



# 18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION (GMS) WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE (WGA)

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**Theme: Towards Achieving Agri-food Safety and Quality Harmonization in the Greater Mekong Subregion in the context of COVID-19 and Climate Change**

Wednesday, 7 July 2021 / 9:00-16:00 (Bangkok time, GMT+7)

Thursday, 8 July 2021 / 9:00-12:00 (Bangkok time, GMT+7)

Recognizing the growing food safety concerns alongside agri-food chains, and the crucial role that food safety plays in putting an end to hunger (SDG 2) and promoting health (SDG 3), the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 7 June to be the World Food Safety Day. In 2017, the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Ministers of Agriculture endorsed the Strategy and Action Plan for *Promoting Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-Based Value Chains in the Greater Mekong Subregion*, with the vision that the GMS would become a leading supplier of safe, nutritious, and climate-friendly agri-food products in the world.

Production of safe and nutritious agri-food products has become increasingly important for economic development in each of the GMS countries, commensurate with growing demand for such products in both export markets and national retail markets. The need for improving safety and quality (nutrition) of agri-food products has become more evident in the context of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), as immunity and vulnerability are inversely related. Research suggests that the implementation of food safety management systems such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), besides cleaning, sanitation, good hygienic practices, and active packaging, are important to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection. Likewise, climate change impacts manifested through increasing temperature and humidity, and variability in precipitation patterns increase operational and reputations risks for agri-food industry.

All GMS countries are members of the recently agreed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership that accounts for about 30% of the world's population (2.2 billion people) and 30% of global GDP (\$26.2 trillion) as of 2020, making it the biggest trading bloc in history. Each of the GMS countries is also a partner in separate bilateral trade agreements with many countries, including the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as with the European Union. Agri-food trade within the GMS is increasing but is constrained by the lack of regional agreements and by informal cross border trade.

While the formal trade agreements provide a great opportunity for the agri-food products from GMS countries to access these higher value export markets, they also require that the agri-food products meet the Food Safety and Quality (FSQ) standards and regulations for these markets. National retail markets, especially the supermarket chains, also have FSQ standards that the agri-food products must meet. Agri-food value chain stakeholders—farmers, collectors and traders, and agribusiness processors and distributors – must all comply with FSQ standards to access high value national retail and export markets.

The GMS Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) and their collaborators undertook pioneering work in the areas of food safety, quality assurance, and climate-friendly agriculture practices under the GMS Core Agriculture Support Program II (CASP-II). Substantial progress was achieved in terms of: (i) development of a strategy to improve food safety and quality assurance for climate-friendly agri-

food products; (ii) policy dialogues on food safety and associated knowledge products<sup>1</sup>; and (iii) public-private collaboration for enhanced training on food safety and quality control for upgrading the technical skills of GMS food scientists in addressing mycotoxin<sup>2</sup> and regional/national stakeholder consultations, training and demonstrations on traceability barcoding systems<sup>3</sup>. Despite all such progress, substantial policy and capacity gaps remain at the GMS level, and more strategic investments are needed. Since many of the FSQ measures are implemented at local levels, further in-depth discussions at national and subregional levels are needed. Harmonization of FSQ standards in the GMS can be difficult to practically achieve and sustain, especially since GMS countries have different processes for ratifying, and codifying new regulations. A better coordinated regional approach to food safety and quality policy, driven by business and public interests, will enhance the protection of domestic consumers and suppliers. It will also support scaling up of production and expanded market access.

The ASEAN Multilateral Arrangement for the Mutual Recognition of Agri-food Standards and Conformity Assessment (MAMRASCA)<sup>4</sup> provides a practical approach to harmonization of FSQ standards, since, participation in a mutual recognition agreement is in a phased manner as long as multi-lateral conformity assessments, and laboratory capacity are at acceptable levels.<sup>5</sup> Further work is needed to advance and adopt MAMRASCA but opportunities are ripe for GMS countries to be its early adopters and expand regional agri-food trade. Development of harmonized agri-food FSQ standards, however, must involve the government departments responsible for FSQ regulations and compliance, and the private sector.

The COVID 19 pandemic disrupted agri-food value chains and reduced access to export markets. The pandemic has also provided a new set of agri-food trade challenges and trust issues amongst the GMS economies. Rebuilding trust will entail greater coordination within and between countries. Support for benchmarking (national, ASEAN, and global) and sharing of best practices within the region could help the establishment of trust and enforcement of FSQ.

Adverse impacts of climate change impacts on agri-food production and value chain competitiveness are becoming more evident. Farmers are challenged with greater rainfall variability making agri-food production more expensive, and risky. Increased temperatures and extreme events are causing food wastage in on-farm storage, and along the agri-food value chains. Agribusinesses need to upgrade their cool chains to ensure agri-food quality. Customers in higher value agri-food markets are demanding that agri-food products be produced in a climate-friendly manner.

To support the implementation of the *Strategy for Promoting Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-Based Value Chains in the GMS*, ADB approved a Knowledge and Support Technical Assistance

<sup>1</sup> The GMS WGA initiated two large GMS-wide Policy Forums on food safety, quality assurance and sustainable value chains. The first was held at the annual world trade forum, THAIFEX from 31 May to 1 June 2017. The other dialogue was conducted in September 2017 as one of the side events of the second GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

<sup>2</sup> Supported by FIA and University of Maryland. Phase 1 & Phase 2 took place in Singapore in December 2017 and January 2018 for scientists from all 6 GMS countries, Viet Nam was selected as pilot country to conduct the in-country training for Phase 3, in Can Tho City from 8-12 October 2018. This initiative addressed lack of verification capacity to test for food contaminants of safety and trade impact concerns, such as aflatoxins, pesticides and veterinary drug residues resulting in loss of trust in the supply chain and lack of cross recognition of certificates of analysis which can devalue commodities and close some export markets.

<sup>3</sup> Initiated in collaboration with GS1 and FIA to develop the capacity of growers, manufacturers/processors, distributors, and governments in applying the GS1 barcoding traceability systems. Stakeholders consultations and capacity building workshops were held in Cambodia, PRC, Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam between November 2017 and April 2018. Demonstration pilots were undertaken for vegetables in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in May 2018 (Natural Garden retail shop), and in Dalat, Viet Nam for the dairy supply chain in mid 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Aims to facilitate the establishment of an effective mechanism for operationalizing and accepting standards at both national and regional level and covers the mutual recognition of all three existing ASEAN agri-food standards: ASEAN Agricultural Best Practices, including good agricultural practices (GAP) for fruits/vegetables, good aquaculture practices (GAqP) for food fish, and good animal husbandry practices (GAHP) for poultry products including broilers and layers, with the flexibility for further adoption of additional agri-food standards.

<sup>5</sup> Mutual recognition in accordance with a country's ability to meet two technical milestones, namely: (i) if existing national standards are aligned with the ASEAN Standards based on an alignment assessment process; and, ii) if national conformity accreditation bodies can meet relevant ISO standards.

(TA) entitled **Greater Mekong Subregion Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Program (SAFSP) for 5 years (April 2020 – March 2025)**. The **outcome** of the TA is: 'GMS investments in and capacity for climate-friendly, safe, and sustainable agri-food value chains increased'. The TA has three **outputs**: (i) Climate-friendly, inclusive, and gender-responsive agri-food value chains and agribusinesses strengthened; (ii) Harmonized crop and livestock safety and quality systems adopted; and (iii) Climate-adaptive agriculture in the context of the water-energy-food security nexus enhanced.

In support of realizing output 2, the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Agriculture will feature the theme of: *"Achieving Agri-food Safety and Quality Harmonization and Traceability in the Greater Mekong Subregion in the context of COVID-19 and Climate Change."*

## OBJECTIVES

1. To share national priorities of GMS countries for reinvigorating the agri-food sector in the context of COVID-19 and climate change;
2. To assess how the ASEAN Multilateral Arrangement for the Mutual Recognition of Agri-food Standards and Conformity Assessment can be utilized to facilitate GMS agri-food trade in the GMS and beyond; and
3. To agree upon priority actions to support harmonized FSQ standards and digitization to enhance agri-food trade in the GMS and beyond.

## TARGET PARTICIPANTS

- GMS WGA representatives
- Technical department representatives from all GMS Ministries of Agriculture, and other related ministries (environment, science and technology, health, planning, and finance)
- Private sector (agribusiness) representatives
- Development partner representatives
- ADB
- TA 9916 consultant team

## EXPECTED OUTPUT

- 18<sup>th</sup> GMS WGA Annual Meeting Statement

Owing to prevailing COVID-19 situation and associated uncertainties, the GMS WGA annual meeting will be held virtually using the Zoom application in **English** language.

### Join the Zoom Meeting

[https://adb-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_FlzgDmfqTXWwm19G\\_ZpEfw](https://adb-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FlzgDmfqTXWwm19G_ZpEfw)

**Meeting ID:** 997 3221 6407

**Password:** 18GMSwga

**(Valid for both 7 & 8 July 2021)**

## AGENDA

### DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, 7 JULY 2021

Date / Time (GMT+7)	Subject	Presenters
<b>Opening Session</b>		
09:00 – 09:15	Welcome Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs</b>, Deputy Permanent Secretary / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand</li> <li>• <b>Jiangfeng Zhang</b>, Director, Environment, Natural Resource &amp; Agriculture Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB</li> </ul>
09:15 – 10:00	Priorities for Reinvigorating the GMS Agri-food Sector in the Context of COVID-19 and Climate Change –  Presentations by GMS WGA Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cambodia (H.E. Dr. Prum Somany</b>, Advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) / Director, Department of International Cooperation / WGA Coordinator, MAFF)</li> <li>• <b>PRC (Mr. Jiang Jiang</b>, Head of Asian and African Affairs Division, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs)</li> <li>• <b>Lao PDR (Dr. Thatsaka Saphangthong</b>, Director General, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)</li> <li>• <b>Thailand (Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs</b>, Deputy Permanent Secretary / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives)</li> <li>• <b>Viet Nam (Mr. Nguyen Do Anh Tuan</b>, Director General, International Cooperation Department / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)</li> </ul>
<b>Session 1: Agri-Food Safety and Quality Harmonization</b>		
10:00 – 10:20	Keynote: Multilateral Arrangement for the Mutual Recognition of Agri-food Standards and Conformity Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pham Quang MINH</b>, Assistant Director, Sectoral Development Directorate / Head of Food, Agriculture and Forestry Division, ASEAN Economic Community Department</li> </ul>
10:20 – 11:10	Panel discussion: Perspectives on ASEAN Harmonized Standards and GMS Countries as Early Adopters of MAMRASCA: What Needs to be Done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms. Lin Jing</b>, Institute of General Administration of Customs, PRC</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Thavisith Bounyasouk</b>, Director of Clean Agriculture Standard Center, Dept. of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Nguyen Anh Phong</b> – Director, Institute for Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), Viet Nam</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Ker Monthivuth</b>, Director, Plant Protection, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Cambodia</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Veeravith Phunsub</b>, Policy and Plan Analyst, National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS), Thailand</li> </ul>
11:10 – 11:30	Open Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator: Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn</b>, Executive Director, Mekong Institute, Thailand</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2: Role of the Private Sector in the Harmonization of Agri-food Standards on Safety and Quality</b>		
11:30 – 12:00	Keynote: Harmonization of FSQ Standards in the GMS – Private Sector Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr. Chusak Chuenprayoth</b>, Chairman, KCfresh, Thailand (Vegetables Exporter to Europe)</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Phuwakji Rungtiwakornkij</b>, Managing Director, The Big Trading, Thailand fruit exporter to PRC</li> </ul>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch Break	

Date / Time (GMT+7)	Subject	Presenters
13:00 – 13:40	Panel discussion: Feedback/ Reflections from private sector and organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natcha Sikaewnamai</b>, Senior Operations Manager – Food Service, Intertek Thailand</li> <li>• <b>Mr. CHEN Qisheng</b>, General Manager, China Certification and Inspection Group (CCIC) Cambodia Inc.</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Chen Wei Ning, William</b>, Director, NTU Food Science &amp; Technology, Programme, Nanyang Technological University</li> <li>• <b>Mrs. Sharmeen Khan</b>, Chief Marketing Officer, OpsSmart, USA</li> </ul>
13:40 – 14:00	Open Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator: Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn</b>, Executive Director, Mekong Institute, Thailand</li> </ul>
<b>Session 3: Implementing Food Safety Harmonization and Traceability Initiatives in the GMS</b>		
14:00 – 14:30	Presentation: GMS TA 9916- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Program – Plan and Actions to support GMS Food Safety and Quality Harmonization, Traceability and Digital Solutions for Harmonization and Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vichelle Roaring-Arunsuwannakorn</b>, TA 9916 Food Safety &amp; Quality Specialist</li> <li>• <b>Pier Paolo Ficarelli</b>, TA 9916 Digital Agriculture &amp; Innovation Specialist</li> </ul>
14:30 – 15:30	Panel discussion: Panel member Views on the Proposed TA Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Wonnop Vissessanguan</b>, Executive Director of BIOTEC (and Secretariat of BCG), National Science and Technology Development Agency, Thailand</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Wonganan</b>, Mae Klong Distribution Company Limited and Choke Anan Farm</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Do Hoang Phuong</b>, Director of the Global Food., JST company</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Xaiyanun</b>, General Manager, CPC, Lao PDR, (climate friendly agriculture and export trade)</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Bui Ba Chinh</b>, Executive Manager of GS1 Vietnam-MOST Directorate of Standard Metrology and Quality of Vietnam (STAMEQ)</li> <li>• <b>Arvind Betigeri</b>, Regional Rice Fortification, World Food Programme – [on food fortification standards]</li> </ul>
15:30 – 15:50	Open Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator: Stewart Pittaway</b>, TA 9916-SAFSP Team Leader</li> </ul>
15:50 – 16:00	Day 1 Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vichelle Roaring-Arunsuwannakorn</b>, TA 9916 Food Safety &amp; Quality Specialist</li> <li>• <b>Pier Paolo Ficarelli</b>, TA 9916 Digital Agriculture &amp; Innovation Specialist</li> </ul>

## DAY 2: THURSDAY, 8 JULY 2021

Date / Time (GMT+7)	Subject	Presenters
09:00 – 09:30	Presentation: GMS Task Force on Food Safety and Quality and Digital Technologies [working title]: Draft TOR  Feedback & Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vichelle Roaring-Arunsuwannakorn</b>, TA 9916 Food Safety &amp; Quality Specialist</li> </ul>
09:30 – 10:00	Presentation of Draft WGA Annual Meeting Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Srinivasan Ancha</b>, Principal Climate Change Specialist, Asian Development Bank</li> </ul>
10:00 – 10:30	Discussion on the Draft Statement and Adoption of the Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator: Dr. Srinivasan Ancha</b>, Principal Climate Change Specialist, Asian Development Bank</li> </ul>
<b>Wrap Up and Closing</b>		
10:30 – 11:20	Final Expression of the GMS WGA Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cambodia (H.E. Dr. Prum Somany</b>, Advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) / Director, Department of International Cooperation / WGA Coordinator, MAFF)</li> <li>• <b>PRC (Mr. Jiang Jiang</b>, Head of Asian and African Affairs Division, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs)</li> <li>• <b>Lao PDR (Dr. Thatsaka Saphangthong</b>, Director General, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)</li> <li>• <b>Thailand (Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs</b>, Deputy Permanent Secretary / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives)</li> <li>• <b>Viet Nam (Mr. Nguyen Do Anh Tuan</b>, Director General, International Cooperation Department / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)</li> </ul>
11:20 – 11:40	Wrap Up and Summary of the Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Srinivasan Ancha</b>, Principal Climate Change Specialist, ADB</li> </ul>
11:40 – 12:00	Concluding Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Jiangfeng Zhang</b>, Director, Environment, Natural Resource &amp; Agriculture Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs</b>, Deputy Permanent Secretary / WGA Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives</li> </ul>