

Advancing Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN and BIMSTEC Region

POLICY ROUNDTABLE AND INCEPTION WORKSHOP

4-5 August 2025

Meeting Room 7, Sheraton Grand Jakarta Gandaria City Hotel, Indonesia

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

As Asia's agri-food systems undergo rapid transformation, countries in the ASEAN and BIMSTEC regions face critical challenges related to sustainability, inclusion, climate resilience, and market integration. Despite high economic growth, the region remains home to a significant number of the world's population of impoverished people and faces increasing vulnerability to climate change and market shocks. Responding to these challenges requires coordinated policy action, strong partnerships, knowledge exchange, and capacity building across countries.

The diversity in economic size, demographic structure, and climate vulnerability across these countries presents both challenges and opportunities. For example, Vietnam and Thailand are emerging players in global value chains, while Bhutan and Nepal are grappling with structural constraints. However, in all contexts, smallholders, women, and youth remain central to food systems.

The initiative on agricultural transformation and market integration under Network of Policy Advisors and Analysts (NePAA) aims to ensure that the voices and needs of these groups are represented in regional policy discussions at the BIMSTEC and ASEAN levels and reflected in future investment strategies through its integrated approach. It also responds to the growing need for coherence in national and regional strategies, particularly in light of evolving trade partnerships, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Building on the success of its [first phase](#) this initiative under NePAA expands its geographic and thematic scope in terms of changing contours of transformation (driven by value chain transformation) and market integration (through new partnerships and global value chains). This new phase aims to mutually strengthen the institutional capacity of selected ASEAN (Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand) and BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal) countries to formulate and implement inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient agri-food system policies.

About NePAA

The NePAA was initiated under the "Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration Phase I", an IFAD-funded project to foster sustained dissemination and uptake of research, capacity strengthening, and policy dialogue. Led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), NePAA serves as a unique platform bringing together key stakeholders such as regional bodies, policymakers, academicians, farmer's associations, and research professionals. It aims to facilitate collaboration, mobilize collective strengths, and provide evidence-based policy recommendations to the ASEAN and BIMSTEC, particularly advocating pro-smallholder agri-food system policies. NePAA will actively support capacity building, empirical policy analysis, and continuous knowledge exchange among ASEAN and BIMSTEC member states.

Synergies with ASEAN and BIMSTEC

The initiative under NePAA is uniquely positioned at the intersection of ASEAN's regional integration agenda and BIMSTEC's mandate on food security and climate resilience across member countries. The project leverages IFPRI's partnerships with both secretariats, backed by a Memorandum of Understanding with BIMSTEC and ongoing collaboration with ASEAN.

As both regions increasingly face shared policy challenges such as climate change, market disruptions, inclusiveness and shocks driven threats to food security, the initiative under NePAA will serve as a bridge for evidence-based policymaking, South-South learning, technical cooperation, and joint initiatives. The Policy Round Table under NePAA will emphasize this synergy by exploring the complementarities between agricultural policy, trade policies, and food system resilience.

Objective

The joint Policy Round Table and Inception Workshop aims to:

- Officially launch the initiative under NePAA and present its goals, components, and roadmap.
- Initiate the consolidation of NePAA as a sustained platform for policy dialogue, capacity building, and prioritized research agenda in both the regions.
- Facilitate dialogue among policymakers, researchers, and development partners on inclusive and sustainable food system transformation.
- Deliberate on the roles of ASEAN and BIMSTEC in harmonizing agri-food policy responses across selected countries.

- Gather inputs from key stakeholders to guide collaborative research and capacity-building activities under NePAA initiative.
- Explore complementarities in agricultural policy, trade policies, and food system resilience.
- Initiate the systems for mutual learning as part of south-south learning both in areas of transformation as well as market integration.

Structure

The event will be structured into two main segments:

1. **Policy Round Table (PRT) under NePAA Initiative:** Featuring addresses from ASEAN and BIMSTEC Secretariat officials, IFAD officials, IFPRI researchers, and thought leaders and senior government officials from participating countries. The forum will deliberate on key issues such as smallholder inclusion, regional and global value chain integration, and climate-resilient food policies.
2. **Inception Workshop under NePAA Initiative:** A technical session bringing together national policymakers, researchers, IFAD officials, NePAA members, national partners, and civil society actors to deliberate ATMI-II's research priorities, capacity-building agenda, action plan for NePAA, and stakeholder engagement strategies.

Expected Outputs

- A shared understanding of NePAA initiative's objectives, implementation modalities, and expected outcomes.
- Stakeholder feedback on priority research themes and national/regional coordination mechanisms.
- Strengthened collaboration with ASEAN and BIMSTEC to embed food system transformation into regional strategies.
- A draft action plan for consolidating NePAA and launching capacity-building activities.

Date and Venue

The two-day event is scheduled to take place on August 4-5, 2025, in Sheraton Grand Jakarta Gandaria City Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia.