

April 2018
(20 Mar- 20 Apr)



e.flash

sustainable agriculture policy information

policy updates

Indian Ministries signed agreement to conduct training programmes in farm and allied sectors at agricultural extension centres across the country (22 Mar)

The Indian Ministries of Agriculture and Skill Development have signed an agreement to intensify training for the agricultural workforce at 690 extension centres, *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (KVKs), across the nation. KVKs were created to support technology dissemination, training and awareness programmes. This is a part of the government's plan to double farmers' income and to develop agriculture as a private enterprise that attract youth. Aside from capacity building, privatization of rural agriculture is considered to bring efficiency into the agricultural marketing system.

[more](#)

India: Committee on Doubling Farmers Income suggests overhaul of crop input registration (20 Apr)

The Committee on Doubling Farmers Income (DFI) urged to examine the crop inputs registration to ensure the availability of patented and off-patent inputs in India. The overhauls include the requirement of a comprehensive policy for 'organics' and 'biostimulants', a proposal for "prescription-based sale" of pest management inputs, registration of formulation and registration of seed treatment solution for export. According to the committee, the overhauls and patent of new molecules production are necessary to reduce the per-unit cost for farmers. It will accordingly lead to the efficient agricultural value system and higher farmers' returns.

[more](#)

Pakistan: Absence of agriculture projects from China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) worries ministers (4 Apr)

During the Pakistan Cabinet Meeting, some members raised concern over the absence of agriculture projects in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Interior Minister, heading the planning and development division of CPEC, acknowledged that agriculture had not been included in the first phase of CPEC. However, he explained that the tube-wells conversion from diesel to solar and electric power had benefitted farmers and the sector. Before initiating other projects, China's priority is to improve energy and infrastructure in Pakistan. Agriculture hence had been included in the second phase of the CPEC.

[more](#)

Pakistan: Challenges in implementing food security policy (16 Apr)

The Federal Cabinet of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has approved a new national food security policy to increase farmers' access to quality inputs and address disaster management. Its preparation of action plan is ongoing under the mandate of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. The country's upcoming elections might cause some challenges since it could cause tension between provincial and federal authorities that is essential for the policy implementation. Furthermore, the 'scrambling' of China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC)'s beneficiary-zone and the management of land and water resource are two other critical and politically sensitive issues. It is expected in the near-future, federal and provincial governments should tackle those conflicts of interests without disturbing the spirit of food security.

[more](#)

Afghanistan: MAIL to standardize five saffron processing centers (4 Apr)

As Afghanistan's saffron expands its new export markets, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) proceeds to upgrade five processing centers in different provinces. Ensuring saffron quality is one of the MAIL's key plans to support the country's priority in boosting 2018 economy through export. Despite increasing production, only 50 per cent of Afghanistan's saffron has been exported. The government hence prepares two laboratories, currently under construction, for saffron quality testing and plant diseases detection to improve export quality.

[more](#)

Iran bans rice cultivation in dry provinces (9 Apr)

Due to serious water crisis across the Islamic Republic of Iran, the government decided to ban rice cultivation in any province other than the northern ones. Rice cultivation is considered non-plausible in dry and semi-dry provinces. Despite the likelihood of farmers' outrage, experts believe that the ban is necessary to control water shortage. The government has formed a working group to cope with the ongoing water crisis, particularly in Isfahan and Khuzestan provinces as its priority agenda.

[more](#)

Vietnamese agriculture tune in to the signals of the global market, growing trend for organic production, demand for organic fertilizer (10 Apr)

The Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture emphasized the country's goal to promote organic agriculture. Organic fertilizer plays a big role in the growing global demand for environmentally friendly and organic production. Vietnam's current demand for fertilizer reaches around 11 million tons a year, nearly five times compared to 10 years ago. The country generates an average of 2.5 million tons of organic fertilizer a year (a tenth of its chemical fertilizer; 26.7 million tons). While imported organic fertilizer in 2017 has shown an increasing trend, the domestic potentials for organic fertilizer remain untapped. Therefore, besides its application, promotion of organic fertilizer production is important for the country's grand scheme towards green agriculture.

[more](#)

Hanoi to build wholesale market for vegetables (22 Mar)

Hanoi's People's Committee has assigned the authority to prepare for the wholesale market establishment. The market for vegetables and flowers is expected to increase the province's agricultural consumption. The idea was initiated during a discussion about measures to assist turnip farmers who experienced food disposal due to low prices. Since it was a bumper crop, the price was considerably low. The key issue suspected was the need for assisting farmers in diversifying products, for instance, by creating their own brand and adding product value through processing. The authorities expect that wholesale market can be a platform for the assisted farmers to expand their sales.

[more](#)

Myanmar: MOALI's new agriculture project under scrutiny in Parliament (26 Mar)

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) offered a JPY 30 billion loan to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) of Myanmar to implement the 'Development of Agricultural Income Sector' project. The agreement includes a grace period of 10 years and must be repaid in 30 years at an annual interest rate of 0.01 per cent. MOALI estimates a six-years project completion, while documents distributed to Myanmar Parliaments (MPs) indicates an eight-year completion. Due to the uncertain term of project completion, the MP is currently analysing the value-add of the project, using more data provided by the MOALI

[more](#)

Myanmar: Crop insurance to protect paddy farmers available soon (20 Apr)

The Myanmar Ministry of Planning and Finance has approved a crop insurance scheme to cover damages due to erratic weather condition. The two-year project will commence, on an experimental basis, in this paddy season, covering the Yangon, Ayeyawady, Magwe and Mandalay regions. According to the Director of Global World Insurance, the country's challenges include no prior benchmark for a suitable premium rate and lack of support from the government and the private sector. He, therefore, suggested including the premiums as part of loans to farmers and working with the state-owned Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation (MOALI) proposed to Japanese insurance companies to offer similar policies to Myanmar farmers.

[more](#)

Philippines' President orders state food agency to boost national rice reserves (16 Apr)

The President of the Philippines has ordered the National Food Authority (NFA) to purchase more rice from both local and international producers. He aims to establish rice buffer stock around 1.92 million tons for the equivalent of 60 days of national consumption. The country is currently under pressure since the NFA had only 43,500 tons (less than two days-worth) of rice supply last month. The issue led to higher rice prices and the country's inflation of 4.3 per cent in March. Alongside purchasing from international traders and making a government-to-government deal with Thailand and Vietnam, the President also directed the Finance Secretary to provide funds for the NFA's local rice procurement program.

[more](#)

Malaysia: National Centre for Food Security to be ready by 2021 (5 Apr)

Malaysia is expecting the National Centre for Food Security (NCFS), the country's first centre to control food safety and quality, to be ready by 2021. The MYR 130 million centre, located in a 15-acre site, would be a scientific arm of the Food Safety and Quality Division (BKMM). NCFS's major activities include generating scientific data for policy development in risk assessment, research and development, standards development, training and consumer protection. Along with the NCFS, the International Food Safety Training Centre and the ASEAN Risk Assessment Center (ARAC) will also come under the purview of BKMM.

[more](#)

China grants more subsidies to soy farmers as it cuts corn stocks (3 Apr)

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) of the People's Republic of China will grant more subsidies to soybean farmers in Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia provinces. The subsidies will be higher than those granted to corn producers. Reducing corn acreage and increasing soybean acreage are included in a five-year plan, issued in 2016, to overtake the world's largest agriculture sector. According to the document released on MARA's website, the government will also offer subsidies to activities related to land's health rejuvenating, farm mechanization and agriculture waste processing.

[more](#)

Korean Government to create 4,300 jobs in Smart Farm Industry (17 Apr)

The government of the Republic of Korea has announced plans to create 4,300 jobs in the smart-agriculture industry by 2022. They plan to attract youth into smart farming by training and facilitating young entrepreneurs and farmers to create innovative models in agriculture. Moreover, they will offer subsidies to open smart farming business on 30 hectares of land for those who complete the courses and low-interest agricultural loans for both new and experienced farmers. They will conduct research projects, tests and exhibitions in smart-farm test site to enhance its competitiveness. Under joint effort between research institutes and companies, the government believes that the country is ready to build a 'company' producing highest quality climate control systems.

[more](#)

trends and statistics

Bhutan: Towards achieving vegetable self-sufficiency (2 Apr)

On Bhutan's 12-year Plan (2018-2023), the country targets 100 per cent of vegetable self-sufficiency by increasing production from 52,114 metric tons (MT) to 65,162 MT by the end of the period. The current percentage is at 86.13 per cent, calculated by considering the import and export trade. This target referred to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) standards and minimum requirements. All districts across the country have agreed on a vegetable production target with the Agriculture Ministry. In August 2017, staggered production method was introduced in eight southern districts to leave traditional cultivation methods.

[more](#)

Philippines: Yellow corn yield achieved 103 per cent self-sufficiency last year - Piñol (28 Mar)

After more than two decades, in 2017 Philippines has achieved a 103 per cent self-sufficiency in yellow corn production as declared by the Department of Agriculture (DA). A report from the Philippine Statistics Authority shows that last year gross yellow corn output reached 5,811 million metric tons (MMT), translated into a net local production of 5,749 MMT at a 1.07 percent post-harvest loss. It is the country's first time to achieve 100 percent self-sufficiency in yellow corn, after 1991. In addition, the 2017 total production of white corn -the staples in Mindanao and Eastern Visayas provinces- amounted to 7,914 MMT which was almost 700,000 MT higher than 2016. The Agriculture Secretary is optimistic that quality corn seeds, modern technology and financial access are the drivers of increased corn output in the Philippines.

[more](#)

UN data show nearly half of Cambodia rice exports undocumented (29 Mar)

The United Nations food agency estimated that only 750,000 out of 1.35 million tons of Cambodian rice exports would be identified as formal exports in 2018. The rest would be 'unrecorded cross-border deliveries' rice, usually smuggled into Viet Nam and Thailand through informal channels. Many parties urged the government to curb unrecorded trade as it gradually harms Cambodian rice's international reputation. The government assumed limited financing and rice storage as the trigger of this issue. It remains a challenge as the government's effort in distributing USD 30 million loans to build three storage and processing facilities was not adequate.

[more](#)

Demand for Cambodian cashews on the rise (12 Apr)

Despite the moderate price growth of Cambodian cashews in recent months, the demand remains strong in 2018. This explains that more plantations will emerge across the country, as predicted by an authority from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Last year, the country produced over 140,000 tons of the commodities from more than 140,000 hectares plantations. This circumstance is possible due to Vietnam's support and guaranteed markets through contract farming. Viet Nam and India are the biggest markets for Cambodian cashews. In consequence, farmers can now trade cashews with higher prices than before. Additionally, the MoA has signed a memorandum of understanding, earlier this year, with the Vietnam Cashew Association (VCA) to help boost cashews nuts production in Cambodia. The VCA agreed to share its technology, management, research and investment know-how with local farmers.

[more](#)

case stories

Indonesian farm incomes spent on tobacco (10 Apr)

A survey conducted in the Garut District of West Java Province, Indonesia, indicates that 78 per cent of 180 farmer respondents consume cigarettes. It shows that 13.7 percent of their total household budget is used for tobacco spending. The majorities of farmers are male and head of the household who earn low income. This situation reflects that the member of the family cannot receive their fair shares. Regardless of farmers' education, this circumstance is very common. The spending money for smoking prevents farmers from enhancing their investment to improve household income. The government already initiated a public campaign and imposed a higher tax on cigarettes, but they seem less effective. The integrated health service centre (*Posyandu*), established by the former government, can support household member to educate their children not to smoke from the earliest age. It becomes an alarming issue as farmers' high spending on cigarettes give more burden on health and indirectly affect national food security.

[more](#)

Rice seeders may start technological revolution in Laos agriculture as workforce moves out of farming (10 Apr)

Lao People's Democratic Republic will face a technological revolution in its agriculture sector as it received a donation of ten rice seeders, organized through the Crawford Fund and bought by Australian donations. Besides rice, the seeder can seed other crops (e.g. maize, legumes and animal forage) in a range of diverse soils and moisture contents. As agricultural workforce in the country is rapidly declining, this technology will help save time and resources. Traditional transplanting methods normally take 30 days of work for one person per hectare; with women fell under the labor-intensive nature of hand-planting. The seeder, therefore, could be a catalyst for women empowerment as it enables them to participate in other opportunities.

[more](#)

New unique agricultural heritage sites designated (19 Apr)

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has recently designated thirteen new landscapes in China, Egypt, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and Sri Lanka as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). These new sites are landmark FAO programme and bring to the total number of 50 GIAHS worldwide. The GIAHS aim to strengthen mutually sustainable livelihoods and ecosystems by, for instance, enabling smallholders to keep their heritage alive amid urbanization and climate change. Taking the GIAHS to the next level of synergies, the People's Republic of China and Japan have built their own national programmes to advocate the GIAHS.

[more](#)

voices and views

South Asia to become 'global leader' in agri trade: SAARC VP (29 Mar)

During the 74th General Assembly and the 23rd Executive Committee of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) chamber, the Vice President of SAARC declared the importance to identify High-Value Crops (HVC) of South Asian countries. He also saw the potential benefits in enhancing prosperity through the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). Despite common challenges throughout the countries (e.g. inflationary pressure, poverty, unemployment, climate change, high budget deficits and unfavorable trade balance), the policies of each member state are still contradictory to another. He, therefore, promoted uniform and market-oriented agricultural policy to help the region achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

[more](#)

Climate change poses serious implications on food security in South Asia: report (22 Mar)

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has released the 2018 Global Food Policy Report. It focused on the climate change adaptation for food security in South Asia, particularly India. Due to last year's flooding in several states, there was a significant drop in food grain production during the rainy season in India and Sri Lanka. The report highlighted that increasing climatic variability, extreme weather events and rising temperatures can lead to new challenges in ensuring food and nutrition security. South Asian countries are expected to increase openness to trade, enhance linkages with global food value chain and reform their agriculture sectors to tackle those challenges.

[more](#)

India: Technology integration is the way forward for agriculture: Experts (29 Mar)

Despite the large number of people involved in agriculture, the sector only contributes around 10 per cent to the Indian GDP. During the 'Technology in Agriculture' summit, both government and industry are encouraged to consider concrete plans in integrating technology for agriculture. They expect the optimization in harnessing internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), biotech, GIS and computing to cope with issues such as climate change, water scarcity and lack of agricultural inputs.

[more](#)

Innovations in food systems: the key to human and planetary health (27

Mar)

Between 2000 and 2015, the global hunger proportion decreased from 14.7 to 10.6 per cent. Additionally, the prevalence of child stunting fell from 40 to 23 per cent between 1990 and 2015. Cases from Rwanda and India have shown the importance of food systems in tackling challenges. For instance, land registration for Rwandan women increased the likelihood of farmers undertaking longer-term investments such as soil conservation for sustainability. Besides, connecting smallholders to modern food value chain has successfully improved the Indian dairy chain. Despite those improvements, food systems still need innovations in technologies, policies and institutions that address human and planetary health to support inclusive development.

[more](#)

Indonesia highlights importance of agriculture sector at WTO (22 Mar)

During a meeting on 'WTO's Multilateral Trading System', held under India's initiative, Indonesia highlighted agriculture and fishery's importance for the country. The Trade Minister emphasized the need for completing proposal related to Public Stock Holding for Food Security Purposes and Special Safeguard Mechanism due to its high significance for developing countries. Indonesia also joined the proposal group for the Dispute Appeals Board election to restore the effective mechanism of WTO dispute resolution. Additionally, issues related to agricultural subsidies, overfishing and excessive stockpiling, small-scale fisherman and small-medium enterprises were also highlighted topics during the meeting.

[more](#)

Mekong river dams may 'harm food security' (4 Apr)

A study revealed that hydropower development of the Mekong River will exacerbate food security and poverty in the region. During the third International Conference of Mekong River Commission (MRC), environmental and social specialists illustrated the danger of dam development that may ruin river basin with severe environmental and socioeconomic impacts. The study shows that biodiversity and fish biomass will be gravely endangered and diminished, causing food shortage and poverty. It hence outweighs the economic benefits from hydropower. However, one of the Laotian executive governmental officers assured that impact of dams was only one of the factors as wastewater, overfishing and climate change all contributed to the decreasing number of fish.

[more](#)

technological innovations

Bangladesh: Gift of the sun, solar-powered irrigation boosts Boro paddy capacity in Pirojpur (4 Apr)

A solar-powered irrigation has been introduced to the farmers in Baniary Village in Matibhanga union under Nazirpur upazila of Pirojpur to cultivate Boro paddy. This is the first solar panel that powers water withdrawal from the nearest canal. It is transported to village fields through a pipe. Despite higher profitability, farmers used to consider cultivating Boro paddy is non-practical and costly in irrigation. This project, initiated by the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation and Rahimafrooz Renewable Energy, has opened more lucrative opportunity for the farmers that they will only have to pay a fixed annual fee for the solar-powered water pump.

[more](#)

Innovative greenhouses help farmers adapt to climate change (11 Apr)

Many small farms in the south-central Indian state of Telangana highly depend on seasonal rainfall. Extreme weather due to climate change turns out as their biggest challenge. *Kheyti*, an agricultural technology social enterprise, created innovative greenhouses which are fitted with drip-irrigation systems. It helps farmers use less water, conserve water and protect crops from deadly climate. Though greenhouse has long been used in India, its standard designs were too large and not affordable for smallholders. *Kheyti's* scaled-down greenhouse can reduce smallholder's investment risk. They also work with the Bank of Baroda to reduce farmers' burden and to get loans on the farmers' behalf. *Kheyti's* action has inspired more farmers in a neighboring state to join the initiative.

[more](#)

Nepal: The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) supports

transforming agriculture with digital technology (12 Apr)

The Mobile Money for Poor (MM4P) programme of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has partnered with Sun Farmer Nepal (renewable energy solution company) and Prabhu Management (financial service company) to execute a project for enhancing farmers' income. Limited financial access has been a hindrance for farmers retrieving quality inputs. This partnership involves integration between digital technology and agricultural value chain. The Nepali farmers will receive support in facilitation of quality inputs for crops production, improved linkage to the market, irrigation, processing and training on the cultivation of high-value crops.

[more](#)

Technology reshaping agriculture in China (21 Mar)

The increasing usage of machinery and high-tech equipment among Chinese farmers has helped them reduce grain losses during harvesting. In Nong'an, a major grain-producing county in Jilin Province, drone spraying was implemented and proven five times more efficient than tractor- and manual spraying. Jilin Province's rate of agricultural mechanization is more than 80 per cent and is only one example of China's modernized agriculture. By the end of 2016, China owned 1.14 million combine harvesters and 14.31 million items of irrigation and drainage equipment. The agricultural mechanization also increases China's growth of scale farming. By the end of November 2017, around 2 million specialized farmer's cooperatives were registered in the country. Currently, the cooperatives have over 100 million rural households joining that accounts for 46.8 percent of the country total.

[more](#)

Disclaimer

Statements and opinions expressed in the articles/news are solely those of the author(s) and the organizations they represented.

Centre for Alleviation
of Poverty through
Sustainable Agriculture
(CAPSA-ESCAP)
Jl. Merdeka 145
Bogor 16111
INDONESIA

Contact person

Fetty Prihastini
Public Information Assistant
E: library-capsa@un.org

Follow us on



CAPSA's latest news update is available at its website www.uncapsa.org
as well as through **ESCAP Newsletter**