



The Commonwealth

CONCEPT NOTE: COMMONWEALTH CONNECTIVITY AGENDA CLUSTER WEEK

4th MEETING OF THE SUPPLY SIDE CONNECTIVITY CLUSTER

THEME: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR FOOD SECURITY

2nd December 2020 (11.00-12.40)-UK Time

1.0 Background

In April 2018, Commonwealth Leaders adopted the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) with a view to boosting trade and investment links across the Commonwealth and raising intra-Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion by 2030. The Connectivity Agenda is structured around five clusters: Physical Connectivity, Digital Connectivity, Regulatory Connectivity, Supply Side Connectivity and Business-to-Business Connectivity. A commitment to mainstreaming inclusive and sustainable trade cuts across each of these clusters.

Following this, separate meetings of the various clusters were conducted in 2019¹, followed by the 1st CCA cluster week meeting in August 2019 and the 2nd CCA week was held from 17-19 February, 2020. The CCA cluster weeks focused discussions on crosscutting issues emanating from each of the clusters and enabled members to identify possible synergies across the clusters. During the CCA cluster week, individual cluster meetings also took place.

In relation to the Supply Side cluster (SSC), the initial focus of the meeting has been on sectoral issues in relation to boosting the productivity of selected agricultural products which included Coconuts, Palm Oil and Soya. However, as discussions in the SSC progressed, members had agreed to focus discussions on the use of technology to boost the Agriculture and Fisheries sector productivity and exports including boosting MSMEs, GVCs and broader trade. The shift

¹ The 1st Digital and Physical Connectivity cluster meeting was held in Durban, South Africa in March, 2019. The 1st Supply Side Connectivity cluster was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu in April, 2019 and the 1st Regulatory Connectivity cluster meeting was held in London, United Kingdom in July, 2019.

in focus of the members of the cluster has been based on discussions and evidence noting that most of the Commonwealth countries in particular the developing countries including small states and India are exporters of raw materials which make up a substantial proportion of their goods exports. These countries include St. Lucia (59%), Botswana (33%), Trinidad and Tobago (25%), India (21%), Mozambique (17%), Samoa (17%), Tonga (16%), Namibia (16%) and Bahamas (15%).² As such in order to further enhance the value-addition, productivity, value chain integration, market diversification and exports of agricultural products, the use of technology was seen as the impetus for agriculture. Similarly, for the fisheries sector, members of the cluster also noted based on discussions and also evidence³ most of the Commonwealth member countries are owners of expansive exclusive economic zones, whilst some are major producers of fish and fish products. Small States such as Kiribati, PNG, Fiji, Seychelles, Mauritius and Solomon Islands are among the largest owners of exclusive economic zones, thus providing the opportunity for members to also discuss on boosting sustainable use of fisheries resources for exports. Considering these milieu, members at the 2nd Supply Side Connectivity Cluster held on 29th August 2019, among other things, *agreed that the discussions on SMART Agriculture and SMART Fisheries, with evidence based research from the Secretariat, should be the focus of the cluster and this be further explored in the next cluster meeting.* The 3rd Supply Side Cluster meeting was held at the margins of the 2nd CCA cluster week, the Secretariat in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had conducted a workshop for the cluster members to discuss SMART Agriculture with the aim for members to further identify capacity building needs at national level.

2.0 Progress on the SSCC

The SSCC cluster is led by Vanuatu. The objective of the SSCC (as per the CCA Action plan) is to encourage participation of all members into Global Value Chains. The initial initiatives for the SSCC includes the (i) facilitation and exchange of views and experiences on the agriculture and fisheries sector with particular focus on smart agriculture and smart fisheries; (ii) Exploring how countries can enhance the role of MSMEs through specific policies (iii) Exploring how Commonwealth Secretariat can promote inclusive and sustainable growth and (iv) seeking technical assistance to support members agriculture and fisheries exports. On the

² Referenced from Paper on “Smart Agriculture and Smart Fisheries for the Commonwealth” dated August 2019 for the 2nd Supply Side Connectivity Cluster.

³ Referenced from Paper on “Smart Agriculture and Smart Fisheries for the Commonwealth” dated August 2019 for the 2nd Supply Side Connectivity Cluster.

basis of the Action plan, members of the SSCC had agreed to the Terms of Reference for the working group outlining more detailed output for the group to achieve in the long term.

To date, the cluster has made significant progress and also has been able to better mainstream issues and focus towards boosting Agriculture and Fisheries sector through the use of technology i.e. SMART agriculture and SMART fisheries. The application of technology in both the sectors would assist businesses including MSMEs, women entrepreneurs (ensuring inclusivity) and integration into global value chains. In this regard members have shared their country experiences by way of case studies and presentations in meetings. The Secretariat had also worked with members in issuing a survey on SMART Agriculture and SMART Fisheries which has accentuated the importance of the sector to members' economies. However, in order to progress further, the survey has identified a number of where capacity constraints would need to be addressed for a well -functioning digital agriculture and digital fisheries ecosystems. These include capacity building assistance including technology transfers, the need for sound regulatory policies for digital ecosystems, peer-to-peer learning, digital and data policies, digital literacy and quality infrastructure support. Furthermore, members have also provided project proposals identifying capacity building in country assistance for implementation to boost its supply side capacity in relation to Agriculture and Fisheries. The SSCC has also had participation and input from the private sector in all the three meetings and proposals from the private sector are also encouraged.

3.0 COVID-19 and Leveraging Technology for Food Security

The pandemic COVID-19 has resulted in global economic catastrophe that without doubt has also affected the Commonwealth members at varied levels. For developing Commonwealth including the small states and the least developed economies, the lockdown measures and closure of borders has drastically affected their small economies with Tourism, Travel and Retail being impacted most. Prior to the pandemic, the Commonwealth small states have been grappling with other socio-economic and environmental issues. The pandemic gravely adds to the ongoing challenges for the small states of the Commonwealth. Given the global economic slowdown and countries moving into recession, it is further ascertained that the priorities of most of the Commonwealth members are changed for the recovery phase of the economy towards ensuring that effective policy measures are implemented. This has been evident from the statements of Commonwealth Heads Meeting in relation to COVID-19 in June, 2020.

There are three major trends from COVID-19 which are deeper digitization, higher debt and a backward shift from globalisation towards protectionist measures. For small economies, one of the profound lessons is that economic and supply chain resilience and digitization are critical enablers for economic growth. The developed Commonwealth members, (countries with higher digital adoption index), despite the initial slowdown, in the post lockdown period are able to manage better as opposed to the small states and the LDCs. As such digitization, with economic and supply chain resilience are critical for small states including LDCs of the Commonwealth to recover. Most of the businesses in the developing Commonwealth comprise of MSMEs with India comprising 51% of MSMEs, Nigeria 34% and the rest 15% of MSMEs are in the rest of the Commonwealth. Numerically, the number of MSMEs in the rest of the Commonwealth are also significant with Pakistan having (29,303,52), United Kingdom (15,182,11), Malawi (674,073), South Africa (5,541,99), Malaysia (496,458), Australia (483,222), New Zealand (419,472), Bangladesh (235,164), Rwanda (114,329), Mauritius (923,88), Cyprus (42,163), Mozambique (28,870), Uganda (18,773), Kenya (178,91), Sri Lanka (15,974), Cameroon (9,917), Jamaica (6,665) and Botswana (5,995)⁴.

In hindsight, the work of the SSCC is therefore paramount for Commonwealth economies, in particular in post COVID-19 recovery period. The Agriculture and the Fisheries sector are critical for the economic development of developing Commonwealth countries and also ensuring food security and sustainability. The sectoral focus on SMART Agriculture and SMART Fisheries is evermore paramount for developing Commonwealth members, particularly small states. The use of efficient methods of farming, production, processing, linking to businesses domestically and in the global supply chain as well as obtaining real time market information with e-financing platforms for the sector are important. Given that most of the agriculture and fisheries sectors in small vulnerable economies are categorised as SMEs and MSMEs and employing women and youth, the intensification of the work of the cluster will aid countries in post COVID-19 recovery period. The 3rd SSCC meeting in February had requested member countries to identify their capacity needs for implementation for SMART Agriculture and SMART Fisheries. Such an exercise has been timely, in the wake of COVID-19 to assist member countries. Different members have identified various capacity needs and some of the proposals are yet to be submitted by members and climate change issues as well.

⁴ Refer to Background Note on 1st Regulatory Connectivity Cluster Meeting dated May 2019.

4.0 Focus of the 4th Supply Side Connectivity Cluster meeting

The 4th SSCC will focus discussions on leveraging technology for food security in the Commonwealth. The basis for discussions will complement the ongoing work of the cluster and assist countries in the economic recovery post COVID-19. The aim of the cluster is to discuss ways in which Commonwealth members can integrate technology to boost agricultural production, create resilient supply chains and also explore new farming techniques such as urban farming to address food security issues. Such level of sectoral discussions are important to ensure food security and sustainable and inclusive development Commonwealth members in view of COVID-19. The session will also include country experiences and lessons learnt which will provide insights and future policy imperatives for the clusters work.

The 4th SSCC meeting will discuss the following:

Session 1 (Agenda Item I): Update from the Cluster Lead

The Chair of the SSCC will be Papua New Guinea. This session will provide an update to members on the work of the cluster thus far and also outline the objectives of the meeting.

Session II (Agenda Item II): Technology as an enabler to leveraging the agriculture sector in post COVID-19 recovery.

This session will include a presentation from the Secretariat on how digital technology can leverage the agriculture sector and improve agro value chains post-covid recovery. The presentation will also discuss the findings from the “Commonwealth Survey for Economic Recovery” in relation to the Agriculture Sector.

Session III: (Agenda Item III): Country Experiences on the Challenges/Opportunities of Technology use in Agriculture sector during pandemic.

This session will include country experiences on the use of technology in agriculture and the challenges and opportunities for Commonwealth members.

Session IV: (Agenda Item IV): Agriculture for Sustainable Development

This session will include presentation on the concept of Urban Farming for Food Security and Sustainable Development and its application by countries. The latter part of the session will briefly discuss the importance of reducing food waste/loss for supply chain resilience.

Session V: (Agenda Item V): Way Forward

This session will discuss on the way forward for the cluster in preparation for CHOGM next year.



The Commonwealth

4th Meeting of the Supply Side Connectivity Cluster

Sub-Theme IV: Leveraging Technology for Food Security
Virtual Meeting: Platform-Blue Jeans

Wednesday 2nd December 2020

AGENDA

Time (UK)	Item
AGENDA ITEM I: OPENING SESSION	
11.00 – 11.10	Welcome Remarks and Update by the Cluster Lead
AGENDA ITEM II: AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER TO LEVERAGING AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN POST COVID-19 RECOVERY	
11.10-11.15	<u>Chair:</u> Ms.Barbara Agirigolo Age, Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT)- Papua New Guinea. <i>This session will include a presentation from the Commonwealth Secretariat on how digital technology can leverage the agriculture sector and improve agro value chains post-covid recovery.</i>
AGENDA ITEM III: COUNTRY EXPERIENCES ON THE CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES OF TECHNOLOGY USE IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR DURING PANDEMIC	
11.20- 11.50	<u>Chair:</u> Ms.Barbara Agirigolo Age, Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT)- Papua New Guinea. <i>This session will include country presentations on the challengers/opportunities of technology use in agriculture sector during pandemic</i> <i>Country 1:</i> Fiji-Mr. Kenneth Katafono, Founder of TraSeable Solutions <i>Country 2:</i> TBC
AGENDA ITEM IV: AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	
12.00-12.20	<u>Chair:</u> Ms.Barbara Agirigolo Age, Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT)- Papua New Guinea.

	<p><i>This session the representative from the Institute of Urban Farming and Sustainable Development will present on Urban Farming and Food Security using various case studies and representative from UNECE informing about reducing Food Waste/Loss initiative and how member countries can join the initiative.</i></p> <p><i>Organization 1: Dr. Anirudh Garg Director, Nano Veda Solutions, Institute of Urban Farming and Sustainable Development.</i></p> <p><i>Organization 2: Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Head, Agricultural Quality Standards Unit Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.</i></p>
12.20-12.30	Question and Answers
AGENDA ITEM V: WAY FORWARD	
12.20-12.40	<p><u>Chair</u>: Ms.Barbara Agirigolo Age, Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT)- Papua New Guinea.</p> <p><i>Identification of group deliverable to June 2021.</i></p>
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