DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Food Systems Transformation and Economic Growth – Powering Economic and Social Development through the Energy Transition

An Official Affiliated Program of the IMF-World Bank Group Annual Meetings

Date:	14:00-16:10, 14 October 2026; During the 2026 IMF-World Bank Group Annual Meetings
Location:	Pinnacle room 4-5, InterContinental Bangkok (Map link), Thailand; (**located near BTS Chitlom, NOT InterContinental Bangkok Sukhumvit in Thonglor**)
Format:	In-person side event (registration link); Hybrid (Zoom link)
Organized by:	Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

BACKGROUND

Food systems sit at the intersection of food security, climate resilience, inclusive economic growth, and sustainable development. At the same time, energy underpins every level of agriculture and food systems. Fertilizer production, irrigation and harvesting, heating, cooling and ventilation, processing and packaging, transportation and storage, food preparation, and retail all rely on affordable and reliable energy. Water and energy are also closely connected - irrigation and groundwater pumping, treatment, storage, and distribution can account for a significant share of agricultural energy use. Yet, the sector remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels and traditional biomass - producing food and moving it from farm to fork generates roughly 30 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.[1] Furthermore, substantial inefficiencies persist, resulting in unnecessary costs, food losses, and reduced competitiveness.

Global food systems have reached a critical juncture as fossil fuel dependence has exposed energy price and supply chain vulnerabilities causing widespread socioeconomic impacts. Conflict, trade restrictions, fuel and fertilizer price spikes, logistics disruption and electricity outages have reverberated quickly through tightly connected global food value chains, spiking production costs and food prices and disproportionately affecting smallholders, low-income consumers and net food-importing countries.[2]

Amidst increasing climate shocks and global supply chain disruptions, the energy transition can be a powerful catalyst for improving food security, water efficiency, employment, economic growth, and achieving sustainable development targets. Renewable energy not only can cut emissions, but also improve competitiveness, strengthen energy security, reduce production costs, deliver new employment opportunities, drive rural development gains, reduce inequalities, and generate new investment opportunities across Asia and the Pacific.

However, strategic deployment is not automatic. Upfront costs, uneven grid development, limited access to affordable energy transition finance, uncertain commercial viability, inadequate data, human capital development gaps, and fragmented energy-agriculture-climate policies all restrict progress.

[1] Orlando Corigliano, Angelo Algieri, A comprehensive investigation on energy consumptions, impacts, and challenges of the food industry *Energy Conversion and Management*, X, Volume 23, 2024.
[2] FAO. Energy-Smart Agrifood Systems: Fuelling resilience with clean energy, 2025.

Coherent multisectoral approaches are needed to ensure the energy transition does not exacerbate scarcity or inequalities, for example that bioenergy or solar-irrigation programmes do not create further competition for land and water, or exclude smallholders, women and informal workers.
The transition must therefore be context-specific, socially just and anchored in resource-efficiency, environmental integrity and equitable benefit-sharing.[3]

With the global population expected to grow to around 9.8 billion by 2050, the agriculture and food sector will continue to stress global energy and water systems. Sector-specific investment plans, stronger project preparation, appropriate risk-sharing and blended-finance instruments are needed to translate global commitments towards a just and sustainable transformation of agrifood systems into bankable pipelines. The Annual IMF-World Bank meeting therefore serves as a critical global opportunity towards building a consensus around the commitments needed to decarbonize agrifood systems and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.[4]

EVENT OBJECTIVES

Delivering the energy transition in agribusiness requires a cross-sectoral approach that is co-designed to incorporate policy with industry and financial strategies. The proposed side event is as an official side event of the World Bank-IMF Annual meetings, and will bring the Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, ESCAP, FAO and partners together to achieve the following objectives.

- Build a shared understanding of how the energy transition in agriculture and food systems can deliver green growth and development for countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Themes to be examined include how improved energy and water efficiency, food loss and waste reduction, circular economy approaches, renewable energy and bioeconomy solutions can accelerate the transition.
- Facilitate dialogue on how the energy transition can reduce exposure to imported fossil fuels and price volatility, protect food security, improve water efficiency, create rural and value-chain jobs, reduce losses, and produce investable assets.
- Consider how IMF and World Bank country engagement, public investment management, subsidy and fiscal reform, policy-based financing, guarantees, concessional resources and private-capital mobilization can support coherent national pathways for energy transition in the agriculture and food sector.
- Explore practical roles for governments, development banks, climate funds, commercial financiers and agribusinesses in developing bankable investment pipelines for transitioning the agrifood sector.
- Generate a concise set of recommendations and potential follow-up actions for country programmes, NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and UN country support.

DISCUSSION FOCUS

- What is the interrelation between agrifood, water efficiency, and energy transition and how can the energy transition serve as a driver of economic growth and food security?
- Where are vulnerabilities within agrifood systems, and which interventions offer the strongest combinations of mitigation, resilience, productivity and food-security benefits?
- How can countries manage the transition without undermining affordability, water security, land rights, biodiversity or livelihoods?

[3] UN: SDG Policy Brief: Interlinkages Between Energy and Zero Hunger: SDG7 and SDG2. 2026.
[4] FAO. "The role of energy in agrifood systems transformation. Opportunities for energy-smart agriculture in the just transition. 2026.

- What policy reforms are needed to align energy, agriculture, industry, trade, water, climate and rural-development strategies?
- How can public, blended, and private financing reduce risks and attract sustainable investment towards the energy transition?
- How should climate, energy and water-smart agrifood actions be incorporated into NDCs, NAPs, public investment plans and MDB country strategies?
- What can Asia-Pacific countries learn from one another on climate, energy and water-smart agrifood technologies and the interconnection between energy systems and food?

PROPOSED FORMAT

A 90-minute, high-level and solutions-oriented session combining scene-setting interventions with a moderated panel focused on technical, policy, and finance-related solutions. The format will be an interactive dialogue to share practical examples, case studies of successful financing mechanisms, and actionable recommendations.

PARTICIPANTS

The event will target approximately 100 participants across finance, planning, agriculture, energy, environment and trade ministries; IMF, World Bank Group and other MDB representatives; FAO, ESCAP and other United Nations entities; climate funds and bilateral partners; commercial banks and impact investors; agribusinesses, private sector partners across energy and agrifood sectors; farmer and SME organizations; research institutions; and civil society. Ministers and other high-level stakeholders will be invited to participate in contributing to the event.

ORGANIZERS

UN ESCAP The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the region, advancing cooperation for sustainable development. The Energy Transition for Green Growth and Prosperity (ETGGP) initiative at ESCAP supports member States, initially with a focus on Southeast Asia, to plan, coordinate and accelerate energy transitions through data-driven policy support, green power corridors and sustainable finance.

FAO The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Through its Energy-Smart Agrifood Systems Programme, FAO advances renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable bioenergy across agrifood value chains, with attention to resilience, food security and a just transition.

AGENDA

Time	Agenda Item	Panelists
14:00-14:30	**Networking, Refreshments and Coffee**	
14:30 -14:35	**Welcome Remarks**	**Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana,** Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
14:35-15:00	**High-Level Segment**	**H.E. Mr. Arthayudh Srisamoot**, Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand **Mr. Robert Simpson,** Deputy Regional Representative, on behalf of **Mr. Alue Dohong**, Assistant Director-

		General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) **Mr. Wempi Saputra**, Vice-President, Sectors and Themes, Asian Development Bank (ADB) **Dr. Hun Kim,** Chief Partnerships Officer, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
15:00-15:05	**Group Photo of Speakers**	
15:05–15:35	**Session 1. Energy Transition in Agrifood Systems – Benefits, Risks, and Designing Policy and Investments to Deliver Economic Growth and Social Development** Discussion Moderator: **Mr. Robert Simpson,** Deputy Regional Representative, FAO Speakers: 3-4 minute interventions each **Objective**: To examine how improved energy and water efficiency, food loss and waste reduction, circular economy approaches and bioeconomy solutions can accelerate the transition towards more productive, resilient and competitive agrifood systems to create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth and development. **Framing question:** How can agrifood systems reduce energy and water demand, improve energy efficiency and water productivity, and generate renewable energy in ways that strengthen food security, competitiveness and economic growth? **Closing Question**: If you had USD 1 billion to accelerate the energy transition in agrifood systems tomorrow, where would you invest first and why?	**<u>Government of Indonesia</u>** **Mr. Jarot Indarto,** Director for Food and Agriculture, Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas), Indonesia **<u>IRENA</u>** **Ms. Kavita Rai**, Senior Programme Officer-Energy Access, Country Engagement and Partnerships Division, IRENA (**online**) **<u>Agri-Energy Coalition</u>** **Dr. J.S. Yadav,** Managing Director, National Council of State Agricultural Marketing Boards (COSAMB), Member, Board of Directors of World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM)
15:35-16:05	**Session 2. Making the Transition Work for People: Driving Social Inclusion and Leaving No One Behind – Ensuring a Just and Inclusive Energy Transition Across and Within Countries** Discussion Moderator: **Mr. Michael Williamson**, Section Chief, Energy Division, UN ESCAP Speakers: 3-4 minute interventions each **Objective**: Demonstrate how to foster the energy transition while also promoting macroeconomic stability, economic growth and people's wellbeing	**H.R.H. Princess Abze Djigma**, Chair of The H.R.H. Princess Abze Djigma Foundation and Co-Chair of UNFCCC Paris Committee on Capacity Building; Co-Coordinator UNFCCC Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways on behalf of the LDCs **<u>International Organization</u>** **Ms. Maria Holtsberg,** Deputy Regional Representative, UN Women

	that ensures the benefits of the transition are felt by all, within and between countries. Understand how agrifood systems transformation can accelerate the just energy transition. How governments, financial institutions, agencies and development partners, civil society, and the private sector can support an energy transition that is socially inclusive, economically equitable and accessible to countries at different stages of development. **Framing Question:** How can the energy transition in agrifood systems create opportunities for all people and all countries, while ensuring that the most vulnerable are not left behind? How can agrifood systems transformation accelerate the just energy transition? **Closing Question**: If we meet again in 2035, what would convince you that the energy transition in agrifood systems has been truly just, not only for farmers and rural communities, but also for countries with very different levels of development and capacity?	**Smallholders - Asian Farmers Association** **Ms. Megha Desai,** Agriculture Director, Self Employed Women' Association (SEWA), Asian Farmers Association member **CSO** **Mr. Zagy Berian,** Founder, Society for Renewable Energy, Indonesia
16:05 -16:10	**Conclusion and Way Forward**	**Mr. Hongpeng Liu,** Director, Energy Division, United Nations ESCAP