

Asia-Pacific Rural Development and Food Security Forum 2022

22–24 March (Virtual)

Battling Climate Change and Transforming Agri-Food Systems



CLOSING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

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Good afternoon and good morning.

Thank you for participating in ADB's biennial flagship knowledge event, "Asia-Pacific Rural Development and Food Security Forum 2022". Over the past three days, we discussed the emerging challenges to food and nutrition security, and frontier knowledge and solutions to build sustainable, resilient, and green food system in Asia and the Pacific. With the recovery from COVID-19 around the corner, the timing of this forum is very opportune.

The forum included one leaders' roundtable, four technical sessions with significant emphasis on voices from the field workers, three deep dive sessions, one special session on COVID-19, and finally the plenary sessions with participation of the stewards of operations in agriculture from ADB and partner organizations. More than 1,000 participants attended different sessions of the forum.

We were privileged to hear from inspiring global leaders along with Vice President of ADB and Associate Vice President of IFAD in the leaders' roundtable who set the scene for discussions in the follow-up sessions. Esteemed speakers discussed the knowledge-intensive solutions to build sustainable and resilient food systems.

This forum was one occasion to showcase two important knowledge products, and advance the progress towards launching of Innovative Natural Capital Financing Facility with support from a corporate technical assistance project of ADB and other partner organizations. It has also created new opportunities for cooperation with partners including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, and other private sectors.

I especially appreciate the key role of ADB's partners in organizing this forum, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Rice Research Institute, World Vegetable Center, World Food Programme, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Food Policy Research Institute, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and The Economist.



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World Vegetable Center

We have five key takeaways. In their keynote addresses delivered during the Leaders' Roundtable, both Vice President Casali of ADB and Associate Vice President Brown of IFAD highlighted the need to increase strategic and science-based investments in agriculture, with focus on innovative technologies for nature-positive solutions. Vice President Casali also reiterated ADB's commitment to work with all partners to step up support for climate-smart agriculture across the entire agriculture and food value chains, including the blue economy, through policy and technological interventions using nature-based solutions.

The leaders noted that the global food crisis is looming due to the combined effects of the prolonged pandemic, increasing energy prices, extreme weather, and also the ongoing invasion of Russia to Ukraine. Based on the lessons from the 2008 food crisis, the leaders called for maintaining the open flows of trade, and enhancing inclusive social protection and safety nets by developing countries. The leaders also stressed that climate change is still the single most important threat to the sustainability and resilience of the food system in Asia. They highlighted the importance of introducing medium and long-term measures to build the food systems' resilience to cope with climate change.

At the session on digital agriculture, we have heard from the panelists using examples from Viet Nam, India, People's Republic of China, and Philippines on how to promote digital agriculture involving small farmers. To scale up these examples, we need to first, create an enabling environment for private sector participation, and entrepreneurial spirit; second, build more digital infrastructure in rural areas; and third, mobilize more public investments to crowd in private investments. Related to that, we need to promote secondary and tertiary education in rural areas not only to promote inclusiveness but also to prevent the country from being trapped in middle-income status for long.

One panelist summarized the call of the time to build a sustainable, resilient food system and meet the growing demand for nutrition as "Plant, plant, and plant!" emphasizing the importance of thinking out of the box to promote urban farming, vertical farming, hydroponics, and farming in controlled environment. However, we need to develop new varieties of seeds suitable for vertical farming and hydroponic. Comprehensive policy action is required to eliminate undernutrition, overweight, and obesity.

We learned that use of simple technology can reduce the GHG emission by rice production by almost 50%. We just need the right incentive and support structures to motivate farmers to adopt them. Inclusion of women, which account for about 40% of the agri-workforce, people with



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disabilities, and marginal farmers in climate-smart agriculture is crucial. Capacity building for DMCs to develop low-carbon technologies and crops is fundamental to enhance climate financing.

Finally, different speakers highlighted the importance of natural capital financing. As you have heard, ADB is developing an Innovative Natural Capital Financing Facility to attract natural capital investments and offer knowledge solutions to build sustainable and resilient food systems. The facility will have 3 pillars—a Natural Capital Lab, an Agribusiness Service Platform, and a Natural Capital Fund. It will strengthen eco-compensation for ecological services, which in turn, incentivizes farmers to adopt new practices.

In conclusion, the forum has brought new knowledge, inspired, and created extra momentum for us to build sustainable and resilient food systems, by scaling up investments in agriculture, including the non-crop subsectors. We will also continue working in collaborative and coordinated action with partners and developing member countries to achieve impacts at scale. In the coming days, ADB will also prioritize innovation and investment for wider climate change and environmental sustainability projects.

Before I conclude, let me thank you all, the most important part of the forum, our learned participants who showed great interest and made the forum very interactive. I would also like to thank our speakers and partner organizations. I would also like to thank my own colleagues at ADB who really worked hard to organize this forum.

Thank you once again for your valuable time and insights during this Forum. I wish you a good day. All the best, and thank you very much.

