



Greater Mekong
Subregion
Sustainable
Agriculture & Food
Security Program

Consulting firm:



GMS as leading supplier of safe and climate-friendly agrifood products

Successful Completion

Dear reader,

The GMS Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Program (SAFSP) will be completed in mid-2026 when the 23rd GMS Working Group on Agriculture meeting is held in Bangkok, Thailand. This will bring the current phase of the SAFSP to close after six years of activities. The SAFSP commenced in late 2020 during the challenging pandemic times and we are very grateful for the support provided by the five GMS WGAs, development partners, research institutes, universities, and by GMS agribusiness sector members.

During the last six years, SAFSP has successfully delivered the 3rd GMS Agriculture Minister's Meeting, five GMS WGA meetings, and a series of technical meetings and workshops on key GMS agrifood sector topics. Implementation of the SAFSP Outreach and Dissemination program that uses videos and digital methods to present the major SAFSP achievements is underway. Knowledge Products that present advanced technical and policy strategies to support the GMS agrifood sector transformation and exciting digital innovations to assist smallholder farmers and agribusinesses are being shared through the program. The final SAFSP country meetings that were successfully conducted during February and March this year were part of the Outreach and Dissemination Program.

Thank you once again for your excellent support during the last six years.

Stewart Pittaway, SAFSP Team Leader

Final SAFSP Event: 23rd GMS Working Group on Agriculture Meeting

Considering the vital role of Regional Public Goods (RPG) and their role in sustainable agrifood systems across the GMS will be the theme of the 23rd GMS WGA meeting that will be held mid-year in Thailand. Initiatives, and potential activities where RPGs are vital for the sustainable growth and transformation of the GMS agrifood sector include shared digital data platforms to enhance cross border agrifood trade, integrated infrastructure, green on-farm production and value chain technologies, addressing transboundary crop residue haze pollution, integrated carbon markets and impact funds, and coordinated transboundary livestock disease prevention programs. Regional Cooperation and Integration is a high priority for the ADB and is crucial for the strengthening of RPGs. The 23rd GMS WGA meeting be an important platform for achieving the transformation of the GMS agrifood system through the next phase of the ADB support for the GMS agrifood sector program to 2030.

Final SAFSP Country Meetings

Final SAFSP country meetings in Laos, Thailand, PRC, and Viet Nam were held during February and March 2026 in partnership with the respective WGAs. These meetings were part of the SAFSP Outreach and Dissemination plan to communicate to the leading SAFSP innovations, technologies, and knowledge outputs to all agrifood sector members.

Presentations at the meetings featured successful innovations from the pilot demonstrations that were implemented in the GMS countries. Lessons and successful experience from the cross-border traceability for durian fruit between Thailand and PRC, the establishment of green tea value chain model in Yunnan's Shuangjiang county, the Water Food Energy Nexus in Mekong delta, digital innovations for improved crop farm planning and management and climate change resilience for Thai and Lao PDR small holder farmers were all featured at the meetings.

ADB presented the structure and priorities for the next phase of the SAFSP that will be implemented from 2026-2030 at each meeting. It was highlighted that the next phase will assist the GMS countries to realize the [GMS-2030 Kunming Strategic Framework for Transforming Agrifood Systems](#). The GMS Secretariat presented the procedure and process for GMS countries to propose grant and investment projects through the [Regional Investment Framework](#)



Dr. Nguyen Do Anh Tuan, WGA National Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Viet Nam, closed the Viet Nam meeting recognizing the SAFSP achievements.

New agribusiness and digital skills learned by Lao female and male smallholder farmers

Learning new financial management skills and improved digital and financial literacy were notable achievements from a series of SAFSP funded courses delivered recently for women and men small holder farmers and small agribusiness operators in Lao. Agricultural entrepreneurship, leadership, financial management, digital and financial literacy and climate smart agribusiness planning skills were topics at the courses. The participants were enthusiastic learners and the formal evaluation at the end of the courses found that their measuring business success, leadership, climate-smart business planning, smart costing, and digital competence skills had significantly increased. There were 305 participants that attended the training program of whom 210 (69%) were females.



Women were very active participants in the training program where the focus was on developing their skills to be more commercially successful

Information gathered from the participants found that 85% owned a smartphone and 87% reported having access to the internet. Use of their smart phones for business was low with only 44% stating that they used smartphones for business purposes before the training. Use of AI was very low and 4% of participants indicated that they had used AI before the training. The lower use of smartphones for business activities and AI highlights significant potential for future projects and initiatives to increase productivity as well as economic, financial, and digital inclusion at the villages level.

Improving the digital financial literacy, leadership and digital literacy skills of rural women involved in micro and small agribusinesses is a key SAFSP target. The training was conducted in Vang Vieng and Kasy districts of Vientiane Province, Lao PDR by LTS Ventures. It continues the training for farmers and small agribusinesses on agri-financing that was successfully delivered by the SAFSP in Cambodia during 2025.

Farmer-to-Farmer Learning: Thai and Lao Farmers



Lao farmers and Champasak University students making a farm visit to learn about the use of digital technologies and sustainable agriculture in Ubon Ratchathani province,

Innovative digital technologies to assist farmers in planning and managing profitable rice-cropping systems were recently showcased through a farmer-to-farmer learning event in Thailand. Farmers from an SAFSP demonstration in the Lao PDR Champasak province, along with Champasak University students, completed a visit to the enhancing climate change resilience and regenerative agriculture SAFSP demonstration in Ubon Ratchathani province in Thailand. Valuable dialogue unfolded between the Thai project demonstration farmers and the Lao farmers and

students. It began with a senior Lao farmer sharing a heartfelt reality: the cycle of degraded seeds and fluctuating prices that leaves farmers saying, *"When we have rice, there is no price; when there is a price, we have no rice."* However, the Thai regenerative agriculture team led by Kasetsart University, together with the Ubon Ratchathani farmers, offered a beacon of hope: not through more chemicals, but through regenerative agriculture. By showcasing how planting Por Tueang (Sunn Hemp) heals the soil and reduces fertilizer costs, and the willingness of Thai agribusinesses such as PWS¹ to pay premium prices for low-carbon rice, the conversation shifted from survival to sustainability and profitability. It became clear to the Laos farmers that the solution to market volatility is not about luck, but rather about working towards better soil health and improving crop husbandry practices.



Farmer-to-farmer learning: Champasak farmers learning new farming technologies from Ubon Ratchathani farmers.

The true inspiration, however, sparked when technology entered the room. While the older generation of Lao farmers admitted that digital tools felt "yak" (difficult), the Lao youth from Champasak University saw them as a lifeline. When the ListenField team demonstrated how a simple app could predict weather and prove rice crop quality to buyers, the atmosphere changed from hesitation to empowerment. This farmer-to-farmer demonstration visit was not just about learning new farming techniques; it was a digital handshake between neighbors. By equipping the 'young smart farmers' of Laos with the tools to record data, they are now building a bridge that connects their parents' hard work to premium global markets, highlighting that when Thai innovation meets Lao resilience, the future of agriculture is borderless.

Successful Climate-friendly Tea Production and Value Chain Lessons

Achievements and results from the SAFSP pilot demonstration to promote climate-friendly tea value chain development were presented at a workshop in Shuangjiang County of Yunnan Province, PRC in January 2026. The Yunnan Tea Research Institute (YTRI), part of the Yunnan Academy of Agriculture Sciences, was responsible for managing the demonstration and organizing the final workshop. Workshop participants included stakeholders from the Yunnan Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA), leaders in Shuangjiang County, tea agribusinesses, researchers from institutes and universities, and tea farmers. There were also international participants from the Tuyen Quang province of Viet Nam and the SAFSP consultant team.

¹ PWS is a Thai company which processes rice: they are leading work on the Regenerative Agriculture Project in the Northeast of Thailand.



Ms. Li Wenli, a smallholder tea farmer, shared lessons and benefits from the demonstration to the poverty reduction.

Shuangjiang is renowned for its ancient tea production and large-scale and its well-preserved tea plantations. These are recognized as having unique characteristics due to Shuangjiang's upland ecosystem and appropriate tea cultural techniques. Shuangjiang Mengku Big Leaf Tea, also known as Shuangjiang Mengku tea, is from the county's Bingdao village and is internationally recognized as a top-quality tea. There are, nevertheless, still obstacles to the sustainable development of the Shunagjiang tea sector that hinder the livelihoods of tea farmers, many of

whom are women.

Assisting tea agribusinesses and the team farmers to learn and apply climate-friendly and green production practices to sustainably develop Shunagjiang's unique ancient tea resource was the objective of the SAFSP pilot demonstration. This will enable the Shunagjiang's ancient tea sector to capitalize upon the market opportunities for the high-quality ancient tea and contribute to improved livelihoods of the smallholder tea farmers. Technical advice on a range of topics, including climate-friendly, green cultivation technologies; better processing techniques; and product quality control was provided to the farmers by the YTRI.

Ms. Hu Xinmei, Director of Foreign Cooperation and Exchange Office under Yunnan DARA, WGA Focal Point, highlighted that the pilot demonstration had achieved impressive results. She is confident that this successful model could be further developed and replicated into other locations, not only in the PRC but also in other GMS countries. A notable achievement is that more than 15,500 ancient tea trees have been digitalized for their preservation and the traceability of their products to consumers.



Field visit to one of the tea value chain demonstration sites in Shuangjiang County, where tea contributes to improved livelihoods for the upland ethnic population.

Assessment of the technical, economic, and social impacts of the model by the YTRI and SAFSP are ongoing. Once completed, these impacts will form the basis of SAFSP outreach activities to disseminate the demonstration innovations to the GMS subregion. It is noted that the pilot model is relevant to the development of tea sector in other GMS countries, especially in Viet Nam and Laos.

Xin Thanh Quyet, Head of Crop Production Division under Department of Agriculture and Environment of Tuyen Quang Province in Viet Nam, was supported by the SAFSP to attend the workshop. Mr. Quyet expects that there will be support from the ADB and Yunnan Province to

share valuable knowledge and experience from the demonstration to the tea sector in the Ha Giang mountainous area of Tuyen Quang province, which has the largest number of ancient Shan Tuyet tea trees in Viet Nam.

Outreach and Dissemination: SAFSP Digital Resource Hub

Ensuring that the significant portfolio of Knowledge Products, digital innovations and advanced technologies and strategic sector policy priorities to enhance GMS regional cooperation and integration are shared with GMS agrifood stakeholders will be achieved through the SAFSP Outreach and Dissemination program. Videos, digital infographics, and formal reports have all been prepared, and these resources are contained in the [SAFSP Digital Knowledge Hub](#).

Knowledge Products and Briefs

Knowledge Products that present technical insights to assist GMS agrifood sector policy and planning decision-makers with the broader objective of advancing the sustainable transformation of the GMS agrifood sector have been prepared by the SAFSP consultants. Each of the Knowledge Products is briefly described below along with their digital connection:

Green Finance for Smallholders and Agri-SMEs, prepared by Pramod Pandeya, SAFSP International Agribusiness Financing Specialist – [view here](#)

The objectives of the green agrifinance Knowledge Product are to: (i) develop a framework for agri-financing institutions (FIs) to undertake green financing; (ii) disseminate information and knowledge to Agri-FIs in various facets of green financing including overarching policies and principles, opportunities and challenges, and instruments; (iii) disseminate institutional knowledge acquired by a selection of GMS banks on green financing to the agriculture sector; and (iv) suggest the way forward to enhance green financing flow to the GMS agriculture sector.

Promoting Private Sector Investment for Agrifood Value Chain Transformation in the GMS, prepared by Pramod Pandeya, SAFSP International Agribusiness Financing Specialist – [view here](#)

Successful promotion of private sector investment in the GMS must be based upon: (i) present innovative business models with appropriate risk-return trade-offs that are operational in the GMS from various sectors such as carbon credit project development, value chain digitization and climate-resilient agricultural practices adoption; (ii) provide recommendations, including policy reforms, to create enabling environment; and (iii) disseminate information and use cases of various financing instruments that are available in the system to private sector investors.

Risks and Livestock Control Measures for Antimicrobial Resistance in the GMS, prepared by Dr David Roland-Holst, SAFSP International Animal Health and Value Chain Consultant – [view here](#)

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) represents one of the most pressing global health and economic challenges of the 21st century. This knowledge product provides an overview of risks and control measures for AMR related to the livestock sector in the GMS. It is intended to support greater public awareness and policy activism in addressing antimicrobial use and AMR risk, promoting expansion of cattle and other agrifood trade between GMS countries and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Water Accounting in the GMS – Policy Implications for Water, Food, and Energy, prepared by Dr Alex Smajgl, SAFSP International Water-Food-Energy Nexus Consultant – [view here](#)

Water resources are central to economic growth and agriculture in the GMS, yet rising demand from population growth, industrialization, urbanization and climate change is driving water scarcity and competition, particularly in stressed areas such as Viet Nam and Thailand. The objectives of this knowledge product are to (i) assess the importance given to the use of water accounting for water management against the backdrop of climate change in national water policies of GMS countries; and (ii) examine the evolution of water accounting approaches in the GMS, and assess the contribution of water accounting approaches to decision-making on sectoral allocation of water resources to address water-food-energy trade-offs.

Transboundary Livestock Disease Control: Insights from PRC and Other GMS Countries, prepared by Dr David Roland-Holst, SAFSP International Animal Health and Value Chain Consultant – [view here](#)

Transboundary animal diseases (TADs) are a major risk in the GMS and the knowledge product explains how the GMS can manage the risk of TADs in a predictable and affordable way. Regional integration has increased both individual country livestock disease risk exposure and interdependence. Livestock production is denser; cross-border movements are more frequent; and expanding value chains are linking farms, processors and cold chains across more jurisdictions. Wildlife-livestock interfaces are also more dynamic than a decade ago. Country systems have improved, but four dimensions of the TAD challenge still decide outcomes: early warning, data exchange, zoning and compartmentalization, and mutual recognition of animal-health standards. When outbreaks occur, linkages across and between these dimensions raise the total cost of control and can shake confidence in domestic and transboundary markets.

Mutual Recognition and Harmonization of Food Safety and SPS Systems in the GMS: Designing Digital Trust for Resilient and Inclusive Trade prepared by Dr Vichelle Roaring-Arunsuwannakorn, SAFSP International Food Safety and Policy Specialist – [view here](#)

The global architecture governing agrifood trade is undergoing a structural shift. Three converging trends are evident: stricter documentation and verification requirements, a decisive shift toward digital auditability, and growing reliance on system-level performance rather than consignment-by-consignment controls. For GMS agrifood exporters, these trends present both heightened risks and strategic opportunities. Drawing on regulatory analysis, institutional benchmarking, and multiple SAFSP activities, the Knowledge Product identifies five consistent findings. Building on this evidence, the report proposes a GMS Food Safety Quality recognition framework structured around five pillars.

Agrifood System Transformation in the GMS, 2026–2030: Priorities for CSA/NbS, Digital MRV & Traceability, Natural Capital Accounting, and Public–Private Finance prepared by Dr Bui Le Vinh, SAFSP International Climate Change Specialist – [view here](#)

The GMS agriculture sector stands at a critical juncture. Climate pressures, soil and water degradation, and rapidly evolving market-access requirements are reshaping how the region produces, trades, and governs its agrifood systems. Smallholders, who make up the backbone of the GMS agricultural economy, face rising climate risks and increasing compliance burdens at a time when traditional financing and extension systems are no longer sufficient. Without a major shift toward more resilient, digitally connected, and environmentally grounded agrifood systems, countries risk widening inequality, reduced competitiveness, and missed opportunities in

emerging climate and green-finance markets. This Knowledge Product provides a practical, investment-ready roadmap for scaling climate-smart agriculture, nature-based solutions, digital MRV and traceability, and natural capital accounting across the GMS.

Topical Briefs: Financing Climate Smart Agriculture; and Strengthening Water and Soil Management

Financing climate-smart agriculture and Agri-SMEs in the Greater Mekong Sub-region prepared by Pramod Pandeya, SAFSP International Agribusiness Financing Specialist – [view here](#)

Climate smart agriculture and agri-SMEs are vital for a resilient, sustainable, and prosperous GMS. Limited financing resources for smallholder farmers and agri-SMEs to make climate smart transition impede adoption of climate smart practices in the agriculture and agri-value chain in the GMS. Green financing could play a catalytic role in incentivizing smallholder farmers and Agri-SMEs in the region to make the climate smart transition.

Strengthening Water and Soil Management for a Climate-Resilient GMS prepared by Dr Bui Le Vinh, SAFSP International Climate Change Specialist - [view here](#)

Policy and investment priorities to strengthen climate-resilient agrifood systems across the region in response to the combined impacts of water and soil degradation, and the systemic barriers limiting adoption of climate-smart agriculture and nature-based solutions are highlighted.

Events, Meetings and Webinars

- GMS SAFSP | GMS WGA Annual Meeting 2026 | Bangkok, Thailand | September 2026 (TBC)
- GMS SAFSP | [GMS Agribusiness Sector Consultation Workshop](#) | Vientiane, Lao PDR | May 2026
- [AGRITECH ASIA](#) | Bangkok, Thailand | 20-22 May 2026
- [MEKONG FORUM 2026](#) | Bangkok, Thailand | 22-23 July 2026

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Get in touch!

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