



**National Consultation on the SASEC SPS/TBT Diagnostic Study**  
**12 August 2016**  
**Thimphu, Bhutan**

**Summary of Proceedings**

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1. A National Consultation on the SASEC Sanitary/phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade (SPS/TBT) Diagnostic Study, jointly organized by the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), was held in Thimphu on 12 August 2016. The initiative was funded through ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund. The Agenda and list of participants is in **Annex 1**.
2. Mr. Namgay Wangchuk, Director General, BAFRA, as chair of the meeting, welcomed all the participants representing different government agencies, private sector organizations, and ADB officials and consultants. In his welcome remarks, he highlighted the importance of SPS measures in protecting human health and bio-security, as well as facilitating trade. He highlighted various measures being taken by BAFRA in cooperation with some other countries in the areas of infrastructure development, reviewing rules and regulations and strengthening human resource capacity. He hoped that the SASEC initiative on SPS/TBT and the preparation of the diagnostic study will help elevate BAFRA's ongoing efforts to a higher level.
3. In her opening remarks, co-chair Ms. Rose McKenzie, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, South Asia Regional Department, ADB, thanked the participants for attending the consultation. She congratulated Bhutan on being the second SASEC member country to hold the SPS/TBT consultation meeting, led by BAFRA. Recalling the Briefing Meeting for the members of the National Core Group organized by ADB on 14 June 2016, which had proved informative and useful for the members, she hoped that the consultation meeting would further clarify the rationale and modalities of carrying out the national diagnostic study. She also presented the Agenda for the national consultation.
4. In session one, Ms. McKenzie outlined the SASEC trade facilitation strategic framework and detailed how the SPS/TBT agenda fits under the overall SASEC trade facilitation program.
5. In session two, Ms. Kinley Pelden, Chief, Quarantine Control and Quality Division, BAFRA made a presentation updating the status of SPS measures under BAFRA and its responsibilities for implementing a number of laws and their regulations, especially on plant quarantine, seed, pesticides, food and livestock. The presentation underlined the challenges faced by BAFRA to protect the country from various diseases entering through its porous border. She highlighted the measures being taken for facilitating import, export, and domestic use of plant and animal products in conformity with the existing legal framework. To promote food safety, BAFRA is working towards improving conformity assessment, setting of standards and accreditation programs on several products at regional, international and bilateral levels. ISO-accreditation was received in 2012 for the food testing laboratory established in 2005. An area of immediate concern is the need for quality control and standard setting for domestic/private food preparations that are increasingly coming to the market.



6. Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and Executive Director, SouthAsian Network on Economic Modeling spoke briefly on TBT in Bhutan, basing his remarks on a presentation made by Mr. Tashi Wangchuk, (former Bhutan Standards Bureau) in during the SASEC Trade Facilitation Week: Sanitary/Phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade, in December 2014, Bangkok. The information in this presentation should be updated to reflect new developments that might have taken place since December 2014.

7. In session three, Dr. Raihan presented the terms of reference (TOR) for the national diagnostic study. Reiterating the need for consistency of methodological approach throughout all six SASEC national diagnostic studies, he provided information on the objectives of the study, detailed tasks to be carried out and a detailed methodology of the NDS.

8. The presentation was followed by discussion where the participants provided constructive feedback on the TOR. A point was made to include the suggestions made by the members of the National Core Group (NCG) during the Briefing Meeting (14 June 2016), which was accepted. Specified low-volume high-value products of export interest for Bhutan could also be included, in addition to others that may be identified in the national study. Possible opportunities to share testing, conformity assessment and accreditation facilities among the SASEC countries were stressed. In order to optimize the study outputs (in terms of sharing information, data, and resources to the extent possible), the participants expressed that the Bhutan national consultant should work closely with the other national consultants in the other SASEC countries, through the international consultant, taking into account the different time frames for completing the national studies. The TOR was improved and adjusted based on participants' suggestions.

9. The meeting agreed on the TOR for the SASEC SPS/TBT national diagnostic study and the tentative schedule of the study as given in **Annex 2**.

### **Closing of the Meeting**

10. In closing the Meeting, Mr. Namgay Wangchuk, as Chair, thanked all participants and ADB for their support and active participation.

