

## 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Forum on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Asia and the Pacific

Agriculture Beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic:  
Building Back Better through Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization

11 December 2020

### I. Introduction

690 million people continue to suffer from hunger and 3 billion cannot afford a healthy diet in the current world<sup>1</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed tens of millions more to the brink of poverty and starvation and may add between 83-132 million people to the total number of undernourished in 2020<sup>2</sup>. This lends further urgency to the need for progressing towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

In the Asia-Pacific region, according to a recent survey conducted by the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM) of United Nations ESCAP, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown created a shortage of labour and agricultural inputs and interrupted the selling of perishable and seasonal agricultural produce in many countries. Consequently, the pandemic disrupted the whole agricultural value chain and brought into focus the fragility of food systems and food security to shocks. It also served to underscore the vulnerability of communities to the risks from climate change. At the same time, the current juncture is also a generational opportunity to ‘build back better’ and make the agricultural sector more resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

Sustainable agricultural mechanization is among the solutions that can strengthen the resilience of the farming community to crisis. It can increase agricultural productivity and incomes – including for resource-poor smallholder farmers – while reducing food loss, alleviating manpower shortages, and enhancing capacities to cope with climate change. Indeed, sustainable agricultural mechanization is imperative for transitioning to

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres’ message on the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste on 29 September 2020.

<sup>2</sup> FAO, 2020, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World – Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets, available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/zh/c/ca9692en/>

a path of modern, resilient agriculture and higher rural incomes in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the same time, it needs to be borne in mind that the Asia-Pacific is a diverse region. In assessing the impact of the pandemic on agriculture and identifying opportunities for recovery and building resilience through increased and sustainable use of agricultural machinery and equipment, it is critical to take into account national and sub-regional contexts. Experiences from different sub-regions and countries can also hold valuable lessons for others for future, and this lends importance to knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices.

The Regional Forum on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (Regional Forum) is an annual strategic initiative of CSAM with the aim to promote policy dialogue, knowledge exchange and regional cooperation on relevant shared or emerging issues of member countries in Asia and the Pacific. In the current unique context, the 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Forum seeks to provide a platform to envision agriculture beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and consider varied perspectives and insights on how to build back better with particular reference to solutions provided by sustainable agricultural mechanization.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Forum will comprise of two sessions in order to give participants an opportunity to take part in a broader dialogue on food systems in China in the morning session, before joining a mechanization-focused forum in the afternoon. The two sessions are as follows:

***(1) Policy Dialogue on 'China's Experience in Strengthening Food Systems amid the Response to COVID-19' (conducted on-site in Beijing and broadcast live on-line):***

The 'United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19' (Framework) presents an integrated support package that the United Nations development system can leverage as it tailors its response in each country. In this context, the Policy Dialogue will engage CSAM and other United Nations entities in China, with the support of UNDP China as technical lead, to discuss and learn from China's national experience. Speakers will be invited to reimagine agriculture and food systems beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and converge wisdom and insights on how to build back better.

***(2) Discussion Forum on 'Agriculture Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Building Back Better through Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization' (fully on-line event):*** The Discussion Forum will provide an overview at the regional level, and subsequently hear the experiences from different sub-regions about the pandemic

and the role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in supporting recovery and building long-term resilience in agriculture. Presenters will also be invited to share the lessons learned and recommendations based on their experiences while highlighting good practices that can prove beneficial to other countries and sub-regions in scaling up mechanization solutions.

## II. Objectives

The 8th Regional Forum is expected to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Share diverse experiences and knowledge in addressing the negative impacts of the pandemic on agriculture.
- 2) Identify sustainable agricultural mechanization solutions that can support and strengthen the agricultural sector beyond the pandemic.
- 3) Explore opportunities for collaboration on sustainable agricultural mechanization for more productive, sustainable, and resilient agriculture.

## III. Date and Venue

The 8th Regional Forum on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Asia and the Pacific will be organized on 11 December 2020. As noted above, it will be conducted in hybrid mode including:

- (i) An on-site ‘Policy Dialogue’ at the United Nations Compound in Beijing, which will be broadcast live online on Zoom and YouTube (morning session).
- (ii) An on-line ‘Discussion Forum’ which will be organized via MS Teams and YouTube (afternoon session).

Upon registration, participants will be provided the meeting links of Zoom, MS Teams and YouTube in order to join the event.

## IV. Programme Outline

<i>11<sup>th</sup> December, Friday</i>	
<i>Session I - Policy Dialogue on ‘China’s Experience in Strengthening Food Systems amid the Response to COVID-19’</i>	
10:30-10:45	Opening
10:45-11:20	Dialogue round 1: Ensuring food security and nutrition services for the most vulnerable
11:20-11:55	Dialogue round 2: Restoring robust and resilient food systems

11:55-12:20	Dialogue round 3: Protecting ecosystems and food systems
12:20-12:30	Closing and Wrap up
<b><i>Lunch Break (1.5 hours)</i></b>	
<b><i>Session II - Discussion Forum on 'Agriculture Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Building Back Better through Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization'</i></b>	
14:00-14:10	Opening
14:10-14:30	Regional Overview of Covid-19 Impact and Building Back Better through Sustainable Mechanization
14:30-15:45	Sub-regional and national perspectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Asia</li> <li>• Southeast Asia</li> <li>• North and Northeast Asia</li> </ul>
15:45-16:00	Q&A
16:00	Closing

For the **detailed programme** of each session, please see Annexes I and II.

**For more information, please contact:**

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## ANNEX I

### Tentative Programme of Session I - Policy Dialogue on 'China's Experience in Strengthening Food Systems amid the Response to COVID-19'

**10:30-12:30 AM BEIJING TIME (GMT +8)**

<b>Opening</b>	
<b>10:30-10:45</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Zhang Taolin Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China</li> <li>• Ms Amakobe Sande UN interim Resident Coordinator in China</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogue round 1: Ensuring food security and nutrition services for the most vulnerable</b>	
<b>10:45-11:20</b>	<p><i>Transforming of our food systems to nourish the world and enhance smallholder farmers' capacity to adapt to climate change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matteo Marchisio, Head of IFAD East Asia Regional Hub and Country Representative in China;</li> <li>• Fan Shenggeng, former Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute, Chair Professor at China Agricultural University</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Maintain essential food and nutrition services, with a focus on infants and young children</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF</li> <li>• Yang Zhenyu, Director of Maternal and Child Nutrition Division, National Institute of Nutrition and Health, China CDC</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Women's leadership in Food Production and the systematic support they need</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Women</li> <li>• Li Yulan, First Secretary of Qiaotou Village, Minhe County, Qinghai Province</li> </ul>
<b>Video remarks by "Food hero"</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sun Jungeng, food supplier from Henan, recent winner of Food Hero Campaign</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogue round 2: Restoring robust and resilient food systems</b>	
<b>11:20-11:55</b>	<p><i>Building resilience of food systems, from the domestic and South-South cooperation perspectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qu Sixi, Country Director of WFP</li> <li>• Xie Jianmin, Counsel (Director General Level), Department of International Cooperation (MARA)</li> </ul>
	<p><i>The role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in enhancing productivity and preventing zoonotic diseases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Li Yutong, Head of ESCAP-CSAM</li> <li>• Jin Hongwei, Director/Researcher, Division of Livestock Machinery, CAMTC, MARA</li> </ul>

	<p><i>Enhancing resilience of food value chains</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAO</li> <li>• Fang Jiansheng, Vice President, Alibaba Group</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Video on biodiversity and COP15 [tbc]</i></b>  <i>3 minutes</i></p>	
<p><b>Dialogue round 3: Protecting ecosystems and food systems</b></p>	
<p><b>11:55-12:20</b></p>	<p><i>The experience of UNESCO Designated Sites in balancing quality food production and ecosystems protection and restoration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Himalchuli Gurung, Programme Specialist for Culture Sector, OIC of UNESCO Beijing Office</li> <li>• Gong Xiaochen, Deputy Director, Shunde Creative City of Gastronomy</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Collaboration for food security and agrobiodiversity in coping with COVID-19 and Climate Change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tu Ruihe, Head of UNEP China Office;</li> <li>• Zhang Linxiu, Director of IEMP-UNEP</li> <li>• Yang Yongping, Researcher, Xishuangbanna Botanical Garden, Chinese Academy of Sciences</li> </ul>
<p><b>12:20-12:30</b></p>	<p><i>Closing and Wrap up</i></p>

## ANNEX II

### Tentative Programme of Session II - Discussion Forum on 'Agriculture Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Building Back Better through Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization'

14:00-16:00 AM BEIJING TIME (GMT +8)

14.00 – 14.10	<p><b>Opening remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Yutong Li, Head, Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization of ESCAP (ESCAP-CSAM)</li> </ul>
14.10 – 14.30	<p><b>Regional Overview of Covid-19 Impact and Building Back Better through Sustainable Mechanization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Anshuman Varma, Programme Officer and Deputy Head, ESCAP-CSAM</li> </ul>
14.30 – 15.45	<p><b>Sub-regional and national perspectives</b></p> <p><i>South Asia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. K. Alagusundaram, Deputy Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, India</li> <li>• Mr. Chaitya Narayan Dangol, Prime Minister's Agriculture Modernization Project, Nepal</li> </ul> <p><i>Southeast Asia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Azman Bin Hamzah, Director, Engineering Research Centre, Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), Malaysia</li> <li>• Ms. Rossana Marie Amongo, Professor 6, Institute of Agricultural Engineering, College of Engineering and Agro-Industrial Technology, University of the Philippines Los Banos, the Philippines</li> </ul> <p><i>East and Northeast Asia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Takashi Fujimori, Administrator, International Collaboration, Institute of Agricultural Machinery, National Agriculture and Food Research Organization, Japan</li> <li>• Mr. Liu Jing, Deputy Division Director, Science and Technology Promotion Division, Department of Agricultural Mechanization, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, China</li> </ul>
15:45-16:00	<p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>

16.00

**Concluding remarks**

- Ms. Yutong Li, Head, ESCAP-CSAM