Regional Overview of COVID-19 Impact and Building Back Better through Sustainable Mechanization

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Impact of the pandemic on agriculture

Role of sustainable agricultural mechanization

Recommendations for the region
Covid-19 pandemic

- Brought unprecedented challenges in the agricultural sector in the Asia-Pacific region
- Threatens to stagnate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, reverse gains made in recent years
- Between 83 and 132 million people may be added to the ranks of the undernourished globally in 2020 due to the pandemic –
  - Serious concern for AP region which has majority of the world’s undernourished
Impact of the pandemic on agriculture

Disconnected Logistics & Transportation
- Lockdowns & Quarantine
  - Shortage of Labour
  - Shortage of Other Inputs
  - Interruption in Trade
  - Inability to Sell Produce
- Delayed or Postponed Agricultural Production
- Food Waste
- Food Insecurity
- Decline in Income
- Decreased Purchasing Power
- Risk of Social Instability
Examples of positive government interventions

• Exempting farmers and stockbreeders from movement restrictions
• Facilitating transportation of agricultural produce
• Creating ‘green channels’ for smoother delivery of raw materials and produce, food imports
• Dedicated aid programmes for several industries including agriculture
Role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in supporting recovery and building resilience

- Improve operations for production
  - Greater speed of operations
  - Increase yield and output
  - Reduce production costs
  - Increase cropping intensity

- ICT-enabled (digital) technologies
Role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in supporting recovery and building resilience

• Address shortage of manpower & support social distancing measures
  o Eg. rice transplanters and combine harvesters, seed cleaners and graders, efficient sprayers

• Improve efficiency of storage and processing including for perishables
  o Reduce loss
  o Empower farmers to better decide time and price of sale

• Promote conservation agriculture for enhancing resilience of smallholders
Role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in supporting recovery and building resilience

- Mechanization solutions for livestock farms to prevent and control zoonotic diseases
  - More reliable elimination of pathogens
  - Block transmission routes
  - Enhance biosafety
- Retain returning migrant workers & youth in agriculture
  - Reduce drudgery
  - Entrepreneurship and increased income
Recommended priorities for region to ‘Build Back Better’ through sustainable mechanization

• Address needs of vulnerable communities
  o Smallholder farmers, migrant workers, women and elderly farmers, hilly and remote areas
  o Provide fiscal incentives, support service providers and custom hiring

• Strengthen rural infrastructure
  o Storage, preserving and processing, transportation and logistics, marketing
Recommended priorities for region to ‘Build Back Better’ through sustainable mechanization

• Promote smart mechanization technologies
  o Big data and artificial intelligence
  o ‘Green’ technologies

• Promote research and development
  o Machinery for harvesting of ‘soft crops’
  o Growing off-season crops under controlled environments
  o Promoting safety
Recommended priorities for region to ‘Build Back Better’ through sustainable mechanization

• Encourage role of youth
• Deepen private sector engagement and agro-enterprise development
Thank you!