, constructing water pump system in Tatkone Township, conducting policy assessment on CFA including GWM, implementing NUE project in Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay regions, organizing a national workshop to disseminate outcome of the project to stakeholders and share the best practices, more GWM trainings in project areas, developing PGS certification and implementing the GMS SEAP Strategy. Details of the projects can be read in [Appendix 6](#).

### **Country Report: Thailand**

10. Ms. Saowarop Panyacheewin, National Secretariat Specialist (NSS) presented the progress report on behalf of Thailand. Two main activities in 2016 to Q1 of 2017 are LOA project implementation and drafting of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan. Two LOA projects namely promoting PGS for small scale organic farming and assessing soil quality on biochar application were completed in December 2016. Key outputs from the PGS project included 400 farmers and officials trained (male 249, female 151) and out of the 456 PGS members, 233 became PGS certified as of June 2017, four PGS learning centers established, PGS website, Facebook page created. The most notable output is the recognition of PGS and its inclusion in the country's 12th National Social and Economic Development Plan as a tool to drive agriculture sector development. Also, the National Bureau of Agriculture Commodity and Food Standards has recognized PGS as a legitimate certification system, a draft regulation is underway. PGS outcomes impact on four dimensions including policy, ecology, economy and society. The key lessons learned from PGS project implementation include: the LOA arrangement is effective, providing flexibility and ownership, benefits in social capital which should be promulgated among farmers and consumers to further PGS recognition, building coalition with like-minded organization is crucial for its success, knowledge is key to change mindset and practices, market is important for expansion of PGS movement and logistic support from farm to fork is needed to make SEAP from PGS groups more accessible to and affordable for consumers. For biochar project which aimed to study the use of biochar to improve acid soil for organic farming, field experiments with 34 farmers concluded with positive result, farmers' perception after experiment is highly positive in the adoption of biochar for soil improvement. Thailand's work plan for 2017 highlighted the continuity of PGS movement scaled up and scaled out by the Land Development Department targeting to train 600 officials and farmers and establish 200 PGS groups by 2017. While Thailand's key development agenda such as Thailand 4.0 and Eastern Economic Corridor, among many other initiatives, are conducive to the implementation of the GMS SEAP Strategy, the latest five-year plan on Organic Agriculture Development Strategy, shares similar strategic plan which is built on four pillars including research and knowledge, production and service, market and standards, and collaboration and funding. The full presentation is attached as [Appendix 7](#).

### **Country Report: Viet Nam**

11. Mr. Nguyen Thanh Dam, WGA NFP for Viet Nam reported on the following: LOA-1 completed 8 subprojects with positive results in addressing gender-responsive climate friendly agriculture practices. Major outcomes/outputs at national level included 79 demo farms and trainings were set up for participation of nearly 600 farmers; demonstration farms attracted thousands of visitors from many neighboring provinces to come for learning and sharing

knowledge; income for farmers in all demonstration farms showed increase of at least 10%; all subproject reports have policy recommendations for consideration by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Meanwhile Viet Nam received further funding of \$100,000 to implement LOA-2 on GWM and \$40,000 for the extension of dairy subproject for Khmer women in Soc-Trang Province, Mekong River Delta. Lesson learned from project implementation has been summed up as follows: need better linkage and cooperation amongst LOA subprojects; using the “learning by doing” approach for farmers from demo farms and scale up the model through training of trainers; LOA arrangement is effective; need for improvement of LOA fund disbursement. For the remainder of 2017 to Q1 of 2018 work plan, Viet Nam is implementing GWM and dairy project with target completion date in February 2018, facilitating the approval of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan and preparations for AMM-2 and collaborating with ADB and WGA to formulate and mobilize fund for the Knowledge Sharing Technical Assistance to support the implementation of the GMS SEAP Strategy. A copy of his presentation is provided in [Appendix 8](#).

### **Progress Report: WGA Secretariat**

12. Dr. Apichai Thirathon, Agronomist from the WGA Secretariat, highlighted notable progress in achieving RETA 8163 outcome following the CASP Midterm Review that placed strong emphasis on aligning the TA outputs with its envisioned outcome of enhanced market access for environment-friendly agriculture products, ensuring strong connection of the five outputs of the TA, as well as applying lessons learned from pilot initiatives. He noted the multi-disciplinary approach, technical support and management approaches that were instrumental in achieving the following:

- Output 1: Significant progress was seen in the participatory guarantee system pilots that succeeded beyond expectation, preparation of low input rice value chain studies, and the identification of policies (GWM, NUE, and PGS) for inclusion in the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan.
- Output 2: Trade and market access of safe and environment-friendly agro-food products were made possible through the successful organization of the GMS Pavilion and Policy Forum on Unified Food Safety Approaches at THAIFEX 2017.
- Output 3: Various LOA and memorandum of understanding initiatives also contributed to the achievement of output 3 on increased adoption of gender responsive and climate-friendly agriculture practices. The lessons learned and way forward were documented during the LOA assessment missions.
- Output 4: Progress on knowledge management was seen in the implementation of a host of strategic communications media (21<sup>st</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference, THAIFEX 2017, and GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan).
- Output 5: The successful conduct of the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the WGA and the highly participatory approach during the development of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan have strengthened regional cooperation in agriculture. This resulted in consensus by the GMS countries to hold AMM-2 in 2017, a decade after the First AMM, to endorse the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan which will guide the next phase of CASP.

13. Dr. Apichai also presented the work plan and deliverables for the remainder of TA 8163 implementation period (July 2017-March 2018). He cited challenges encountered during project implementation, such as time limitation, lack of evidence based-information, and the need for improved inter-ministerial coordination, as well as identification of funding mechanisms for the GMS SEAP Strategy. His presentation is provided in [Appendix 9](#).

### **Joint Donor Statement:**

14. Co-financing partners of CASP2, the Nordic Development Fund and the Government of Sweden prepared a joint development partners' statement which is attached as [Appendix 10](#). In the joint statement, seven points were raised by the donor partners namely: (i) allocating enough internal ADB staff resources to CASP2; (ii) showing more clearly the gender responsiveness and other social dimensions of the LOA projects under CASP2; (iii) influencing the GMS Regional Investment Framework's implementation plan process; (iv) further enhancing advocacy and awareness raising, in particular, having more information available in local languages; (v) promoting sustainable practices and investment opportunities in environmentally- and climate-friendly agriculture resulting from CASP2; (vi) ensuring that institutionalization and transition of results and activities are integrated in the final year of CASP2 implementation; and (vii) diversifying the funding base of the next phase of CASP, including identification and preparation of follow on investments drawn from the successful pilots of the program.

### **Session 2: GMS Strategy for Promoting Safe and Environment-friendly Agro-based Value Chains, 2018-2022**

15. Dr. Francesco Goletti, Policy Framework and Capacity Building Specialist from the WGA Secretariat, presented the final draft of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan, including the vision, approach and methods to build on the successes of CASP2. The document, developed iteratively with extensive contributions from all GMS countries, outlines a coordinated plan for GMS agriculture key investments between 2018-2022. The strategy was developed cognizant of the need to support, build on, and add to relevant national strategies and objectives in the GMS countries. The strategy addresses inclusiveness in relation to GMS countries and agricultural actors, harmonization of systems in relation to foodborne hazards and concerns of importance to trade, and the promotion of environmentally and climate-friendly agricultural practices. The rationale for the strategy is founded upon increased trade, economies of scale, and inclusive food safety for all. The current political and socio-economic conditions in the GMS are right for establishing the strategy as the key policy and investment plan for GMS agriculture. The key objective at this point is to finalize the strategy and present it for endorsement by the GMS Ministers of Agriculture at the AMM-2 in September 2017. Dr. Goletti's presentation is attached as [Appendix 11](#).

16. The participants discussed the final revisions leading towards finalization of the Strategy. Although there was little discussion about the content, which has been reviewed on numerous occasions by the Strategy Drafting Committee, the meeting discussed further issues relating to harmonization of standards including but not limited to GAP, and also the complexity of livestock disease control zones beyond quarantine systems.

17. Chair H.E. San Vanty emphasized the urgency to finalize the Strategy quickly so that it can be endorsed by the AMM-2 and to ensure that donor funding can be obtained to implement it. The Thai delegation echoed the Chair's concern and shared the complexity of the Thai government's internal clearance process for endorsement which requires submission by the Minister to the Thai Cabinet for approval. Thai representatives also suggested minor adjustment in the terminology to be used to facilitate approval, i.e., to replace "to seek endorsement", with "to seek acknowledgement or support." Myanmar delegation also mentioned that they need to get prior approval by their Minister of the Strategy.

18. H. E. San Vanty reminded the WGA of the main reason for holding the AMM-2 this year. He stressed that the Strategy will guide the next phase of CASP and will ensure the achievement of the CASP vision for the GMS to become a leading supplier of safe and environment-friendly agriculture products. It is in this light that all countries should aim for endorsement rather than softer commitment such as support and acknowledgement.

19. The meeting decided that the final version of the Strategy will be distributed to the WGA by 17 July 2017 with return of final comments by 24 July 2017 to the WGA Secretariat. A final revised Strategy will be circulated by the Secretariat by 27 July 2017 to be used by the countries in seeking internal approval. The WGA members agreed that final comments should be submitted in a timely fashion to allow adequate time for preparation and printing of the document before the AMM-2.

### **Session 3: Action Plan for the Implementation of the GMS Strategy**

20. Dr. Goletti presented the 4 outputs of the Strategy, namely: Output 1 – harmonized standards, practices, and policies to facilitate production, trade, and investment in SEAP value chains; Output 2 – strengthened infrastructure for regionally integrated SEAP value chains; Output 3 – improved systems for generating, sharing, and disseminating knowledge and innovation related to SEAP value chains; and Output 4 – developed marketing approaches to promote GMS's reputation as a SEAP global leader. The proposed consolidated pipeline of investment is estimated at \$902 million while the pipeline for technical assistance (TA) is estimated at \$105 million. The consolidated agriculture project pipeline is attached as [Appendix 12](#). He also presented the proposed implementation arrangement showing the WGA structure and delineation of tasks between the national coordinator, national focal point, national secretariat support unit, WGA Secretariat, and the national secretariat specialist and how this structure links to the overall GMS Economic Cooperation Program institutional structure.

21. Dr. Goletti then presented the policies and institutional measures for promoting SEAP that emphasize collaboration among GMS members to harmonize standards, assurance systems, and reference labs. He also stressed the need to promote compliance and responsible investment; develop infrastructure; facilitate knowledge sharing; exchange information about GI and develop joint marketing and communication strategies. He concluded the presentation by showing the proposed initial steps to be taken to achieve the four outputs during the first year of implementation.

22. The meeting noted the difference in investment value among countries and it was clarified that these values are initial proposals submitted by the countries and will be reviewed and further refined. The pipeline is aligned with the countries priorities and may be revised as necessary. On the pipeline of technical assistance, the meeting suggested that funding should be secured for the next phase of the program to support the initial phase of strategy implementation. It was also suggested that TA fund allocation should be considered so that all GMS countries will equally benefit. Consensus was reached that the consolidated agriculture project pipeline be submitted for inclusion in the Ha Noi Action Plan to be endorsed by the 6<sup>th</sup> GMS Leaders' Summit in March 2018. With regard to the implementation arrangement, PRC proposed that an appropriate structure should be set up to assist the two provinces of Guangxi and Yunnan for better coordination and implementation.

23. On the issue of whether the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting should be conducted regularly or whether it should be organized as needed on a case by case basis, the meeting agreed that AMM will be convened periodically as necessary.

24. The meeting also discussed whether the WGA Secretariat should remain within the implementation structure. In the absence of external funding support, the WGA National Focal Point/NSSU or a designated department within the Ministry (e.g. Department of International Cooperation) usually acts as the WGA Secretariat in each country. Support should be provided to strengthen the capacity of the government agency acting as WGA Secretariat in the country. However, if external funding is available, the current WGA Secretariat can continue to provide

technical and management support to the WGA. The WGA should play the coordination role for sector activities whereas the GMS National Coordinator can do cross ministerial coordination.

#### **Session 4: Linkages to the GMS Program**

25. Ms. Rhodora Concepcion, ADB, briefed the meeting on the status of preparations and the relevant agriculture sector inputs for the following key GMS events: (i) 22<sup>nd</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference (MC-22), 18-20 September 2017, Ha Noi, Viet Nam; (ii) 9<sup>th</sup> Economic Corridors Forum (ECF-9), 19 September 2017, Ha Noi, Viet Nam; and (iii) 6<sup>th</sup> GMS Leaders' Summit, 29-31 March 2018, Ha Noi, Viet Nam. She noted that key achievements in the agriculture sector including the successful implementation of projects and activities under CASP2, the convening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the GMS Agriculture Ministers on 6-8 September 2017 and the anticipated Ministers' support for the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan will be highlighted in both the MC-22 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit Joint Declaration.

26. Ms. Concepcion also briefed the meeting about the preliminary findings of the Midterm Review of the GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022 (SF-II MTR), both in the broad context of the overall GMS Program, and more specifically with respect to the agriculture sector's performance. She highlighted the overall positive assessment of WGA as one of the top five sectors considered beneficial and effective working groups. The findings of the SF-II MTR in turn inform the 5-year Ha Noi Action Plan (HAP) 2022 to guide the remaining years of the SF-II. Under the HAP and guided by the GMS SEAP Strategy, the agriculture sector would be focusing on modernizing agricultural trade and food safety to support GMS integration into value chains. She further noted that the agriculture sector's project pipeline presented in the preceding session would feed into the RIF 2022 as a project planning and programming tool. She requested participants to send additional comments on the MTR preliminary report, if they have any, by 26 July 2017 for consolidation into the revised report to be circulated to the countries within August 2017. A copy of her presentation is in [Appendix 13](#).

27. The meeting welcomed with appreciation the positive findings of the SF-II MTR concerning the overall performance of the agriculture sector and noted that the new SEAP Strategy and Action Plan provides valuable inputs to the HAP and the RIF 2022.

28. The Chair noted that key strategies and documents arising from high-level GMS meetings typically adopt the name of the venue of the meeting where these emanate. He therefore proposed that the new strategy be called the Siem Reap Strategy and Action Plan to promote Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-Based Value Chains.

#### **Session 5: The Next Steps**

29. Preparations and update on key deliverables of the AMM-2 were presented by Dr. Prum Somany from MAFF, Cambodia. He mentioned that there are four main deliverables:

- (i) GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan—the current final draft incorporated the feedback from the GMS countries during the national consultations in January-February 2017, the discussions with development and implementing partners at the Regional Roundtable Meeting in April 2017, and succeeding consultations with the WGA between March-June 2017. Any final comments from the WGA should be submitted by the end of July 2017.
- (ii) The Siem Reap Action Plan consisting of a list of viable priority regional investment and technical assistance projects that will promote and enhance agriculture cooperation in the GMS. This Action Plan identifies potential

investments, policies, and institutional measures to support implementation of the Strategy. The countries were requested to look at their national agriculture strategies, national development plans, the GMS Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan (RIF-IP) and the RIF long list, in addition to the discussions during the national consultations-- and use these information in drafting their respective Action Plans. From the country submissions, the WGA Secretariat identified common areas of interests and prepared the list of potential regional projects included in the GMS SEAP Strategy implementation plan. The agriculture projects in the RIF were revisited to screen the projects that are likely to be pursued and consolidated with the potential projects in the Strategy Action Plan, while others with no country support were dropped. The resulting consolidated list has 4 lending and 6 non-lending (TA) projects. This will be submitted for inclusion in the Ha Noi Action Plan for delivery at the 6 GMS Leaders' Summit in March 2018.

- (iii) An enhanced online portal for the AINS (now called AINS 2.0) and the new WGA website. Specifically, the plan is to build a new CASP website hosted in Bangkok and to migrate to a new content management system to include the current content from the old website (gms-wga.org) and accommodate AINS 2.0 features. Parallel efforts will be made in PRC and in Bangkok so as to achieve a similar look and feel. Eventually, a new mobile application has to be built for AINS/CASP for mobile phone functionality.
- (iv) A series of knowledge products and a new audio-visual production to be shown at AMM-2 and a post AMM-2 video to capture the highlights and key outcomes of AMM-2. A roadshow post AMM-2 will be organized to feature a public exhibit of the work of the WGA and promote awareness on the AMM-2 as well as CASP2. The presentation is provided in [Appendix 14](#).

30. H.E. San Vanty noted the above deliverables for the AMM-2. He also mentioned that MAFF had invited Cambodian Prime Minister, H. E. Hun Sen to open AMM-2 and they are waiting for Cabinet approval. An update would be provided once a reply has been received. Mr. Ramachandran stated that the comprehensive package of deliverables for AMM-2 was noteworthy and that the knowledge products consisting of reports and/or policy briefs on a range of topics plus the audio-visual productions and market place events will all be interesting.

31. Ms. Vichelle Arunsuwannakorn, Trade Facilitation Specialist from the WGA Secretariat presented the key messages and lessons learned from THAIFEX 2017. She mentioned that the GMS Pavilion at THAIFEX 2017 attracted over 17,000 visitors and featured over 200 SEAP from 35 company exhibitors who sold over 100 products. Among the key takeaways were: GMS joint regional marketing is a viable concept, market matching can be a successful tool to promote market access, and GMS is primed and ready to harmonize food safety through continuous dialogue and concerted action. Mr. Thomas Weaver, Private Sector Development and Value Chain Specialist from the WGA Secretariat, briefly presented the summary of the Issues Paper on "*Increasing the safety and quality of food products from the GMS*" which compiles the key messages from the Policy Forum at THAIFEX 2017. The paper underscored the importance of harnessing existing political will to address food safety and quality issues; priority issues and gaps and priority hazard categories and the need to address these issues, i.e. establishing a 'quality culture'. In summary, addressing food safety and quality in the GMS requires coordinated regional approaches that address domestic markets and border areas, using risk-based and whole chain approaches. A copy of the full presentation is in [Appendix 15](#).

32. The participation at THAIFEX 2017 was greatly appreciated. Mr. Ramachandran closed the discussion noting the importance of food safety and food quality at the regional level.

### **Session 6: The Way Forward**

33. Dr. Lourdes Adriano, Team Leader of CASP2, presented the ground work for the next phase of CASP, including the components of the proposed technical assistance (TA), which will support the implementation of the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan for the next five years. She cited noteworthy initiatives already underway in many GMS countries as proof of an auspicious foundation for the Strategy. An example is Thailand's and PRC's achievements in their capacity building initiatives for developing soil volunteer doctors and NUE respectively. She noted that as a result of these progressive agricultural activities in the region, the landscape is conducive for the shift from regarding the Mekong River as merely a transport corridor to that of an economic corridor that reinforces the GMS Strategy on agriculture. It is aligned with ASEAN's four pillars of being a single market, integrated to the global market that is economically competitive while espousing equitable economic development, which will also create momentum for the Strategy. Food safety becomes the natural outcome as a result of the more transparent, inclusive value chains, directly supporting the ASEAN's vision while bringing to the forefront the GMS as a leading supplier for SEAP.

34. The proposed TA will be key in supporting the implementation of the GMS SEAP Strategy for five years, from 2018-2022. It will support the realization of improved coordination of policies, increased agricultural investment with the development of knowledge products and services aimed at expanding safe and environment-friendly agro-products in the GMS and connecting them to the global market. More specifically, the TA will strengthen the capacity of the GMS to solve transboundary problems on food safety and provide proactive measures to ensure its value chains are inclusive and resilient. The proposed new TA shall implement the four pillars of the Strategy. The policy output will put in place harmonized policies that will facilitate and accelerate trade and investment across the entire value chain. Pillar 2 shall review and develop infrastructure to complement such policies and provide necessary capacity building and research support including conducting pre-feasibility studies, risk analysis and management, modeling requirements for climate change and vulnerability analysis. The knowledge and innovations outputs shall focus on sharing and bridging knowledge gaps whether online through AINS 2.0 or physically through capacity training. Some of the initiatives that will be implemented under this output include fortifying training capabilities and research for product labeling, marketing, packaging and reduction of waste in the value chain. Lastly and equally important, is regional cooperation to orchestrate all these Strategy outputs harmoniously through regular dialogue, across agencies and sectors, including, and most importantly, the consumers and end-users. The WGA will facilitate inter-agency and inter-sector collaboration, which will feed into the other policy, infrastructure and knowledge pillars. The WGA will supervise the outputs of the TA, monitor its state of play and report and collaborate with the concerned GMS agencies and provide technical and logistical support through engagement of experts.

35. The funding requirement to implement the Strategy is estimated at \$10 million. ADB expressed its strong financial and technical support and has taken the necessary steps to begin its processing. However, there is a need to seek co-financiers to sustainably continue the project and Dr. Adriano took the opportunity to welcome existing development partners, the Nordic Development Fund (NDF) and the Government of Sweden to explore continuing the partnership under CASP. It is imperative to further articulate a subset of policies to continue the good work on GWN, NUE and PGS in the GMS countries and to support pre-feasibility studies to strengthen infrastructure that has been planned under the investment pipeline. Mr. Ramachandran remarked that \$10 million is an indicative amount to get the TA done properly

and that ADB would continue to help mobilize resources including additional financing. For full details of the next steps for CASP, please refer to [Appendix 16](#).

### **1<sup>st</sup> Day Closing Session**

36. PRC WGA representative informed the meeting that they would be pleased to host the next WGA meeting in Yunnan, PRC in May 2018. They will send more details as soon as they get approval on the date and venue.

37. In preparation for the drafting of the record of discussion on day 2, the Co-Chair reminded the countries to nominate representatives for the drafting session. He also took the opportunity to reiterate the importance of finalizing the AMM-2 Joint Ministerial Statement which will be endorsed at the upcoming AMM-2 in September. He urged the WGA national focal points to work for the Agriculture Minister's attendance at the AMM-2 as it is very crucial to get their guidance on the next phase of the program.

38. The Chair echoed the ADB's message and request. He thanked the ADB for coordinating the organization of the meeting and all participants for their active participation and constructive inputs to the discussions. He recognized the heavy work load for all from now until September leading to the AMM-2 but expressed optimism about its expected outcome.

### **Day 2**

39. Representatives from the GMS countries convened for 1.5 hours to draft the WGA AM-14 Record of Discussion, facilitated by Ms. Georginia Nepomuceno, Regional Cooperation Specialist from the WGA Secretariat. The record summarizes the key messages and outcome of the WGA AM-14 (see [Appendix 17](#)).

40. On the Chair's suggestion to adopt the name of the venue (Siem Reap) in the title of the Strategy, some countries expressed concern that it might connote that it is a strategy of Cambodia only. It was clarified however that such practice in the GMS is used for living documents such as action plans where updates are provided as new information becomes available. It was also emphasized to keep the regional dimension of the GMS SEAP Strategy intact and for the GMS countries to have joint ownership and commitment. Subsequently, agreement was reached in the plenary that the strategy will now be called "Strategy for Promoting Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-based Value Chains in the Greater Mekong Subregion and Siem Reap Action Plan, 2018-2022".

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Preparatory Meeting for AMM-2**

41. Dr. Somany from MAFF, Cambodia, updated the WGA on the program and logistical arrangements for AMM-2 on 6-8 September 2017 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. A Policy Forum will be held on 6 September to gather key stakeholders in a dialogue relating to food safety, quality assurance, and inclusively sustainable agro-based value chains in the GMS. This will be followed by a WGA Meeting, Development Partners' Forum, and Public-Private Policy Dialogue on 7 September. The formal Agriculture Ministers' Meeting will take place in the morning of 8 September, followed by the closed-door Ministerial Retreat in the afternoon. Market events will explore new synergies and potential partnerships in the GMS agro-tourism sector, promote food-tourism and eco-tourism potentials of selected safe and environment-friendly GMS products and extend the benefits of agro-tourism to farmers, the rural community and tourist operators in the region.

42. Key development and implementing partners have been invited to the Development Partners' Forum to discuss strategic partnerships and highlight synergies and opportunities for increasing investments in agricultural value chain development. The Public-Private Policy Dialogue is being jointly organized with the Food Industry Asia with participation

by key officials from the Ministries of Agriculture of GMS countries and regional managers and CEOs of multinational/regional agribusinesses operating in the GMS. The main topic would be on raising the bar for food safety at international standards in GMS SEAP value chains. The Mekong Business Initiative is launching the Mekong Agribusiness Technology Challenge (MATCh) during AMM-2.

43. For the Ministerial Retreat, 2 topics were proposed to the WGA, namely:

Topic 1: In order to address some investment gaps to facilitate cross-border trade, (SPS measures, customs processing, and food inspection capability at the border including all necessary technical and logistics support (cold chain, truck parking and weighing stations, etc.) and reduce losses in transit and minimize the likelihood of food contamination, how do we move countries to enter into bilateral and multilateral agreements which recognize the equivalence of each country's food safety measures?

Topic 2: How can the new GMS SEAP Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan be effectively executed through (i) formulation of a realistic and achievable implementation plan; what immediate actions should be done during the first year of implementation which will be the most crucial to guide the direction of the following years; (ii) mobilization of public and private financing, particularly what role can public investment have in attracting private investments in agriculture value chain development; and (iii) improved coordination and results-based monitoring and reporting, particularly what measurable and realistic results would you like to see after 5 years of implementation of the strategy? There was consensus to use topic 2 as focus of the Retreat discussion.

44. Dr. Somany also informed the meeting about his ministry's efforts to prepare for the AMM-2. Subcommittees were organized to take care of overall logistical arrangement, protocol, liaison, security, transportation, social functions, among others.

45. With regard to the draft AMM-2 Joint Ministerial Statement, the countries agreed to send further comments and suggestions by end of July 2017. The timetable leading to AMM-2 was presented to the WGA members. It was agreed that any further comments should be sent to the WGA Secretariat by the last week of July 2017 to allow for printing of the document and formal endorsement at the AMM-2. The countries were requested to update the WGA Secretariat on the process and status of internal approval of the GMS SEAP Strategy. While they have different internal approval requirements and timing, all were committed to getting the document delivered at AMM-2.

### **The Agriculture Information Network Service Version 2.0**

46. The Agricultural Information Network Services version 2.0 (AINS 2.0) was presented by Mr. Ludovich Pommier, Monitoring and Evaluation and Information Services Specialist from the WGA Secretariat. He stated that AINS 2.0 would be user-friendly inside a new WGA (CASP2) website operated from Bangkok which can be viewed using mobile smartphone technology. A second AINS2.0 website will upgrade the original AINS website operated from Beijing, PRC. The two websites will carry the new features of AINS 2.0, including (i) food safety policies/certifications, procedures; (ii) directory of GMS SEAP; (iii) directory of GMS SEAP traders/producers; (iv) GMS map of SEAP, food GIs, hotspots (restaurants); and (v) WGA/CASP2 website. The tools will include: an export/import tool to show border crossing points, food safety requirements, logistics availability/capacity, and other information needed for land border crossing. The current initial pilot project until the AMM-2 will demonstrate this capability inside the new WGA website. It is planned that two land border crossings for all GMS countries would be done in coordination with WGA NSS. For the GMS countries except PRC, AINS2.0 will use Facebook as its social media platform and in PRC, WeChat will be used. At

least three E-forums will be organized using social media on: (i) agricultural standards and certifications; (ii) food safety of GI, value chains and traceability, and on CFA practices. Beyond the pilot, phase 1 could include the development of a WGA AINS APP and expansion of the databases, for the remaining period of the TA. For the next five years AINS could provide the information and communications technology (ICT) capability for the various outputs and activities of the new GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022 particularly for the Strategy's pillars 3 and 4, knowledge and marketing. His presentation is attached as [Appendix 18](#).

### **Open Discussion**

47. In response to query from a delegate from Viet Nam on whether the new AINS 2.0 would be useful to farmer cooperatives, Mr. Pommier explained that the initial pilot project would be in English at the regional level but eventually there should be national level forums in all the GMS countries. H.E. San Vanty recalled that the First AMM discussed the significance of AINS a decade ago, therefore, this AMM-2 could also relate to AINS as a tool to promote the GMS Strategy and the Siem Reap Action Plan. Delegate from Thailand mentioned that all countries should contribute information to and also benefit from AINS2.0. Myanmar representative inquired how AINS2.0 can provide value addition. Mr. Pommier replied that AINS 2.0 would provide specific 'one-stop-shop' services to all the GMS countries which could prove advantageous in the future. Mr. Ramachandran mentioned the importance of ICT for the future of e-commerce and knowledge sharing. AINS2.0 should be made simple and easy to use and be seen as a tool and service for the entire GMS as it prepares for the implementation of the new strategy in 2018.

48. Other discussion points were:

- AINS users need to be identified before the core products can be determined (farmers are concerned about selling prices; traders are concerned about import/export conditions; Alibaba should be considered as a model)
- AINS 2.0 should first be presented in a meeting of GMS WGA focal point representatives before being presented to WGA
- The idea of two poles was not understood by the WGA AM-14 participants; tests/trials at six poles should be considered (major challenge is that the sharing of confidential trade information is not possible)
- AINS 1.0 had many problems and was not used and therefore needs to be changed and to be more accessible and interesting to GMS member countries
- AINS 2.0 needs a new design that allows sharing of publicly available information and data

49. In conclusion:

- The 6 GMS member countries should agree on an AINS 2.0 concept before proceeding
- Information posted on AINS 2.0 should be similar to that already available at existing trade portals; information is not controversial, and should include standards for agricultural products needed by importers, and technical characteristics of agricultural products
- Information regarding trade and investment should be based on the World Bank's site on "Ease of Doing Business"
- AINS 2.0 entry point should be from the GMS-WGA website
- AINS 2.0 needs to address the issue of sustainability of the site
- Proposals for the sustainability of AINS 2.0 should be submitted for consideration by AMM-2

## **Mekong Agribusiness Technology Challenge (MATCh)**

50. Mr. Dominic Mellor from the ADB Resident Mission Office in Viet Nam introduced the Mekong Agribusiness Technology Challenge (MATCh) as the first agribusiness acceleration program to help agribusiness startups launch successfully, and mature agritech startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to expand into new markets within the Mekong region. He highlighted technology and knowledge transfer to unlock the Mekong region's potential as a major producer of SEAP, through the MATCh Startup Accelerator track and the MATCh Technology Transfer track. MATCh offers a platform for participating startups to earn exposure, get connected to local ecosystems and stakeholders, network with investors and incubator programs, support prototyping and product testing for local markets, receive individualized matchmaking and coaching, and win innovation grants for up to about 10 agribusiness startups and SMEs. MATCh will be launched at the AMM-2 and agritech pitching and competition events, with the awarding ceremony for the winning startups to be held subsequently. The presentation is provided in [Appendix 19](#).

## **Open Discussion**

51. Representative of Viet Nam remarked that the initiative is interesting and inquired whether the network is open to cooperate with others and how AINS can be integrated with it. Mr. Mellor replied that MATCh is completely open to work with anyone. Three steps have been planned for its development, the first is to go regional, the third global, and the plan is to use GMS as the second step. They would like to see how MATCh could work with GMS–AINS.

52. Representative of Thailand suggested for the planned agritech pitching and competition to bring smart young people together to develop technology and knowledge for agriculture. She asked whether sustainable development should also be considered rather than just competition. Mr. Mellor gave an example of their previous activity on environmental issues that encouraged young people to develop projects to reduce plastic waste and in that way they could contribute to sustainable environmental development. He indicated that similar activities to address sustainability challenges can be initiated in agriculture.

53. PRC representative queried about the innovation grants and how private companies could join the initiative. Mr. Mellor explained the grant modality, incentives and criteria for selecting private companies. He introduced the scoring system to evaluate 70% of the commercial impact and 30% social impact of the proposed project to win the grant. He pointed out that the possible overseas visibility, media coverage, and business networking opportunities attract private companies to join.

54. Dr. Goletti suggested that the initiative might combine different components and work similarly like some agro-incubators in the region. He wondered in what way MATCh is different and how differently the financing grants are provided. Mr. Mellor pointed out that for the competition and challenge part, the initiative does not provide financial support but rather work for exposure with regional and global partners. They help to connect the agritech start-ups with partners, and all funding is from the private sector. Mr. Pommier mentioned a similar initiative under the USAID program, and asked how the initiative could help start-ups to attract investment to develop into business. Mr. Mellor explained their feedback mechanism about investment through an innovation map. They try to help students' projects to develop from prototypes to business models and add value to the process.

## **Day 2 Closing Session**

55. The Co-chair once more reminded the WGA of the submission deadlines on any further comments/edits on the GMS SEAP Strategy and Action Plan and the AMM-2 Joint Ministerial Statement. To help MAFF, the ADB will be willing to facilitate and support the invitation process

for the GMS Ministers via the ADB Resident missions in each country if needed. He thanked all the participants for a productive discussion.

56. The Chair concluded that the 2-day meeting brought excellent cooperation from all the participants, GMS countries, and ADB. He reassured the other countries that Cambodia is committed to the preparations for a successful AMM-2. The countries can still continue to provide comments and suggestions until before the AMM-2; however, not much time is left until then. He urged everyone to update their respective ministers on the progress of the arrangements. He reassured the countries that Siem Reap is a safe city for the event. He thanked the ADB, the WGA Secretariat, and the GMS countries for good organization, productive discussions, and useful contributions to the 2-day meeting. He acknowledged the gracious acceptance of the PRC to host WGA AM-15 next year. He declared that the WGA AM-14 is closed.

### **Development Partners Dialogue**

57. The session aimed to discuss promoting the implementation of the GMS SEAP Strategy with donors and other development partners in preparation for the AMM-2. The AMM-2 program will include a Development Partners Forum that would come up with a joint development partners statement. The concept and approaches of geographical indications (GI) were also introduced during the dialogue and perspectives were provided from Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam. The need for further support to fully realize the potential of GIs in the GMS was acknowledged by national representatives.

58. Mr. Erik Holmqvist, Nordic Development Fund (NDF), introduced the NDF approach on sustainable financing through loans, guarantees and investment grants. Unlike ADB, NDF does not have funding earmarked for post-CASP2 initiatives at this stage but is interested to receive proposals. Mr. Holmqvist emphasized that NDF would not be looking for more of the same from CASP, which is also the position of the Government of Sweden. He suggested that scalable initiatives from the LOAs, for example, be considered carefully.

59. Mr. Stephane Passeri, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, outlined FAO's strong interest in value chain development and moving from food security to food quality, with links to voluntary standards and the like. He noted the varied contexts across the GMS related to national levels of development and the need to focus on consumer preferences within the subregion. The role of non-traditional funding sources, such as trust funds, was also acknowledged.

60. The session reviewed the draft development partner joint statement in detail and revised to better reflect the interests of donors and to ensure the statement's acceptability to regional policymakers. It was noted that the statement should be reduced to one page if it is to be read during the AMM-2.

### **Public-Private Dialogue**

61. The public-private dialogue was organized to gather further information on how to develop safe, environment-friendly and inclusive value chains to enhance product valorization in local and international markets through GIs, which will feed into the issues paper on *"Increasing the safety and quality of food products from the Greater Mekong Subregion"*. The dialogue also sought to actively involve the private sector and civil society in the GI conversation. The session was facilitated by Mr. Anthony Zola, Senior Researcher and Consultant, Mekong Environment and Resources Institute (MERI) and co-facilitated by H.E. Mr. San Vanty.

62. The public-private dialogue opened with a presentation by Mr. Stephane Passeri, Project Coordinator and Officer of the FAO, who discussed about sustainable agriculture and value-added creation through the development of GIs. He introduced GI as an intellectual property right, one that does not belong to an individual or group. Its characteristics are heavily dependent on the product's specific production area and environment (i.e. Darjeeling Tea from India, not Indian tea). This allows the product to be directly associated with the specific area from where it is sourced and its qualities. It is also dependent upon the producers' knowledge of the product that is closely linked to local knowledge and heritage. When maximized, GI can be valuable in increasing public awareness on GI products and its overarching framework and systems. However, for it to work effectively in promoting such unique products, there must be a legal framework in place that oversees its control, protection, and enforcement with necessary capacity building initiatives. In other words, countries must develop legislation that works closely with other country government agencies and private sector to achieve mutual recognition of GI products. GI products cannot be properly promoted without these measures. Mr. Passeri showed how many GI products there are in Asia (Thailand has 89, Viet Nam has 55, Cambodia has 2, Japan has recently enacted a GI law). There is also a database for ASEAN GI products that can be accessed at [www.asean-gidatabase.org](http://www.asean-gidatabase.org). The attribute of control is central in GI. First, because the handling of the product as well as how it is marketed all contributes to how trustworthy the product is. Second, internal control is key through organizations and associations help enforce safeguards on products. Finally, establishing external control, meaning, having an area of mutual cooperation in the region, in the GMS, is important as well. He recommended that there be one branding through a logo for all GMS GI products. He reiterated that this will be a more effective way to promote GMS as a leading supplier of safe and environment-friendly agro-food products while maximizing the value additions of GI. A copy of his presentation is attached as [Appendix 20](#).

63. Mr. Lao Reasey from the Intellectual Property Department of the Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia, spoke about the experience of Cambodia on GI. He mentioned that, as of 2017, Cambodia has been successful in registering two GI products – Kampot pepper and Kampong Speu palm sugar and both products are recognized and registered in Viet Nam last December 2016 and in Thailand in early 2017. Kampot pepper has also been registered in the European Union (EU) while kampong Speu palm sugar is undergoing the same EU process, supported by FAO. Mr. Reasey discussed the details about their experience with successfully registering their GI products. As explained by Mr. Passeri, they did in fact collaborate with the private sector (individual experts) to assess the situation of Kampot pepper such as its production, handling, labeling, branding and so on. The public-private team also studied the EU GI procedures and worked tirelessly and collaboratively on meeting all requirements. They acknowledged the importance of putting safeguards in place as there was an emergence of fake Kampot pepper in the market and hence adversely affected the penetration and sales of authentic Kampot pepper. Fake Kampot pepper emerged from the recognition of its GI value additions that put a price premium on the product. He emphasized that while there are notable successes with Kampot pepper and Kampong Speu palm sugar, there are still many challenges to overcome with GI. His presentation can be accessed at [Appendix 21](#).

64. Mr. Sok Sarang, representative of ECOCERT (a certification and inspection organization operating in Southeast Asia), explained the importance of GI to promote a country's unique and natural agri-products and the five pillars for GI registration. First, is a book of registration, which will serve as a guidebook to the attributes a GI product ought to have while detailing control and traceability measures that it must comply with. Second, a GI organization that manages a group of experts, producers, traders and facilitates dialogue among these groups. Third, a delimitation of the area where the GI product was produced. Finally, a proven historical document that links the product to its environmental origin. He stressed the importance of traceability in the GI process as it can identify the quality of the product, thereby giving more dependable information

to generate trust from potential consumers. Because GI is strongly linked to a specific area and local knowledge, local communities, more specifically, smallholder farmers have an upper hand in this capacity and must definitely be included in the conversation on GI and consequently its benefits. The private sector has a stake in this as well and must be engaged more deeply. The sector recognizes its economic and social rewards, being the largest sector that provides employment and generating revenue and has the resources for capacity building. Collaboration across sectors (public, private, civil society) and industries is key for maximizing the benefits of GI. A copy of ECOCERT's presentation is in [Appendix 22](#).

65. Ms. Gao Fang from the Ministry of Agriculture, PRC, shared PRC's achievements in laying down the framework and processes for GI registration of local products which has reaped benefits for the local agriculture industry. She reinforced what previous presentations have discussed that GI is a key branding tool in promoting products that are safe and environment-friendly, for which they made a specific logo for GI products. She discussed that GI products mostly come from poverty-stricken areas in PRC, hence, it is also a tool to alleviate such unfortunate conditions by involving the local communities in the value chain. The success of the GI process in PRC is largely due to strong central government support and clear directions on promoting GI. The PRC government has successfully established GI processes and infrastructure to support the registration and promotion of GI products in the country. They have field experts in different provinces who advise local farmers and also conduct quality control inspections and monitoring of GI products every year. They have research facilities dedicated to GI. PRC has signed mutual recognition documents with the EU which is also reflected in the EU website, and of the 100 GIs that are on the website, 5 are from the GMS. The Ministry of Agriculture also regularly joins exhibitions and trade fairs to promote and educate the public about GI. Ms. Gao recognizes that there are still areas that PRC can maximize GI such as providing technical capacity training for experts, farmers and crucial players in the GI system. Financial support is also important to support these capacity building programs. They have seen the tremendous positive feedback and interest in GI products from joining exhibitions and will thus keep utilizing these channels. Her presentation is attached as [Appendix 23](#).

66. During the discussion, Mr. Passeri mentioned that exchange of information can be the first output for the WGA on GI. The other countries may not be aware of the achievements of PRC on GI and many successful initiatives could be applied in other GMS countries. He also noted that the principle of inclusiveness kept repeating in all presentations and local experiences, which is central to GI. Because GI is a new concept to consumers, there must be visual information or branding of GI products for the end-users to understand, trust and patronize GI products. There is a need for raising awareness on the issues around GI and how it can directly alleviate poverty. PRC's GI logo is a good start and it is an effective way of communicating and identifying with GI products. He recommended that a GMS GI logo be developed so that GMS GI products are widely recognized across the subregion, while also jointly promoting and protecting each other's GI products.

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## Appendices

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