



Food and Agriculture
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27-28 September 2023

Digital Agriculture Solutions Forum 2023 for Asia and the Pacific

CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

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1.0 Background

Following the success of the previous two bi-yearly E-agriculture Solutions Forum¹, and the last Digital Agricultural Forum 2020, FAO and ITU are continuing with this highly anticipated event and is organizing the Asia and Pacific Digital Agriculture Solutions Forum 2023 in Thailand in a hybrid format.

Significant advances have occurred in the last three years propelled under the impetus of COVID-19 pandemic and the reinvigorated attention and interest in everything digital. Digital agriculture did not escape such accelerated march towards digital economy, digital innovations within the agrifood systems and rural transformation necessitated by the urgent needs to achieve the Strategic Development Goals.

Agrifood systems have been battered and challenged to a great extent by the effects of the pandemic and its consequences following by a cascade of crises including the Russian war on Ukraine, and the consequences impacts on global economy, energy and food markets and the increasing challenge of rising interest rates on the global economy, agrifood sector, food security, malnutrition, and poverty. The United Nations Food Systems Summit was an important global milestone aimed to address these challenges and include countries to renew their commitments to a fundamental transformation of the agrifood systems and reestablish the progress towards achieving the Strategic Development Goals under the Agenda 2030.

Against this background, countries across the board turned their attention to the promise of digitalization to help achieve the development goals and tackle efficiently and fast the cumulative challenges mentioned above.

In Asia and the Pacific, the impetus toward greater investments in innovation and digitalization is growing by the day and the current digital landscape is vastly different than what it was just 5 years ago. Most countries have established ambitious national digital strategies and set out to support private digital innovations and promote digital ecosystems to foster greater digitalization and to overcome the many constraints and challenges facing the translation of national ambition into practical implementation on the ground. Certainly, many in the region have made significant strides in expanding mobile internet coverage and the use of mobile phones and smart technologies has expanded hugely among the population in most countries making access, use and deployment of digital services, solutions and innovations both feasible and economically accessible.

Since the last Asia-Pacific Digital Agriculture Solutions Forum 2020, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a flagship program – 1000 Digital Village Initiative to scale up its engagement, support of digital agriculture among Member States. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has also continued its support to countries through its whole-of Government approach to developing smart villages and smart Islands. Likewise, many developments have also gained much experience through their specialized initiatives, including the UNCDF initiatives around digital finance inclusion and IFI focus on supporting the enabling environment for advancing digitalization of agri-food value chains and facilitate the agri-tech startup ecosystems and enabling conditions.

The Asia-Pacific Digital Agriculture Forum 2023 is a unique regional opportunity aimed bring together all these advances, experiences and help facilitate knowledge exchange among Member states, private actors,

¹ FAO-ITU E-agriculture Solutions Forum, 29-31 August 2016, Thailand (<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/Events/2016/Eagriculture/eagriculture.aspx>); E-agriculture Solutions Forum 2018, 15-17 November 2018, Nanjing, P.R.China (<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/E-agriculture-Solutions-Forum-2018.aspx>)



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development partners, NGOs and other stakeholders. The Forum will explore these key issues and will help members to identify, develop and sustain digital solutions for agriculture. This year DASF 2023 has the following thematic focus “From solutions to ecosystem development: **“Scaling up promising digital innovations and lowering barriers to deployment and to persistent digital divide”**”.

The two-day event, co-hosted by FAO and ITU and co-sponsored by strategic partners will take place physically in Bangkok, Thailand from July 25 and 26 and will also be shared virtually with participants from all over the world.

The event will bring together:

- Government officials from several countries in the region at the level of Directors and Directors-General of relevant Ministries, Departments and Divisions
- Agri-tech company founders, leaders, and managers
- Successful young entrepreneurs
- Representatives of NGOs, communities, local authorities, and field agents
- Representatives of development agencies based in Thailand, the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere
- Infrastructure and service providers from sectors critical for e-agriculture (Telecom, IT, Banking, Insurance, Governance etc.)
- Farmer and Fisher organizations, cooperatives, associations and CSOs working in rural areas
- International, regional, national organizations working in agriculture and rural development
- Agriculture research institutes/ academia

The event themes will include:

- Latest examples of successful digital innovations, solutions with proven record of problem-solving, high impacts, with demonstrable benefits and high scalability potential
- Innovative digital initiatives by governments, public-private partners, multi-stakeholder partnerships and private actors enabling and supporting digital ecosystem development by agri-tech startups, entrepreneurs including young men and women.
- Examples of successful and promising digital villages and smart village pilots and lessons optimal conditions for accelerate rural digitalization that is inclusive, accessible, affordable, and sustainable.
- Exchange, discuss and deliberate on constraints and ways to overcome barriers to digitalization and to lower digital divide for women, youth, small scale producers and marginal groups.
- Successful investment initiatives and opportunities in agrifood and rural enterprises to scale up, expand and deploy inclusive and promising digital services, including digital finance and other affordable critical digital services.

The event is hybrid. The physical meetings will be held in Bangkok, Thailand (venue to be finalized) with expected participants from 50 to 80. The event will be open to general public and will be streamed for wider attendance.



4.0 Provisional Programme

DASF 2023 will be organized virtually over a two-day period comprising of 8 thematic sessions described in the provisional agenda below:

Wednesday, September 27 0900 -1030 Hrs. Digital agriculture strategies	SESSION 1: Opening and Senior Officials Panel - Accelerating Agrifood and Rural Digitalization: from Ambition to Action Inaugural session (30 minutes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opening remarks from FAO Senior Management ○ Opening remarks from ITU Senior Management ○ Key note address from Thailand (tbc) Senior Officials Panel discussion (60 minutes) Theme: Accelerating Agrifood and Rural Digitalization: from Ambition to Action
Wednesday, September 27 1100 -1230 Hrs. Successful digital solutions	SESSION 2. Digital Agriculture Solutions: Success stories of Agritech applications, models, and platforms from Asia in support of agrifood transformation The session will showcase a range of successful digital innovations across the agrifood system – innovations (or solutions) fully deployed, commercially viable and with demonstrable benefits to target users. The solutions will be presented by agri-tech founders, leaders or managers.
Wednesday, September 27 14:00 -15:15 Hrs. Digital ecosystem initiatives	SESSION 3. Fostering digital agriculture ecosystems: Successful initiatives for promoting agritech startups, SMEs and social enterprises The pace of digitalization and its penetration within the food and agricultural systems and rural sector is accelerating. The domain of digital agriculture applications is practically unlimited. Digitalization is critical to enabling better access to agricultural information, resources and markets, more revitalized rural areas confronted with rural depopulation and ageing. This session highlight country initiatives in setting, designing, investing and supporting ecosystem environments (agri-tech companies and startups) with potential users, beneficiaries and clients.
Wednesday, September 27 15:30 -16:45 Hrs. FAO Digital Village Initiative	SESSION 4: FAO Digital Village initiative– Launch of FAO New DVI Dashboard (Knowledge Platform) and examples of successful digital and smart villages in Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of the DVI Dashboard (20 minutes including Q&A) • Panel: examples of successful digital and smart villages in Asia (40 min) • Q&A - discussion (15 min) Panelists from selected digital/smart villages (60 minutes)
DAY 2	



Thursday, September 28 0900 -10:15 Hrs. Pacific Islands digitalization and Smart Villages and Smart Islands	SESSION 5. Digitalization in The Pacific SIDS: The Smart Islands initiative This session will focus on the ITU Smart Villages and Smart Islands initiative adopts an innovative approach to deliver connectivity and digital services to unconnected and underserved communities. The initiative, is being tested in dozen plus countries and aims to transform rural and coastal communities, improve their livelihoods and their well-being by connecting them to a range of digitally enabled services. The initiative follows a whole-of-government approach that is demand-driven, user-centric, flexible, and focused on sustainability, scalability, and multi-sector collaboration.
	Coffee break
Thursday, September 28 1030 – 1200 Hrs. Youth & Agritech startups	SESSION 6. Youth entrepreneurship and the agritech startup ecosystem: Successful stories from Young startup founders in Asia This session will bring together a panel of agritech startup founders to share experience.
1200 to 1330	Lunch break
Thursday, September 28 1330 – 1445 Hrs., Gender inclusion and Digital finance	SESSION 7: Digital finance inclusion and gender empowerment: Breaking the digital divide with a panel of women entrepreneurs, leaders, and development practitioners This session will showcase innovative digital financial services (including e-finance, e-services), and their roles in expanding social and gender and meeting financial needs of rural women, and young girls entrepreneurs. The session will showcase solutions aimed at rural retail customers, agribusinesses and/or financial service providers (e-commerce, data service management, agribusiness for SMEs), including solutions that lowers effective barriers for women access to digital services (like supporting digitization of women-centric institutions like SHGs).
	Coffee break
Thursday, September 28 1500 – 1615 Hrs.	SESSION 8. Scaling up successful digital innovations: Examples of successful models, effective partnerships and holistic applications
Thursday, September 28 1615 – 1645 Hrs.	Wrap up session Rapporteur summary Hosts final take home messages

5.0 Contact

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