



South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation
Workshop on Sanitary-phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade
National and Regional Diagnostic Studies 2018
11-13 April: New Delhi, India

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, India, conducted the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Workshop on Sanitary-phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) National and Regional Diagnostic Studies on 11-13 April 2018, in New Delhi, India to (i) share the findings and recommendations of the six national SPS-TBT diagnostic studies and seek participating countries' views and comments on the draft regional SPS-TBT diagnostic study; (ii) review opportunities to include SPS-TBT trade facilitation projects in the *SASEC Operational Plan 2016-2025*; and (iii) organize a learning event with international expertise sharing their experience in implementing SPS and TBT initiatives. The Agenda is in **Appendix 1**; the List of Participants **Appendix 2**; and the presentations in **Appendix 3**.

2. Mr. Kenichi Yokoyama, Country Director for India Resident Mission, ADB delivered opening remarks, stating that South Asia is the fastest growing region in the world and the reduction of trade-restrictive practices and harmonization of standards could bring significant benefit. He further noted the valuable findings of the national diagnostic studies and potential, among others, to inform agri-value chain development in the region.

Day 1: SASEC National SPS-TBT Diagnostic Studies for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka

3. The ADB national consultants responsible for preparation of the national diagnostic studies, in close collaboration with the respective national SPS-TBT Core Groups, presented the findings of the reports. They shared prioritized products for potential export to other SASEC countries; examined the trade-restrictive SPS-TBT related non-tariff measures (NTMs) applicable to these products; noted the gaps in SPS-TBT legislative and regulatory structures, institutional frameworks, infrastructure, and capacity; and proposed recommendations to address the NTMs. Similar issues and challenges in conducting effective intraregional trade were noted in all areas of the studies, with a degree of national variance. Comments and updates received from the SASEC delegations were noted and will be incorporated in the national diagnostic studies.

Day 2: SASEC Regional SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study

4. In sessions 1-4, the ADB international consultant for SPS-TBT presented the rationale, structure, approach, and outline of the SASEC regional SPS-TBT diagnostic study under preparation that draws on the findings of the national studies. Proposed and time-phased recommendations were presented to address trade-restrictive SPS-TBT related NTMs at a coordinated regional level, where the impact would be felt across multiple SASEC member countries. Valuable comments and feedback were received from all delegations and will be incorporated into the draft final version of the regional diagnostic study. This draft final study will

be shared with the national Core Groups of SASEC member countries, including the national consultants, for comments and inputs, if any, in June 2018.

5. **Session 5** shared the SASEC Operational Plan 2016-2025 and clarified how potential SPS-TBT related infrastructure projects could be included in the Operation Plan, specifically in ADB's pipeline of future investments. ADB also introduced the components of a proposed regional technical assistance for trade facilitation: Customs; SPS-TBT and conformity assessment; and transport facilitation. ADB proposed the following areas for inclusion in the concept design for the SPS-TBT and conformity assessment subcomponent: (i) inventory of SPS-TBT related infrastructure; (ii) development and/or enhancement of NTM databases and mechanisms; and (iii) support in building capacity toward development of mutual recognition arrangements in the SASEC region. In principle, these three areas of concept design were broadly supported by the SASEC delegations.

Day 3: Successful Implementation Approaches to SPS-TBT Challenges

6. Day 3 focused on knowledge and experience sharing sessions in the field of SPS and TBT, and with direct reference to the SASEC SPS-TBT diagnostic studies, by international expertise from the Standards and Trade Development Facility: WTO Trade and Environment Division; International Trade Center; South Asia Regional Standards Organization; Food Safety and Standards Authority of India; and the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

7. The **Summary of Proceedings** for the Workshop was shared with the SASEC delegations and comments incorporated by ADB. The Chair thanked and commended the delegations and resource persons for their substantive contributions to the discussions.
