TERMS OF REFERENCE

Project Name	Mekong Capacity-Building for Resilient and Enhanced Agricultural Technologies and Food System
Contract Type	Consultancy Services
Service Title	Lead Trainer on *"Regional Training on Food Systems Thinking for Safer and Resilient Value Chains"*
Activity Code	A29-NZAP25-ADCY1-2.1-06-2.1.6
Contract Category	Special Services Agreement (SSA)
Duration	10 Working Days (Between November to December 2025)
Duty Station	Homebased, with one trip to Khon Kaen, Thailand (December 14-20, 2025)

1. Background / Project Description

Food systems lie at the heart of the world's most pressing challenges and opportunities. They are expected to feed a growing population of nearly 10 billion people by 2050 while simultaneously addressing malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, and socio-economic inequalities[1]. However, current global food systems are unsustainable in many respects. They account for up to one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions[2]; drive deforestation and biodiversity loss[3]; and still fail to deliver equitable access to safe and nutritious diets[4]. In low- and middle-income countries, particularly in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), these challenges are compounded by limited resilience to climate shocks, food safety threats, and the socio-economic vulnerabilities of smallholder farmers[5].

A food systems approach is therefore needed. Unlike traditional production-or value chain–focused specific strategies, food systems thinking examine interconnected activities across production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste, while also considering the enabling environment of policies, socio-cultural norms,

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[1] WEF & FAO. 2022. *Transforming Food Systems: Pathways for Country-led Innovation*. *White paper – January 2022*. Geneva.

[2] Hannah Ritchie (2021) - "How much of global greenhouse gas emissions come from food?" Published online at OurWorldinData.org. Retrieved from: 'https://ourworldindata.org/greenhouse-gas-emissions-food' [Online Resource].

[3] Benton, T., Bieg, C., Harwatt, H., Pudasaini, R. and Wellesley, L. (2021). *Food System Impacts on Biodiversity Loss*. [online] Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank. Available at: https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss.

[4] 2020 Global Nutrition Report: Action on equity to end malnutrition. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives.

[5] ADB. 2024. GMS-2030 Kunming Strategic Framework for Transformation of Agrifood Systems. https://greatermekong.org/g/gms-2030-kunming-strategic-framework-transformation-agrifood-systems-0

and natural resources[6]. This perspective recognizes complex interactions and feedback loops between agriculture, environment, health, and trade, helping to avoid solutions that simply shift problems from one area to another. Instead, it seeks to generate synergies for economic, social, and environmental sustainability[7].

For Mekong countries, operationalising food systems thinking requires building institutional and individual capacity to move beyond siloed approaches. Sector-specific interventions must be integrated in broader frameworks that balance food security and nutrition, socio-economic development, and environmental sustainability. Experiences from recent crises, such as COVID-19, highlight how disruptions in one sector can cascade across value chains, undermining both livelihoods and food availability. Systems thinking provides tools to identify leverage points, anticipate risks, and design multisectoral interventions that strengthen resilience at local, national and regional scales.

To address this gap, the Mekong Institute (MI), under its Mekong CREATES project, is organizing the **Regional Training on Food Systems Thinking for Safer and Resilient Value Chains**. The five-day program will convene senior officials and development practitioners from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (CLMV) to strengthen their capacity in applying systems thinking to policy and program design.

About Mekong CREATES

By building on the achievements of the PROSAFE initiative, **Mekong CREATES: Mekong Capacity-building for Resilient and Enhanced Agricultural Technologies and Food Systems** promotes sustainable food systems by enhancing food safety and climate resilience of agricultural value chains in CLMV. The project will strengthen the capacity of government, academic, research, and private sector actors in two key thematic areas:
    (1) food safety across value chain and
    (2) climate resilience in agricultural systems.

Mekong CREATES is supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

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[6] Borman, G.D., de Boef, W.S., Dirks, F., Gonzalez, Y.S., Subedi, A., Thijssen, M.H., Jacobs, J., Schrader, T., Boyd, S., ten Hove, H.J., van der Maden, E., Koomen, I., Assibey-Yeboah, S., Moussa, C., Uzamukunda, A., Daburon, A., Ndambi, A., van Vugt, S., Guijt, J. and Kessler, J.J. (2022). Putting food systems thinking into practice: Integrating agricultural sectors into a multi-level analytical framework. *Global Food Security*, [online] 32, p.100591. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2021.100591.

[7] Nguyen, H. (2018). *FAO Knowledge Repository*. [online] Available at: https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/8d2575e3-e701-4b1d-8e20-d9c83179c848.

2. Role of the Consultant

The consultant will serve as the Lead Trainer, responsible for the overall design, delivery, and facilitation of the training. Specifically, the consultant will:
1. Provide technical leadership and develop the training curriculum;
2. Deliver core training modules on systems thinking, food system dynamics, and integrated planning;
3. Facilitate practice-oriented and country group exercises;
4. Mentor participants in developing Action Plans; and
5. Document training results and provide recommendations for sustaining capacity-building efforts.

3. Scope of Work and Deliverables

Phase	Scope of Work / Tasks	Deliverables	Timeline	LOE* (Days)
Pre-Training	• Develop the training curriculum and agenda • Prepare presentations for assigned modules • Design module exercises • Coordinate with MI to identify guest/online speakers for case studies	1. Training curriculum 2. Training needs assessment questionnaire 3. Pre- and post-test questions 4. PPTs for modules 5. Exercises guidelines and templates 6. List of speakers	1–2 weeks before training	3
During Training	• Serve as Lead Trainer for 5-day training • Deliver selected modules • Facilitate exercises • Mentor groups in Action Plan development	1. Delivery of training as per agenda 2. Collected group outputs	Dec 15-19, 2025	5
Post-Training	• Review and consolidate participant outputs (Action Plans, exercises) • Prepare and submit a Training Report	1. Post-training report 2. Annexes, including finalised Action Plans, presentations, outputs of exercises	Within 2 weeks after training	2

4. Technical Competencies and Experience Requirements

- **Education**
  - Master's degree or higher in agriculture, food systems, environmental sciences, development studies, climate change, food safety, or related fields
  - Additional experience or training in systems thinking, system dynamics, or complexity analysis is high desirable

- **Experience and Skills**
  - Proven expertise in food systems thinking, system-based approaches (e.g., system dynamics, scenario building, value chain systems analysis) climate-resilient agriculture, and/or food safety
  - Minimum 8–10 years of experience in designing and delivering international or regional training programs on food systems, systems thinking, or integrated planning in the GMS or Southeast Asia
  - Skilled in facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues, participatory learning, and experiential exercises
  - Ability to mentoring participants in applying systems tools to context-specific contexts and developing practical action plans
  - Experience in translating systems approaches into actionable policy, program design, or field-level interventions
  - Experience working with government agencies, policy institutions, research bodies, and regional platforms
  - Knowledge of gender, youth, and inclusivity dimensions in food systems

- **Other Skills**
  - Excellent written and spoken English; knowledge of a Mekong country language is an advantage
  - Strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to work across multicultural and multidisciplinary teams
  - Proficiency in developing training curricular, case studies, and digital learning materials

5. Application Guidelines

Interested applicants should submit:
1. Updated CV highlighting relevant expertise
2. Brief cover note with examples of previous similar assignments
3. Proposed consultancy rate (daily or lump sum)

Submission
- Consultant online application form: https://forms.gle/W9fJPyJQz2Xa5p9v6
- Ensure uploaded documents are set public access
- Subject title: Lead Trainer on "*Regional Training on Food Systems Thinking for Safer and Resilient Value Chains*"
- **Deadline:** October 17, 2025