



Speaker Summary Note

Session: East Asia

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Title: Fine Tuning Policies to Better Link Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health

- 1. Accelerate food production and productivity growth, along with quality improvement.** To ensure availability of quality food, we need to increase food supply at national and global level in line with the increase on demand. Major policy agendas are: (a) investment on infrastructures, particularly irrigation, involving private and communities' initiatives; (b) investment on Research & Development, with priority areas on developing new crop varieties/animal breed with high yield potential and better nutritious values; (c) promote application of sustainable production system with environment friendly and less hazardous to human health, include food safety standard; (d) diversify food production based on the available local resources;
- 2. Increase household access to adequate and better quality food.** The availability of food supply at national level does not guarantee household access (both physical and economic) to food. In term of physical access, the problem is more serious in non-continent countries such as Indonesia, which implies a complex logistic system and high transportation cost. To promote household access to sufficient and better quality food at all times, some policy interventions are needed, namely: (a) improve regional and local distribution system to reduce cost and timely delivery; (b) promote better post harvest handling system to maintain food quality; (c) promote development of regional and local food reserve system, to enable local authority take a quick response in case of emergency; (d) promote income generating activities such as production of high value commodities and non-farm employment; (e) connect smallholder farmers to new market opportunities.
- 3. Facilitate the function of trade in improving national and global food security.** Poor household in some developing countries depend on imported food staples to meet their consumption need. Therefore, national governments and international organization should work together to facilitate the working of an efficient and well-functioning trading system. On the other hand, smallholder farmers in developing countries should be active participants and get maximum benefit from this global trade initiative. To better link smallholder farmers to market, capacity building programs in the area of market access is necessary.
- 4. Promote diversification of diets, particularly in countries with heavily dependent on a single staple food.** In some countries, consumption of staple food is heavily dependent on a single commodity (rice in the case of Indonesia and Cambodia). This consumption pattern creates pressures on the need to increase production in response to a growing demand. To reduce this

burden, it is necessary to take initiative in promoting more diversified dietary pattern. Although diversification is positively related to income growth, focusing intervention on non-income factors (knowledge and awareness, availability of alternative staples) will accelerate the process. This initiative will also create higher demand for alternative staples, include those locally grown.

5. **Focus to smallholder farmers.** Agriculture in many East Asian countries is characterized by smallholder farming. In Indonesia, smallholder farmers (operate land <0.5 hectare) have increased from 45.3% in 1993 to 56.4% in 2003. Because of limited access to productive assets and economic opportunity, they suffer from poverty and food insecurity. To alleviate them from poverty and secure sufficient food supply, productivity of their farm have to grow much higher than the average farms. In addition, smallholder farmers also need to diversify their income sources from various non-farm activities.
6. **Improve safety-net program.** To cushion the vulnerable groups from natural and economic shocks, a much better safety net program is necessary. The programs consist of: distribution of subsidized staple food, cash transfer, food or cash for work, etc. Some areas which require improvement are: (a) more accurate data base to have appropriate household targets; (b) improve design on distribution of benefit to avoid leakage to non-targeted household and moral hazard.
7. **Short and medium term initiatives: Appropriate responses to food price volatility.** Continuous price hikes of some food staples in the world market has raised concern to the access of poor household in developing countries to adequate food intake. National governments and related international organization need to work together to mitigate the issues and formulate appropriate policy responses. Some areas of works includes: (a) improvement on market information and transparency; (b) coordination among national governments for better policy responses; (c) develop risk management instruments to cope with price volatility for both farmers and consumers (crop insurance, future market, etc).
8. **Increase coordination across concerned agencies.** Conceptually, development of agriculture, nutrition and health need to be implemented in an integrated manner. However, in practice agriculture and nutrition&health development programs are coordinated by different ministries. Therefore, to come up with an integrated approach, it is necessary to have better coordination among Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Development Planning in planning, implementation and evaluation of the policies and programs.