

IFAD proposes to accelerates establishment of Asia and the Pacific (APR) office in Thailand

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Thailand's Deputy Permanent Secretary for Agriculture and Cooperatives, Setthakiat Krachanwong, participated in a discussion on January 18, 2024, with representatives from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), namely Meyerhans, Executive Director, and Giorgia Salucci, Head of Support Department.

Senior officials of the 16th Berlin Ministers' Conference of Agriculture (The 16th Berlin Ministers' Conference) met to discuss the progress of setting up an IFAD Asia and Pacific office in Thailand. As part of the process of establishing the IFAD Office for Asia and the Pacific in Thailand, the Host Country Agreement documents are referred to by the Deputy Permanent Secretary Economics and proposed to develop the documents by October 2024.

In the 4th quarter of 2023, Thailand has been selected as the location for IFAD's first regional office in the Asia and the Pacific region (APR). With the key milestone is part of IFAD's decentralization strategy to bring the regional counterparts more closer to reflects steadfast commitment to enhancing collaboration and efficiency. Establishing IFAD's first regional office in Asia strengthen IFDA's presence and impact in the region, enabling it to forge even stronger partnerships and drive growth.

A tentative timeline for the establishment of the regional office has been set for Q3 of 2024. In line with the established regional office model, this office will eventually house the APR Regional Team as well as the COM, CSD, FMD, and SKD staff members mapped to APR.

In addition to being IFAD's largest investment portfolio, APR also plays a significant role in the mission of the organization. By setting up regional offices, IFDA will be able to enhance efficiency, bridge time differences, and ensure seamless coordination among regional offices. Through closer collaboration with partners, IFDA aims to strengthen networks, and amplify efforts toward inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

The strategic positioning of Bangkok enables IFDA's operational teams to serve clients with greater efficiency and achieve even greater impact. In addition, the presence of 21 UN regional and other offices in Bangkok provides valuable opportunities to enhance collaboration within the UN system, particularly with FAO and WFP regional offices. A stronger partnership with IFIs, also located in Bangkok, will further strengthen IFAD's regional initiatives.

IFDA has considered an array of critical factors, including cost-effectiveness, travel accessibility, IT connectivity, visa considerations, alignment with IFAD's strategy, proximity to other UN and multilateral agencies, and the overall impact on the staff costs to make Bangkok as the location. A strategic nexus uniting IFAD staff from different departments, the regional office will be led by the Regional Director.

Stronger strategic focus on China and India

To ensure comprehensive coverage across Asia, IFAD will further strengthen its office presence in Beijing, China, and New Delhi, India. India will operate as a multi-country office (MCO) in the APR region, while the office in China will have a particular focus on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) as IFAD SSTC Centre in Asia. In this unique capacity, the office will actively strive to secure substantial additional SSTC funds, significantly enhancing outreach efforts and maximizing the profound impact of IFAD-supported rural development and poverty reduction initiatives throughout the region. We will also be exploring the possibility of strengthening the role of these offices further as centres for development financing, digital transformation, and more.

The two offices will oversee various country portfolios, thereby reinforcing IFAD's strategic positioning and expanding partnerships at both country and regional levels in APR. The China office will continue to cover Mongolia, while the India office will continue to cover Sri Lanka and Maldives. As a result, they will foster robust client relationships and effectively reach rural communities in those countries.