

Lao Country Statement

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Good day to you all

Excellency Chair

Director General of FAO

Distinguished delegations and participants

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as well as the Government of Lao PDR, I am delighted to be part of the 35th Asia and the Pacific Regional Conference (or APRC in short) as this is an important forum to discuss challenges related to food security, nutrition and agriculture. I am also very pleased to learn that this year APRC will also discuss innovation and digital technologies that are helping to improve food security and nutrition, the new Director-General's Hand-in-Hand Initiative, water management and other topics.

Before I start, I would like to highlight that this year APRC is organised during the most difficult time of our life time due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has already imposed a major shock on Lao PDR.

In Lao PDR, following years of **GDP** growth averaging in excess of 7 percent, growth in 2020 will be severely impacted.

Lao PDR is part-way through the development of the **9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED)**, which will be the master document guiding Government policymaking from 2021 to 2025. But we are now revising the plan once again.

The effects of COVID-19 therefore require a structured process to consider necessary adjustments to plans whilst they are being developed, both to ensure that they focus on the right priorities, and that targets remain achievable.

Brining experience, lessons learnt and what we discussed at the country level, I would like to highlight some of key points for addressing food and nutrition security in accordance to the key themes of this year APRC.

First and foremost, on water management:

- **Multisector institutional coordination and capacity are of great importance.** There is a need for the lead/key institutions to prepare a **roadmap** and develop a **plan for water usage** by each sector. **In order to save water, the agricultural sector should focus on new crop varieties and climate smart crop and livestock production.**
- **We need to value water as a key resource.**

Second, I would like to drawn our attention to innovation and digital technology for agricultural production:

- **We must accelerate our efforts on capitalization of data.** There is a need for good data, good data collection system and good data analysis.
- **In particular, there is a need for farmers and policy[makers to have access to data and information.**
- **I would also like to stress the importance of linking technology and innovation for disaster risk management and preparedness.**

Last but not least, I would like to highlight priorities of FAO for the next two years. Some of key areas are:

- **Support the implementation of the national Agriculture Development Strategy** through better alignment and harmonised approached.
- **Capacity strengthening:** FAO should assist Lao PDR in capacity strengthening at all levels from national to community level.
- **Collaboration / cooperation** with other countries, south–south collaboration should be in focus and for Lao PDR to learn from other countries.
- **Small holders** should be the focus of the interventions.

These are some of my key areas that Lao PDR would like to put on the table to simulate discussion over the course of consultation concerning key topics of the APRC 35.

I will stop here and before I end my remarks, I encourage all of us to be frank, and provide constructive feedback in a coordinated, inclusive and forward looking manner.

I wish the APRC success and looking forward to working with FAO and our partners in the years to come.

Thank you very much.