

## Concept Note

### Special Event on “Innovation, Science and Digitalization: Transforming agrifood systems in Asia and the Pacific region”

**36th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC 36),**

**Ministerial Session, 10 March 2022**

#### Rationale and scope of the Special Event

Agrifood systems challenges can be tackled through a wide range of approaches, technologies and practices. Science and innovation – including indigenous and local knowledge – underpin them all and are an essential part of assessing risks, identifying trade-offs and finding solutions to complex problems. The landscape of science and innovation is changing rapidly with amplification of biotechnologies, digital tools and nanotechnology, to name but a few.

Digitalization in particular is changing the way agrifood systems operate and it is opening new opportunities for agriculture and rural development. FAO is committed to a digital agricultural transformation and the use of innovation leading to better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind, in Asia and the Pacific. Digital transformation is occurring at all stages of the value chain, with new technologies and ways of doing business emerging from farm to fork. Parallel revolutions in food e-commerce, Industry 4.0 technologies, and online advisory, marketing and financial services for smallholder farmers are taking the region’s value chain actors to new levels of efficiency.

Public-private partnerships are on the rise, pushing science and innovation to new heights. The importance of the participation of a range of actors in agricultural innovation systems is increasingly recognized to co-create knowledge, strengthen capacities and enhance inclusiveness and sustainability. The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 recognizes that innovation across agrifood systems is key to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and as a result the Organization’s first Science and Innovation Strategy is being formulated. FAO is also uniquely placed to support its Members in strengthening national policy frameworks for enhanced science and innovation, and identifying research priorities and communicating them to the major research institutions.

This Special Event on ‘Innovation, Science and Digitalization: Transforming Agrifood Systems in Asia and the Pacific region’ invites Members to reflect upon their experiences, initiatives, and priorities related to these issues. A roundtable discussion will encourage Members to consider perspectives on national and regional priorities, opportunities for partnership and cooperation, as well as guidance on policy and technical support needed from FAO in the coming biennium to drive innovation, science and the digital transformation of agrifood systems in a sustainable and inclusive manner. In particular, the panelists will share their perspectives on some of the following issues:

1. What are the top priority areas the government has identified to strengthen innovation, the lab-to-land link and technology transfer, and the science-policy interface within agrifood systems?
2. How is the government rethinking its digitalization strategies to target investments for upscaling inclusive digital innovations within the agrifood systems and rural economy?
3. What is one successful case or illustrative example of a government initiative that addressed a serious governance and/or regulatory issue in relation to innovation, science and digitalization in agrifood systems?

4. Provide an example of new intra-government, multi-country or multilateral policy coordination mechanism or initiative to promote innovation, science and digitalization arising in agrifood systems and lessons for partnerships with FAO, UN entities and development partners.

### Proposed Agenda

**Duration:** 1 hour from 14.00–15.00 (UTC/GMT +6)

**Format:** Hybrid. The participants already on site in Bangladesh attending APRC 36 will join the event physically, while others will join virtually.

Time	Intervention	Speaker
10 minutes	Presentation of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy	Ms Ismahane Elouafi, Chief Scientist, FAO
45 minutes	Roundtable on innovation, science and digitalization: country-specific opportunities, challenges and areas for regional cooperation and FAO support	Moderator: Mr Jong-Jin Kim, ADG/RR, RAP Panellists: Ministers from four countries
5 minutes	Closing remarks	Ms Ismahane Elouafi, Chief Scientist, FAO