

Preface

Trade is considered 'the engine for growth'. Agricultural trade adds more value to this statement since livelihoods of millions of people are dependent on the agriculture supply chains. Hence trade facilitation for agricultural products is significant for socio-economic development of the Asia-Pacific region. It is tied with employment concerns, the development of small and medium enterprises and basic food security. In the context of depleting natural resources also, agricultural trade is a much discussed topic.

This study is an initial attempt to provide a comprehensive look at Trade Facilitation for agricultural products in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP had organized a High-level Consultation on 'Facilitating Agricultural Trade in Asia and the Pacific' at the beginning of this year. Discussions held at the consultation identified a few major constraints that guided the structure of this study. The paper provides the status of agricultural trade as well as constraints in facilitating trade and their remedies.

The first chapter introduces the agricultural products, compares Asia-Pacific agricultural trade with other major traders in the World and provides growth trend and drivers behind such growth. The second chapter discusses the constraints that limit agricultural trade. The defined bottlenecks of agro-trade include procedures, standards, logistics and finance issues. The third chapter specifies some measures to address the constraints and provides some examples of good practices. The fourth chapter concludes the study with an indication that better understanding on specific issues related to facilitating agricultural trade is required. The study used its own analysis to present a scenario of agricultural trade, using trade data from COMTRADE. It has made use of several cases to showcase the operational or functional problems related to Trade Facilitation, mostly from secondary sources.

This study is one of the work programme (2010-11) outputs of Trade and Investment Division (TID). Trade Facilitation in agriculture is a major focus of the TID's work programme for the next biennium. This study contains specific issues on Trade Facilitation in agriculture that may develop into topics of extensive work for the Trade and Investment Division in the near future.