

Online Workshop on Climate Smart Mechanization for Sustainable Food Systems Transformation in Central Asia

14:00-16:00 (Beijing time), 27th September 2021

Opening Remarks by Dr. LI Yutong, Head of CSAM

Dear Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and good afternoon!

I am Li Yutong, Head of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). On behalf of CSAM, and our co-organizers: the Administrative Committee of Yangling Agricultural High-Tech Industry Demonstration Zone of the People's Republic of China and the Sub-regional Office for North and Central Asia (SONCA) of ESCAP, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you to this 'Online Workshop on Climate Smart Mechanization for Sustainable Food Systems Transformation in Central Asia'.

First of all, I am honoured to introduce to you three eminent speakers who will join the welcome session today:

- Mr. Cheng Jinqing, Deputy Director General of the Administrative Committee of Yangling Agricultural High-Tech Industry Demonstration Zone of China
- Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head of Office, ESCAP Sub-regional Office for North and Central Asia
- Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee, United Nations Resident Coordinator in China

Before we start, please allow me to make some housekeeping announcements:

- In this workshop, simultaneous interpretation is available in Russian, Chinese and English languages. You can click on the Interpretation function at the bottom of the screen to select the language you prefer.
- Speakers are requested to mute themselves when not speaking.
- Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions via the Zoom Chat function. Please use the Chat function at the bottom of the screen to submit your questions.
- Participants will be invited to complete a post-workshop feedback survey and a link will be provided in the Chat at the end of the workshop.
- This online training workshop will be recorded.

I will now take this opportunity to make some brief opening remarks.

Ensuring healthy and resilient food systems is critical for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, at the current juncture, food systems across the world are facing severe challenges due to the climate crisis. Climate change is fuelling an increasing

incidence as well as severity of extreme weather events and climate-related disasters. Changes in rainfall, temperature and humidity as well as outbreaks of pests and diseases are jeopardizing crop yields and production. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests that global temperature rise will hit the 1.5 degree Centigrade threshold within 20 years, and the severe impact on food systems needs no elaboration.

Agriculture is a critical sector of the economy in the countries of Central Asia where a high proportion of the population lives in rural areas. Agriculture including the livestock sub-sector provides not just food but is an important source of livelihoods and employment. However, agriculture in Central Asia is especially vulnerable to water stress. Many countries are also suffering from the severe impacts of land degradation. Overall, the agro-ecological conditions make agriculture - and food systems more broadly - in the countries of Central Asia extremely vulnerable to climate change. There is urgent need to transform food systems and put them on a path of more resilient and sustainable development.

Sustainable agricultural mechanization can play a key role in promoting both climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in the agricultural sector. Mechanization can improve agricultural productivity and incomes, increase the utilization efficiency of inputs and reduce environment fallout, and conserve water use. And use of conservation tillage and minimum tillage methods can improve soil health and reduce costs for farmers, among other things.

In this context, this Workshop arrives as an important follow-up action in response to the United Nations Food Systems Summit under the auspice of the United Nations Cooperation and Development Framework in China to synergize efforts in fight against climate change threats and support the transformation of food systems in a sustainable way.

Today's workshop aims to achieve the following three objectives:

1. Enable a better understanding of the role of climate smart mechanization in the Central Asian context and highlight its significance in transforming food systems.
2. Promote adoption of suitable climate smart mechanization technologies and practices, especially in the areas of improved food production, dryland and water efficient agriculture, and post-harvest management; and
3. Support regional networking, and knowledge and information sharing for practitioners in Central Asia.

I am very much looking forward to a vibrant session of discussions today and a successful online workshop.

I would now like to invite our first speaker in the opening session to make welcome remarks.

Mr. Cheng Jinqing, the Deputy Director General, Administrative Committee of Yangling Agricultural High-Tech Industry Demonstration Zone of the People's Republic of China, now Mr. Cheng please, floor is yours.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head, ESCAP Sub-regional Office for North and Central Asia (SONCA) to address the audience.

Last, but not the least, I would like to invite Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee, United Nations Resident Coordinator in China to deliver his welcome remarks.