CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Conference “Strengthening resilient food and agriculture systems – Implementing the Sendai Framework for DRR in the Agriculture Sector in Asia and the Pacific”

15-16 March 2018

Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Introduction

More than 2.2 billion people in Asia solely rely on agriculture alone for their livelihoods. Agriculture sector including farming, animal husbandry / livestock / pastoral, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry (hereafter agriculture sector would be used to denote farming, animal husbandry / livestock / pastoral, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry) form the backbone of rural livelihoods while the trading and traditional occupations (like carpentry, ironsmith, cobbler, and such) form the supportive elements. Directly responsible for more than 50 percent of Asian population’s survival and growth, the agriculture sector is inherently risky in nature as they are often at the mercy of various shocks and stresses emanating from climate change and disaster risks as well as economic fluctuations and changing consumption patterns. In the recent past, the accumulated impact of recurrent shocks to agriculture sector in Asia is increasingly evident. More than 500 million people in south and south-east Asia were directly affected by back-to-back droughts in 2015 and 2016 alone while more than 3 million livestock died during the 2009-10 Dzud in Mongolia.

The impacts of climate change and disasters are rising coupled with increase in hazard exposure that is not matched by a reduction in vulnerabilities. As per FAO estimates, 642 million people suffered from hunger in the Asia-Pacific region due to the global food and economic crises in 2007-09; aggravating further the undernourishment prevalent for almost 564 million in Asia. Scenario analyses of the potential impact of climate change and disasters suggest that population living in poverty would increase between 35 to 122 million by 2030, large section of which would be dependent on agriculture sector.

The predicted impact of climate change on agriculture sector includes the shifting of agricultural zones due to decline in freshwater availability, declining yields, limiting of livestock numbers, significant fall in volume and mass of fish, loss of biodiversity, coupled with increased frequency of invasive pests and diseases.

Deep transformations are underway in the agriculture and food systems ranging from production practices to post production and consumption patterns in Asia-Pacific countries. One of the key drivers of these transformations is rapid urbanization, which is resulting in, amongst others-

- Land and water resources are getting subjected to unsustainable pressures,
- Commercialization and intensification of production practices pertaining agriculture, fishing, livestock, and forest-produce to meet the high demand,
- Emergence of peri-urban areas where agricultural land is getting converted to non-agricultural uses,
- Degradation of ecologies and local ecosystems,
- ‘Greying’ and ‘feminization’ of agriculture,
- Shaping of the rural youth’s / families’ imaginations and priorities towards migrating / urbanizing,
- Sharpening of risks to agriculture sector due to non-risk informed urban planning, and
- Declining investments in agriculture vis-à-vis other sectors and urban areas.
- Increasing risk of impoverishment and marginalization of smallholder agriculture and farm families

The manifestations of rapid urbanization are bound to have an adverse impact on food and nutrition security of the vulnerable sections, both in rural and urban areas. Further, they also contribute to climate change (i.e. through GHG emissions) and increasing disaster risk.

It is well established by now that in the changing climate, poverty cannot be eradicated without strengthening the resilience of agriculture dependent livelihoods, especially of smallholder farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, and community foresters, to various shocks and stresses. As highlighted in the ‘The State of Food and Agriculture-2016’:
Unless action is taken now to make agriculture more sustainable, productive and resilient, climate change impacts will seriously compromise food production in countries and regions that are already highly food-insecure. These impacts will jeopardize progress towards the key Sustainable Development Goals of ending hunger and poverty by 2030; beyond 2030, their increasingly negative impacts on agriculture will be widespread.

Yet, most national governments have struggled to reduce the underlying factors driving increasing risks to food and agriculture systems either due to the same being not well identified and understood or due to the capacity constraints and lack of priority.

A shared understanding amongst key stakeholders of these drivers of risks, risk perceptions and coping strategies is essential for developing interventions to manage risks, both at the primary production site (farm, river, grazing land, and forest), throughout the value chains and at overall sector level. A simple “technological fix” is not going to solve the problem; instead a reorientation of agricultural sectors’ and rural development as well as urbanization policies is needed that resets incentives and lowers the barriers to the transformation of food and agricultural systems toward disaster and climate resilience. The emerging narrative is to focus on Climate Smart Agriculture through improvements in infrastructure, extension, climate information, sustainability of farming practices including environmental dimensions, market access, post-production processes, credit, and social protection along with adaptation and diversification of smallholder livelihoods.

The agriculture sectors feature prominently in nearly all the Nationally Determined Contributions by countries to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21) and emerging national plans to implement the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for DRR. However, practices to strengthen the resilience of food and agriculture systems and dependent livelihoods are scattered and a common understanding of how the agriculture sector’s more proactive role in the Sendai Framework will facilitate more concerted and collaborative actions is yet to emerge. Further, there appear to be few bottlenecks and stumbling blocks not only in the nuanced understanding of risks but also in the priority and pitch of policy and programmatic actions on DRR in the agriculture sectors due to divergent viewpoints and competing priorities of concerned key stakeholders. There is thus a need to evolve shared understanding on the following:

1. Nature of existing and emerging risks (including enhanced complexity through cascading chains of risk) to food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific, evolving from changing hazard characteristics and their geographical patterns, rapid urbanization, globally connected economies and market forces, transforming consumption / demand patterns, changing priorities of rural youth / producer families, and national policies underpinned by global and regional agreements.
2. Reasoning and realities behind the diverging viewpoints and priorities of concerned key stakeholders acting as stumbling blocks for shared narrative and urgently needed actions towards strengthened resilient food and agriculture systems.
3. On-going efforts of the agriculture sector in Asia-Pacific countries to reduce risk and strengthen resilience including in implementing the Sendai Framework, the NDCs and SDGs; challenges and emerging learnings.
4. Required actions at policy, programmatic and community/farm levels to strengthen the resilience of agriculture and safeguard food-nutrition security, particularly in vulnerable sub-sectors (viz. agriculture, livestock / pastoral / animal husbandry, fisheries, aquaculture, etc.), in line with SFDRR priorities for action.
5. Nature and pitch of collaborative platforms needed at sub-regional and regional level to support actions at national and local levels.
The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Government of Viet Nam and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific will organize a regional conference titled “Strengthening resilient food and agriculture systems – Implementing the Sendai Framework for DRR in the Agriculture Sector in Asia and the Pacific”. The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry, Government of Mongolia will co-chair the Conference with MARD.

Objectives

The overall objective of this regional conference is to discuss and recommend workable pathways for the Agriculture sector in implementing the Sendai Framework for DRR to strengthen the sector’s resilience to disaster and climate change in Asia and the Pacific. Resilient food and agriculture systems contribute significantly to food security and resilient urbanization.

Specifically the conference aims to:

1) Raise awareness on the ample, yet largely untapped opportunities that the agriculture sector provides to reduce risks and promote resilience and reinforce commitments of the sector to implementing SFDRR and related global frameworks.
2) Strengthen the understanding of existing and emerging disaster and climate risks to food and agriculture in light of rapid urbanisation and the intertwined urban and rural risks’ context, particularly through the experiential narratives of at-risk population (primary producers, extension workers, post-production process entrepreneurs, forest dependent communities, etc.) from the region.
3) Take stock of on-going efforts in Asian countries to reduce disaster risk and strengthen resilience of food and agriculture systems and dependent livelihoods.
4) Identify, through a multi-stakeholder dialogue, required policies, programmes and actions for the agriculture sector to implement the SFDRR and to strengthen its resilience against disaster and climate change.

Outcomes

- **A set of recommendations** on policies, programmes and actions by the agriculture sector to implement the SFDRR and NDCs to achieve food and nutrition security and resilience of agriculture and dependent livelihoods in the region.
- **Reinforced commitments by the agriculture sector and related stakeholders** to the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework for DRR.


Conference Plan

This regional conference is designed to nurture an open dialogue between different stakeholders-including those with divergent viewpoints – to arrive at recommendations leading to concerted actions. Broadly, there would be five sessions spread over the two days of the conference (see indicative Conference agenda below).

A call for contributions will be launched to identify issues of interest and generate inputs for different sessions of the Conference.
**Indicative session outline:**

The opening plenary of the regional conference on the first day would be for 60 min (0900 to 1000) hours, with the following structure:

- Welcome of chair, co-chair, dignitaries, and delegates for the conference.
- Introduction to the regional conference
- Opening remarks by the co-chairs viz. Govt. of Viet Nam and Govt. of Mongolia and FAO
- Key note address on “Food security and resilient livelihoods – the daunting task for agriculture sector in the risky world” (tbc).
- Vote of thanks

Following the Opening, the **First Plenary Session in the form of a Panel Discussion** will set the context with broad development trends that drive vulnerabilities and risks facing food and agriculture as well as deep transformations in the sector, how implementation of global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for DRR, Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) at large will help the agriculture sector enhance its resilience against disaster and climate change. The panel will be multi-stakeholder to provide different perspectives. The panel discussion will include question and answer cum moderated discussion between the participants and panellists. The session summary by the chair will guide more in-depth deliberations at the following sessions.

**Parallel Sessions in Day 1:** Four parallel sessions would be organised focusing on four agriculture sub-sectors viz. farming, fisheries/aquaculture, livestock, and forestry to facilitate in-depth discussions. The sessions will unpack the existing and anticipated risks facing each, within the broad trends impacting the whole sector; take stock of on-going efforts and share lessons learned by related stakeholders (of primary producers, extension workers, pre and post-production entrepreneurs and
other actors of the whole value chain) in reducing risks and strengthening resilience; and identify priorities in policies, programme and actions to further strengthen the efforts. The SFDRR goal, targets and priorities for action will serve as the guidance for each session’s discussion.

The following questions would guide contributions and further conceptualization of the parallel sessions, led by specialized technical agencies in collaboration with FAO:

- What is the nature of existing and emerging / anticipated risks (induced by natural hazards, climate change, others including man-made hazards) to the agriculture sub-sectors within the broader risk and vulnerability context of food and agriculture systems in Asia?
- How is the nature and manifestations of these risks to the sub-sectors evolving especially in the backdrop of rapid urbanization in the Asian region, globally connected economies and market forces, transforming consumption / demand patterns, changing priorities of rural youth / producer families, as well as national economic development?
- What efforts / initiatives are on way to prevent/reduce risks and strengthen resilience in the sub-sectors? What are the lessons learned, opportunities and gaps for policy and programming? Further, what are the emerging priorities (at the policy, programme and actions levels) to strengthen these efforts? The Sendai Framework’s four Priorities for Actions1 will be the guiding framework for this discussion.
- How to build coherence in policies and investments pertaining agriculture development, food and nutrition security, DRR, and CCA as well as urban development to manage risks and strengthen resilience in the sub-sectors (and agriculture sector at large) as countries deliver on their commitments for the SDGs, the SFDRR and Paris Agreement? Further, how should these policies be translated into a plan of action for the agriculture sub-sectors to implement the SFDRR and Paris Agreement?

Each of these four parallel sessions would be for three hours (1400 to 1700 hours) on the first day. Innovative design of sessions is encouraged to facilitate sharing of experiences and views and to arrive at shared understanding and recommendations.

The Second Plenary Session in the morning of Day 2 will facilitate the reporting back from the Parallel Sessions in Day 1, followed by a Panel Discussion to bring perspectives from sub-sectors into a coherent and broader vision for the agriculture sector with regard to its priorities in reducing risks and enhancing resilience and how to address common challenges across the sub-sectors such as sharing information and coordination across sub-sectors as well as among the sectors to boost DRR and CCA efforts in the agriculture sector; practical approaching in addressing both disaster and climate risks for resilient food and agriculture systems and gender equality. This plenary session would be for 90 minutes (0900 to 1030 hours).

Parallel Sessions in Day 2 will share innovative approaches, technologies and practices that will be instrumental for the implementation of the identified priorities to make food and agriculture more resilient to disaster and climate change. These include: (i) how Science and Technology can better support effective risk assessment, forecast and early warning to trigger actions and more effective investments (ii) what are innovative and sustainable solutions for Risk Financing in the agriculture sector to cope with both disaster and climate change impacts including progress and challenges in agriculture insurance and (iii) the role of Food and Agriculture for Resilient Urbanization that will unpack the rural and peri urban/urban linkages that drive risks, what are the priorities for risk reduction along the rural-urban food chain and how to address them.

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1 SFDRR four Priority for Actions are: (i) understanding risks, (ii) strengthening risk governance, (iii) investing in risk reduction for resilience, and (iv) strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response and to build back better in recovery (www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/43291)
The three parallel sessions would be for 90 minutes (10.30-13.00). The following questions would guide contributions and further conceptualization of the sessions, led by specialized technical agencies in collaboration with FAO:

**Science & Technology**

- What role has science and technology played in reducing risks and strengthening resilience of food and agriculture systems and dependent livelihoods in Asian countries? i.e. how science and technology are used in risk assessment/strengthening the understanding of risks, strengthening risk governance, making the business case for investing in risk reduction and early warning, preparedness and disaster recovery in the agriculture sector in general and specifically in the four sub-sectors?
- What are the success factors of innovative use of science and technology for DRR and resilience building in the agriculture sector?
- What are the key technical know-how requirements and collaborative structures and processes needed to strengthen resilience in the agriculture sector? How to develop collaboration and partnership with the scientific and technology institutions in light of the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda?

**Risk financing**

- What are the emerging models and innovative approaches for financing DRR and CCA in the agriculture sector and specifically in the four sub-sectors? What have been the lessons, opportunities and gaps?
- How to measure the cost-benefits of DRR and CCA interventions to make a business case for investments including the private investments?
- What role can social protection and insurance/re-insurance play in disaster risk financing in the agriculture sector? What would be the enablers and barriers for the same?
- How to promote risk financing in the new era of partnerships?

**Food and agriculture in risky urbanizing world**

- What role food and agriculture play for resilient and sustainable urbanization? What are the food and nutrition security related risks facing the rapidly urbanizing Asia and how is this issue being framed in government policy and programmes?
- How do food and agriculture systems drive changing patterns of hazards and risks in urban / peri-urban areas?
- What should be the policies, programmes and actions for safeguarding food and nutrition security and strengthening resilience of agriculture systems as driver/contributor to resilient and sustainable urbanization in Asia? And vice versa, what should be in place for enhanced resilience of food and agriculture systems in urban policies?

Innovative design of sessions is encouraged to facilitate the sharing of successful experiences as well as failures and to arrive at common recommendations as well as opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

The **Final Plenary Session** (14.00-16.30 hours on Day 2) will share the outcomes of preceding Parallel Sessions and facilitate a dialogue on how all concerned stakeholders – policy makers, government officials, farmers, academia, civil society as well as the private sector – will further promote innovative approaches to boost actions by the agriculture sector to implement the Sendai Framework.
The co-Chair’s summary of the conference will focus on the identified priorities and recommendations to take them forward including for further deliberations at the FAO 34th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference and the 2018 AMCDRR.

Organization

The regional conference will be hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) of Viet Nam, in collaboration with the Government of Mongolia as host of the 2018 AMCDRR. FAO-RAP will provide technical support for the Conference.

Collaboration with relevant organizations working in DRR and CCA in the agriculture sector, livelihood practitioner networks from Asia and other partners will be sought for support to the Conference and participation of farmers, farmer groups, agri-food businesses, relevant government agencies and other stakeholders.

Cover Picture: Early Morning, by Vietnamese Artist Tran Thu Huong. (Permission is yet to be received). Source: Vietnamese Artist http://www.vietnamartist.com/product/early-morning-4/ (accessed on 24.06.17)

End Notes

2 See for example the Global Assessment Report 2017 (GAR).
3 Dzud is the Mongolian term for an extremely snowy winter, typically preceded by a summer drought, wherein livestock perish due to inability to find fodder thereby disrupting millions of rural families.