

	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación
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TWENTY-NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Bangkok, Thailand, 26-31 March 2009

Provisional Annotated Agenda

SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING

26 – 28 March 2009

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening of the Senior Officers Meeting
2. Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

II. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

4. **Policies, strategies and technical options for coping with water scarcity**

Water plays a key role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially in hunger reduction and environmental sustainability: over 1 billion people in the region are affected by water scarcity. By 2025, two-thirds of the population will live in affected countries, mostly in poor rural areas.

The region's food security and staple crops (rice in particular) are highly dependent on irrigated agriculture. Accounting for 84 percent of water withdrawal, agriculture plays a crucial role in the region's water management. Water scarcity is chiefly an issue of poverty. For the poor, fair and safe access to water is needed to sustain their lives, daily income or food production. Rural areas, where most poor are located, are most affected. Farmers, rural enterprises, herders and

fisherfolk's livelihoods need water. Smallholders often occupy marginal land and many depend on rainfall for production. Already affected by land degradation and desertification, they are highly sensitive to climate change and variations, including droughts and floods. Climate change is expected to account for about 20 percent of the global increase in water scarcity, hitting countries already suffering from water shortages hardest. The impact will affect bulk water availability and worsen the extremes of drought and floods.

This paper discusses policies, strategies and technical options in dealing with water scarcity to improve the ability of countries to maintain or improve their food security and of poor people to lift themselves out of poverty, with greater water security, productivity and sustainability. Countries need to increase their cooperation for the management of transboundary waters. At the national level, policies and institutions need to address competing uses in a fair and equitable way. With proper incentives and investments to mitigate risks for individual farmers, improving water control and soil and water conservation in agriculture holds considerable potential to increase food production and reduce poverty, while maintaining ecosystem services. The sustainable management of watersheds and large river basins must be given new impetus. At the local level, better management practices of river basins, aquifers, irrigation systems, and farmers' fields are needed in all fields for sustainability and equity in access to water and improved agriculture water productivity. Low-cost, community-level, simple, small-scale water harnessing, irrigation and drainage works, well targeted investments (including public-private partnerships) in rural infrastructure modernization of medium and large-scale irrigation and drainage facilities, and associated institutional reforms, which can boost productivity and develop local economies, are a priority.

5. Agribusiness and competitive agro-industries in the context of globalization and free trade

Agri-food systems in the Asia-Pacific region are undergoing rapid transformation and are consequently challenging farmers, traders and processors to be more responsive to market demands and to comply with regulatory frameworks, especially in the context of globalization and free trade. For agro-industries to be more competitive, farmers must be able to understand and respond to buyer requirements, secure adequate financing, apply technically, economically appropriate and efficient technologies and implement logistical arrangements, which ensure consistent and timely delivery of quality outputs.

The establishment of competitive agro-industries in the Asia-Pacific region is crucial for creating employment and income opportunities and enhancing demand for farm produce. In rural areas, economic growth is, in most instances, led by the growth of agro-industries that are efficiently run and responsive to evolving markets. The efficiency of post-harvest handling, processing and marketing operations is one of the determinants of the prices paid by the urban and rural poor and is an important factor in ensuring household food security. Improvements in the performance of the agro-processing and distribution sectors also contribute to the safety and quality of food for all households. More importantly, agro-industry development has the potential to provide employment for the rural poor in off-farm activities, such as handling, packaging, processing, transporting and marketing of food and agricultural produce.

Rapid globalization and market liberalization in the Asia-Pacific region have created new opportunities for countries to trade agricultural and food products. However, they have also created challenges and increased risks. Countries with agro-industries that are not competitive are likely to be left behind as other countries push ahead in developing modern, efficient agro-

industries. This paper analyses agro-industry development trends in the region: moving from factor driven to efficiency driven to innovation driven; reviews work undertaken from village-level micro-enterprises through to SMEs in the agriculture sector; draws lessons from regional experience in creating enabling policies and environments for the growth of agro-industries; and outlines requirements for capacity building in support of agro-enterprises, through public and private partnership and regional cooperation.

6. Aid for trade initiative and the role of FAO

The Aid-for-Trade is a new WTO work programme created through the Declaration of the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference at Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China in December 2005. In July 2006, a Task Force on Aid-for-Trade issued a comprehensive set of recommendations towards operationalizing the initiative, and regional Conferences have been convened by WTO in 2007, including in Asia, followed by a global Conference in Geneva in November 2007.

The Aid-for-Trade initiative is aimed at helping developing countries, particularly least-developed countries, to build supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure that are essential for expanding trade and benefiting from trade agreements. For many developing countries, agriculture continues to be the dominant sector and holds the greatest potential for alleviating poverty and food insecurity. The potential of agricultural trade in developing the agricultural sector is undermined by considerable supply-side constraints. Therefore, it is important to ensure that this new initiative is made effective for the agricultural sector.

Given that the bulk of the FAO programmes address supply-side constraints to agricultural growth, including regional programmes, FAO has a comparative advantage in assisting Members in the effective implementation of the Aid-for-Trade initiative, in collaboration with the WTO and other development partners. This background paper provides information on the initiative from the standpoint of agriculture and on how FAO might play an effective role assisting Members in this process in the Asia-Pacific region.

III. INFORMATION ITEMS

7. Regional State of Food and Agriculture

Despite rapid economic progress and poverty reduction, Asia and the Pacific accounts for more than 60 percent of the world's undernourished, according to the most recent *State of Food Insecurity in the World*. In South Asia, the incidence of child malnutrition is higher than in any other region. Only a few countries are on track to meet the World Food Summit target of halving the number of undernourished by 2015. Furthermore, future progress is uncertain, especially in the wake of recent substantial gains in cereal prices that make it more difficult for the rural landless and the urban poor to afford adequate nutrition. Interest in biofuels as a means to achieve energy security may lead to further increases in commodity prices that will help some farmers but will have negative impacts on food security for many households.

The impact of biotechnology in the region to date has been confined to a few crops, but the impact has been substantial in those areas. Bt cotton has been widely adopted in China and India, and insecticide use has declined as a result. This has improved the environment, increased profits for

farmers and helped to maintain low cotton prices for consumers. But many other crops urgently need research attention. In addition to more agricultural research, in both biotechnology and traditional technologies, increased investment in rural human resources and infrastructure is also critical if poor Asian farmers and consumers are to escape poverty. Better institutions to improve community participation and local governance in areas of natural resource management and strengthen the bargaining power of farmers are also important, as is stable macroeconomic management and a vibrant non-farm economy.

8. Recommendations and activities of the regional commissions

The FAO regional office in Bangkok serves as the secretariat of five Asia-Pacific regional commissions. These statutory bodies of the Organization deal with animal production and health, agricultural statistics, fisheries, forestry and plant protection:

- **Fisheries** – Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC). Established 1949. Presently has a membership of 20 countries. The commission actively networks with members, regional fisheries organizations and other stakeholders in fisheries in the region.
- **Forestry** – Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC). Established 1949. Membership currently stands at 33 countries. Active participation of international non-governmental organizations and the private sector is encouraged.
- **Plant protection** – Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC). Established 1956. Membership now comprises 26 countries.
- **Agricultural statistics** – Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS). Established 1963. Membership currently comprises 24 countries.
- **Animal health** – Animal Production and Health Commission for Asia and the Pacific (APHCA). Established in 1975. Present membership stands at 16 countries.

These commissions have varying degrees of participation by observers comprising other related regional organizations, NGOs and even the private sector. The commissions have a unique ability to synthesize the opinions and recommendations of member countries within a region and also gather together opinions on issues of importance to the various sectors through their regular sessions and inter-sessional activities (workshops, projects etc.). In this respect, they are an integral part of FAO's knowledge network, making an important contribution to the work of FAO and underpin its activities within regions by providing direction on priorities and issues of concern.

This paper summarizes the key issues and major findings of the commissions' last session prior to the APRC and brings to the attention of the senior officers the relevant recommendations of the commissions active in the region.

9. Food safety and trade in Asia-Pacific

Food safety issues are receiving greater attention in Asia and the Pacific owing to the increasing diversity and volume of trade in food and agricultural products and the establishment of the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) – a framework for resolving potential trade conflicts and for determining the legitimacy of SPS measures that restrict trade. Food safety has become a shared concern among all countries in the region and, in response to increased political and social pressure on government regulatory

agencies, many countries have revised their national regulatory systems and applied new standards and methods for regulating food safety.

This paper analyses regional trends that have several implications on trade in food and agricultural products. Some new regulatory requirements are likely to lessen barriers to trade while others may impede trade. Along with food safety regulations and standards setting introduced by the public sector, the role of the private sector in implementing food safety standards is increasing. In certain markets and for certain products these theoretically voluntary private standards tend to become de facto mandatory standards for exporters. The paper also deals with the existing and emerging food safety issues that have severe implications on international trade in food and agricultural products. In addition, the paper outlines FAO's role in building capacity and providing technical assistance to countries in strengthening their national food control systems, complying with international requirements for food safety, expanding exports and responding to new emerging hazards.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

10. Any other business

V. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Adoption of the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting
12. Closure of the Senior Officers Meeting

PLENARY SESSION

30 – 31 March 2009

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Emerging issues and priorities on food security and agricultural development in the region

The delegates attending the 29th FAO Regional Conference, during the debate, are invited to focus on emerging regional trends on food security and agricultural development and propose policy innovations for addressing emerging regional issues and priorities. They are also encouraged to discuss and advise measures to enhance FAO's capacities and activities in the region in line with the Conference decision.

6. Report on FAO activities in Asia and the Pacific region (2006–07) and actions taken on the 28th APRC recommendations, with a focus on achievement of the World Food Summit (WFS) Target and the Millennium Development Goals
7. Report of the Senior Officers Meeting

IV. STANDING DISCUSSION ITEM

8. **Global and regional emergency issues: Transboundary animal diseases in the region and looking at the environmental factors affecting their occurrence**

Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) are defined as those epidemic diseases which are highly contagious or transmissible and have the potential for very rapid spread, irrespective of national borders, causing serious socio-economic and possibly public health consequences. In Asia,

diseases such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Classical Swine Fever (CSF) and Peste de Petit Ruminante (PPR) are the priority diseases identified in the region.

Since these diseases cause a high morbidity and mortality in susceptible animal populations, they constitute a constant threat to the livelihood of livestock farmers. Furthermore, their potential consequences are of such a magnitude that their occurrence may also have a significant detrimental effect on national economies.

This paper contains information on epidemiological work that has been conducted focusing on the occurrence of these diseases, determining the pattern of occurrence and spread, etc. With the occurrence of HPAI, experts have begun looking at different risk factors that may have contributed to the rapid spread of Avian Influenza. They analyzed major environmental factors that include the role of ecology on the animal production system, the intensification of livestock rearing, cultural practices in raising livestock and changing trade patterns brought about by demands of an increasing human population that are now considered in the study of transboundary animal diseases and would greatly assist in understanding emerging diseases. The paper intends to address major issues relating to transboundary animal diseases emergency and their impact on food security and agriculture and FAO's role in dealing with such issues in support of member countries in the RAP region.

V. ROUND TABLE

9. Round table on the bioenergy rush: Opportunities and risks for food security, the environment and rural development

Recent sharp increases in petroleum prices have made bioenergy commercially viable and competitive with fossil fuels and traditional energy sources. At the same time, increasing concerns over climate change are motivating the search for clean and sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels. Governments and the private sector in the region are rapidly embarking on major programmes and investment for commercial-scale production of bioenergy. Bioenergy development, based on sustainable production of oil crops, sugar, cassava, maize, agricultural residues and other biomass, offers countries the potential to reduce dependence on costly fossil fuels, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, and enhance rural incomes and employment.

The rush to develop bioenergy is not without risks, however. A primary concern is that increasing competition for land, water and other inputs for bioenergy production could potentially lead to sharp increases in food prices, food insecurity, reduced availability of water to meet other needs and reduced investment in other sectors of agricultural development. There are also concerns that increased demand for biomass – and for land on which to produce bioenergy crops – could accelerate the loss of forests and biodiversity. Finally, numerous issues relate to the scale of production and the potential impacts and opportunities for small farmers, forest-dwellers, and women should bioenergy production expand significantly.

Delegates to the 29th FAO Regional Conference will be invited to share their experiences and perspectives on these critical issues during an informal facilitated round table discussion. It is

anticipated that suggestions for future collaboration and mutual learning among member countries and organizations will emerge from the round table discussion.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

10. Any other matter

VII. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Date and Place of the 30th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
12. Adoption of the Report (including the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting)
13. Closure of the Conference

(updated 09.01.09)