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CROSS-BORDER TRADE FACILITATION IN TWIN-BORDER-PROVINCES ALONG EWEC STUDY REPORT

Presenting the results of the

In-depth Study on Cross-border Trade Facilitation of Agricultural Products / Inputs and Cross-border Business Cooperation in Border Areas of Three Pairs of Twin Provinces of Savannakhet and Quang Tri, Khammouane and Nakhon Phanom, Kayin and Tak provinces and an Extension to the Border Post of Savannakhet and Mukdahan

Elaborated within the project Regional and Local Economic Development along the East-West-Corridor of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region



Imprint:

Publisher:

Mekong Institute

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Citation to be used:

Wehinger T., H. Junger-Sharma, C. Nguyen Hung, T. Manolom, et.al. 2018: Cross-Border Trade Facilitation of Agriculture Commodities in Twin-Border Provinces along the East West Economic Corridor (EWEC) in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. Mekong Institute (publisher), Khon Kaen.

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Acknowledgement

The study would not be made possible without the support of the Swiss Government through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC.

The implementation of the in-depth study and the preparation of this publication was managed by Mekong Institute, Regional and Local Economic Development on the East West Economic Corridor (RLED-EWEC) Project. Mr Nguyen Hung Cuong – RLED-EWEC Project Director provided overall guidance and inputs for the publication and took part in 2 of the three missions implemented during the study.

The main authors of the study Ms Heike Junger-Sharma and Mr Thomas Wehinger from NACCON GmbH, Germany had the overall responsibility for the implementation of the field studies, the design and moderation of the stakeholder workshops and the drafting of the report.

Dr. Thantavanh Manolom supported the study team during all missions and the implementation of stakeholder workshops. She contributed with her extensive knowledge of the region, background studies and information on the specifics of trade and customs procedures in Lao PDR.

The staff members of MI supported the consultants with background information and literature, the review of documents, translation and interpretation, selection of interview partners, the implementation of the interviews and the stakeholder workshops.

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The study team expresses its highest respect to the contribution and commitment of the interview partners and the participants of the stakeholder workshops. Special thanks go to the public authorities and chairmen of the stakeholder workshops and their contribution to the successful drafting of the future cooperation between the twin-border provinces along EWEC and the Mekong Institute.

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CBT	Cross Border Trade
CCA	Common Control Area
DIC	Department of Industry and Commerce
EWEC	East West Economic Corridor
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-Region
km	Kilometre
km² or sq.km	Square Kilometre
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MI	Mekong Institute
N.A.	Not Available
nes	not elsewhere specified
NTM	Non-Tariff Measure
RLED	Regional and Local Economic Development
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SSI	Single Stop Inspection
SWI	Single Window Inspection
Tab	Table
US\$ or USD	United States Dollar
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1 Executive summary

This report presents the results of the in-depth study to foster cross-border agricultural trade through measures in twin provinces along the East West Economic Corridor (EWEC) of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) between Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam. In order to achieve the abovementioned overall goal, this report adopted the specific objective ‘to improve the efficiency of the implementation of existing Non-Tariff Measures on the local level along the selected border crossings with regards to agricultural commodities’.

In chapter 2 this report first provides the reader with background information on the most relevant past efforts of the RLED-EWEC project of the Mekong Institute, a project financed by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation in its second phase. The Chapter 3 describes the study objective, methodology and timeline of the study. Starting with a desk review in December 2017, the development of semi-structured questionnaires for interviews with main stakeholders in the field, first shortlisted agricultural commodities and a list of leading questions as guidance during empirical data collection, the fieldwork started in January 2018. Main stakeholders on agricultural trade in the twin-provinces of the border crossings of Lao Bao (Vietnam) - Dansavan (Lao PDR), Savannakhet (Lao PDR) – Mukdahan (Thailand), Khammouane (Lao PDR) - Nakhon Phanom (Thailand) and Myawaddy (Myanmar) - Mae Sot (Thailand) were accordingly interviewed up to February 2018. During three stakeholder-workshops, as well as a debriefing workshop at MI concrete priority-lists and action plans were further detailed out for effective follow-up by RLED-EWEC up to end of the project duration in 2019.

The Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the contents of the empirical data research, literature reviews and workshop deliberations. In chapter 4, the readers will get familiar with the countries along the EWEC in the GMS and the twin provinces of the respective border crossing through the latest publications and statistics. Chapter 5 lists out the challenges to cross-border trade in respect to the main NTMs in place: Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (NTM-A), technical barriers to trade (NTM-B), non-automatic licensing, quotas, prohibitions and quantity control measures (NTM-E), price control measures (NTM-F), and rules of origin (NTM-O). Further to these detailed deliberations in respect to agricultural trade, study findings and recommendations, the topics of customs procedures like Single Window Inspection, Single Stop Inspection (SSI/SWI) and Common Control Area (CCA) with fees and charges at border crossings, knowledge and capacity management in transboundary programs, transport infrastructure and transport regulations along EWEC follow.

The Chapter 6 finally brings out the suggested action plans and considerations of main stakeholders in respect to its relevance and additional information. Priority measures for the RLED-EWEC incorporate the following:

1. Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC;
2. Individual country-specific manuals on contract farming;
3. Bilateral manuals on cross border business investment;

4. Optimised implementation of Phase IV – SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao-Dansavan;
5. Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points;
6. Quality standards for agricultural products;
7. Human resources development strategy for border control;
8. Digital information exchange improvement along EWEC;
9. Special Economic Zones cross border cooperation.

Each action plan features 10 parameters in order to tailor the interventions for each twin province, as the challenges, needs and priorities are locally specific. Chapter 7 presents the result of a further analysis of the Action Plans according to project relevant parameters, conducted during a debriefing workshop at the Mekong Institute in Khon Kaen (Thailand).

With the above chapters and findings, the purpose of bringing out the most effective cross-border trade facilitation measure under the RLED-EWEC program for improvement of agricultural trade along the EWEC is described in this last chapter.

The literature list is attached to the report, and the annexures to the report incorporate the questionnaires and further details to the findings.

Recommendation 1: Utilise synergies for all border-crossings by implementing action plan 1

Action plan 1 on standards for transparency and fees and procedures along EWEC is a common ground for all border-crossings. Therefore, MI decided to focus on this action plan and allocate the available resources most efficient, by designing the action plan in the way, that most components of the action plan are similar for all four border crossings. At the same time synergies can be developed, by the utilisation of best practice examples.

Recommendation 2: Combining action 4 with 7 will raise efficiency

Action plan 4 on the optimal implementation of SSI/SWI at the Lao Bao / Dansavan border crossing is most relevant for all border-crossings, since it is the political will, that SSI should be implemented in order to reduce time and costs of trade in the GMS member states. This action plan is rated very high with a total of 99 points. Under the condition that action plan 4 is implemented, the efficiency can be increased by combining this action plans with components of action plan 7, which are strongly linked to the implementation of SSI. The elaboration of a human resource strategy for the border control should consider the implementation of SSI as well.

Recommendation 3: Targeting agriculture related topics

Within the other components of the RLED-EWEC project, MI has the possibility to include minor components of action plan 2. The implementation of a new action plan on contract farming with a focus on cross border business investments and business cooperation seems not realistic considering the limited time and resources available for rest of the project duration.

Recommendation 4: Carefully consider implementation of action plan 5

The reduction and optimisation of check points is a highly sensitive issue, where MI does not necessarily have a mandate to discuss or advise the national decision-making authorities. Therefore, the consultants recommend being reluctant to take up an action plan, where MI does not have the capacity nor the decision-making power to change anything. Resources might be wasted, and the impact is very limited with respect to agricultural trade and income of the target groups.

Final recommendation:

Whichever final cross border trade measure will be taken up by MI it is highly recommended to follow an intensive stakeholder analysis and a detailed revision of the action plan with the most important stakeholder for each of the twin border provinces. The cooperation of the twin provinces with the implementation of action plans and the exchange of experience, coordination of activities, should be a main objective of the activities. MI would be in first place facilitator and coach of this process.

2 Background of cross-border trade facilitation (CBTF) within the project RLED-EWEC

From March 2013 to June 2017 the Mekong Institute (MI) implemented the pilot phase of the project named: “Capacity Development for a More Inclusive and Equitable Growth in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)”, also referred as Regional and Local Economic Development – East West Economic Corridor (RLED-EWEC) Project.

The project was commissioned and financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).

To reach the main goal of the project four outcomes were defined.

Outcome 1 - Smallholder farmers become more competitive as producers of coffee, rice, and maize.

Outcome 2 - Improved regional and local competitiveness of the private enterprises active in cross-border of coffee, rice and maize value chains.

Outcome 3 - Improved enabling environment for LED and trade in and between target districts and provinces.

Outcome 4 - MI becomes a more effective regional capacity development organization serving and owned by GMS countries.

The facilitation of cross border trade was part of the activities under outcome 3. Until May 2017 the project accomplished the following activities:

- (i) Three studies on cross-border trade of agricultural products in the project locations and one study on the EWEC cross-border trade EWEC, 2016;
- (ii) Two policies dialogues between Quang Tri and Savannakhet provinces, October 2016 (MI, 2016d);
- (iii) Two provincial consultations between Khammouane, Lao PDR and Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, and between Kayin State, Myanmar and Tak province, Thailand, December 2016 (MI, 2016a and MI, 2016b);
- (iv) Four national consultations held in the four countries, February - March 2017 (MI 2017b);
- (v) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation agreement on cross-border trade (CBT) facilitation between Savannakhet province and Quang Tri province, March 2017; and
- (vi) Regional consultations with Ministries of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, private sector of the four countries (Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), May 2017.

The annual report 2016/2017 of the RLED-EWEC project outlines the following results for the CBTF activities.

Regarding the CBT facilitation, 142 government officials (over the target of 75 officials) were capacitated and improved their knowledge on the CBT facilitation, particularly on agricultural product trade. With the project support, three policy

changes were made by local governments and they are now operational. Specifically, Quang Tri province made changes to its policies by adjusting the infrastructure use fees at Lao Bao border post (reduction of the fee by 30% to 60% of all categories) and officially announcing the removal of regular and irregular check points along the road from border post. Savannakhet province had also announced a same decision on removal of check points as a result from the two provinces joint commitment implementation under their signed MoU on CBT facilitation. No change in the policy on CBT facilitation by Khammouane-Nakhon Phanom and Kayin-Tak was made. Project progress on the CBT in these two project sites was left behind.

Source: Mekong Institute, 2017: Annual Report 2016/2017 on the implementation of RLED-EWEC

The consultations and workshop on CBT had little impact on the ground and remained behind the expectations. On the other side one must consider the short period of time between the capacity building measures starting in 2016 and the reporting period until June 2017 (MI, 2015 and MI, 2016a and MI, 2017a and Reichmuth et.al. 2016).

Still, the information collected and documented in the various studies and workshop documents show a deep insight and draw a realistic picture of the status quo of CBT in the GMS with many of the minor or major obstacles and shortcomings, which need to be addressed in the future, when the member countries of the GMS implement their bilateral, regional and international trade agreements.

3 Objective, methodology, timeline of the study

This document presents the results of the in-depth study on cross border agricultural trade with a specific focus on concrete recommendations for the implementation of activities and measures on CBTF within the framework of the RLED-EWEC project.

3.1 Objective and expected outcome of the study

The Overall objective of the study is (i) an in-depth analysis on cross-border trade facilitation of agricultural products/inputs at both sides of the border areas of three pairs of twin provinces of Kayin (Myanmar) and Tak (Thailand), Khammouane (Lao PDR) and Nakhon Phanom (Thailand), Savannakhet (Lao PDR) and Quang Tri (Vietnam) provinces and an extension to the border post of Savannakhet (Lao PDR) and Mukdahan (Thailand) twin border provinces (at the border and behind the border), and (ii) at a lesser scope but specific, the policies and regulations influencing the movement of agricultural products. The study also covers research on existing practices of cross-border business cooperation in the border areas at all the twin border provinces.

The **specific objective** is ,to improve the efficiency of the implementation of existing non-tariff measures (NTMs) and the implementation of policy and regulations in practice on the local level along the selected border crossings with regard to agricultural commodities', and therefore:

1. Identify different types of NTMs applied by local authorities at both sides (e.g. policies and regulations and their implementation in practices, check points, etc.), and official and unofficial fees/charges;
2. Identify issues faced by import and export small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and transport service providers at the crossing points and behind the border when local governments apply NTMs;
3. Analyse the negative impacts of those NTMs on SMEs and farmers;
4. Examine the existing cross-border business cooperation at the border areas for identification of issues, challenges, good practices.
5. Develop concrete recommendations toward supportive policies and regulations to improve the situation with consideration of possible result achievements under the project resources, implementing approach, and time availability.

Note:

During the inception phase of the in-depth study, after studying the background papers, workshop documents and available online data, the study team concluded, that the focus of the study should lie on the possible intervention of MI within the framework of the RLED-EWEC project for CBTF on the sub-national level in the twin-border provinces. It was agreed upon, that national, regional or international agreements, commitments and regulations, which influence CBT along EWEC cannot be considered for intervention measures within the project. The study therefore should identify measures and interventions, which can be supported by MI within 1,5 years of the project lifetime.

3.2 Timeline of the study

The period for the elaboration of the in-depth study originally was planned for two months. For good reasons such as stakeholder availability and workflow the period was extended to three and half months, starting end of December 2017.

Month	Activities
Dec. 2017	Desktop research, first shortlisting of agricultural products, methodology development, identification of NTMs
Jan. 2018	Desktop research continued, data collection/qualitative interviews at the borders at Thailand/Lao PDR and Viet Nam/Lao PDR
Feb. 2018	Data collection, qualitative interviews and stakeholder workshop at Thailand /Myanmar border (04.03.2018)
March 2018	Two stakeholder workshops for three twin-border provinces of Vietnam/Lao PDR and Lao PDR/Thailand borders Debriefing workshop with MI staff in Khon Kaen Reporting

3.2.1 Data collection and desktop research

(i) Desk study: After finalisation of the consulting-group leading the in-depth study for the RLED-EWEC Project, the first step was a desk-study to familiarise with the project, its objectives, the CBT issues in the region, and to come out with a suggestive list of most important agricultural commodities per border. To assure rapid short-term and mid-term development outcomes by RLED-EWEC in the field of agricultural cross-border trade at the four borders of Dansavan/Lao Bao (Lao PDR/Vietnam), Khammouane/Nakhon Phanom (Lao PDR/Thailand), Savannakhet/Mukdahan (Lao PDR/Thailand), and Mae Sod/Myawaddy (Thailand/Myanmar), the following parameters were taken as basis for suggested agricultural commodity selection per border¹:

- Formal trade value (monetary value) and volume
- Potential increase of formal trade value (monetary value) and volume
- Frequency and regularity (number of customs clearances)
- Potential for reduction of NTMs on the local level (responsibility for the reduction of NTMs is on the local level)
- Perspective for increase of trade value and volume through measures of MI to reduce NTMs: Short-term (< 1,5 year) and mid-term (1-5 years).

Along the above parameters, a first list of agricultural commodities was drafted in cooperation with the MI study team and used as an entry point and for evaluation during the in-depth analysis.

¹ Note: Agricultural products for the in-depth study exclude any meat-products due to the complexity of sanitary measures imposed on these products.

(ii): Selection of interviewees and drafting a questionnaire: A list of interview partners per border were shortlisted. Interview partners included farmer groups (only at the Myanmar/Thailand border), shipping and logistic companies and wholesale vendors; Furthermore, also technical staff of public institutions e.g. customs office, migration office, public health department, plant quarantine, and selected provincial departments of seven provincial towns. The final list of interviewees is attached in the annex of this report.

The total number of interview partners is 73 in 6 provinces:

- 1) 7 in Khammouane (2 public, 5 private)
- 2) 14 in Savannakhet (7 public, 7 private)
- 3) 8 in Mukdahan (1 public, 7 private)
- 4) 13 in Nakhon Phanom (7 public, 6 private)
- 5) 7 in Tak Province (5 public, 2 private)
- 6) 8 in Kayin State (6 public, 2 private)
- 7) 10 in Quang Tri (7 public, 3 private)
- 8) 6 in Dansavan (4 public, 2 private)

A summary of the guiding questions used for the semi-structured interviews is outlined in the box on the right. These guiding questions were adapted to the specific knowledge and experience of the interview partner. When time was sufficient the interview partners filled out a part of a standard questionnaire, with a focus on most needed interventions and potential activities of MI to support and facilitate cross border trade.

Leading questions during interviews:

- What are important agricultural product exports and imports at your border?
- Which agricultural commodity has good opportunity to increase in future and why?
- What are restrictions and non-tariff measures you are aware of and which are hindering the increase in official agricultural trade volume/value?
- Who are the various stakeholders involved in agricultural trade in your country/in your neighbouring country? With whom do you have direct and regular contact on CBT?
- What are the process steps for agricultural exports at your border? Time, licences, documents etc. required?
- What vision do you have for a better agricultural trade/less hindrance on agricultural trade for your border?
- What suggestions do you have to increase official agricultural trade volume/value at your border?

(iii) Finalization of interview instruments: A workshop in MI concluded the finalization of interview-instruments in the beginning of January. Final translations into Vietnamese, Thai, Burmese and Lao were organised accordingly. A shortlist of questions was distributed in the various languages (Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Burmese) to the interviewees.

(iv) Field-data collection: The lead consultant with the local interdisciplinary consultant team collected necessary data from SMEs, government offices, border posts and other relevant stakeholders at and around the surrounding areas of the border posts of Myawaddy (MM)/Mae Sot (TH), Mukdahan (TH)/Savannakhet (LA), Nakhon Phanom (TH)/Khammouane (LA) and Dansavan (LA)/Lao Bao (VN). The data collection instruments (interviews and focus group discussion) were conducted as participatory knowledge exchange information tools, which were, wherever feasible, substantiated through trade-data collection. Flexibility in logistical matters was inherent to the data collection as short-notice interviews had to be arranged by MI colleagues in the field.

3.2.2 Data analysis for action plan development and preparation of stakeholder workshops

The findings of the interviews were summarized regarding relevant content and clustered into specific topics. Based on this content analysis a problem analysis and description of the status quo of CBT at the twin-border provinces was drafted.

The content analysis specified and clustered topics most relevant for CBT with regards to:

- Information on and relevance for agriculture trade
- Problems and NTMs for cross-border trade of agricultural commodities
- Recommendations and priority measures of the interviewees to increase CBT of agricultural commodities (scaling from questionnaires and quality data collection)

A key element of the content analyses was the priority list by the interviewees on how to increase and support cross-border-trade. Their perception of the most relevant activities, which would facilitate cross-border trade are considered as the basic ideas for the future cooperation of the Mekong Institute with stakeholders. Based on the gaps and findings based on interviewees' responses, workshop findings and literature research - the consultant team suggested detailed action plans.

The action plans specified and outlined in specific:

- What: Objective, activities, main steps and measures
- Who: Participating active stakeholders and partners/lead partner
- When: Timeline within defined frame (<1,5 year, 1,5 - 5 years, 5-10 years)

Considering the duration of the RLED-EWEC project, which ends in 2019, the potential action plans had to be possibly implemented during this period. Only action plans, which have a realistic implementation plan within 1,5 years where considered relevant for an intervention by Mekong Institute. Actions plans, which would not fit in this time frame or may not be feasible for other reasons, were not considered and discussed during the workshop e.g. improvement of road infrastructure, implementation of bilateral or regional trade agreements, agricultural policy amendments. The action plans were then considered as given possible frameworks in which MI proposes to work in future.

3.2.3 Stakeholder workshops

The stakeholder workshops were considered an additional tool for the assessment and analysis of cross-border trade along EWEC, by discussing, commenting and prioritising possible action plans. Due to organisational and logistic restrictions action plans as such were not available for the first workshop in Myawaddy of the twin provinces Kayin (MM)/ Tak (TH). In this workshop the participants discussed relevant activities for CBTF on a more general level without going into details of actions plans provided to the participants in the other two workshops in March. Three stakeholder workshops were implemented:

- Myawaddy (Myanmar) - Mae Sot (Thailand) on February 3rd 2018 in Mae Sot
- Lao Bao (Vietnam) - Dansavan (Lao PDR) on March 13th 2018 in Dong Ha
- Khammouane (Lao PDR) - Nakhon Phanom (Thailand) and Savannakhet (Lao PDR) – Mukdahan (Thailand) and on March 15th 2018 in Khammouane

The core elements of the workshop were:

- (i) Presentation and validation of findings on CBTF and cross border business cooperation for agricultural products;
- (ii) Discuss, finalise and approve specific action plans / measures to support CBT of agricultural products and business cooperation along EWEC and in specific in the cross-border regions;
- (iii) Identification of priority actions to enhance CBT along EWEC with the support of MI.

A first prioritisation of most important action plans was followed detailed country/provincial working groups on the selected priority measures. After this “internal” (in-country) discussion, each group presented their results to the audience and opened the floor for a short discussion and feedback to the other twin-province presentation. Most of the action plans were therefore discussed in two working groups – one from each side of the border (twin-province) and then compared during the presentation. The expected outcome of the workshop was a list of at least three specific activities and interventions, which MI was asked to support during RLED-EWEC project implementation within the following 1.5 years.

3.2.4 Final selection and detailing out of priority action plans with the MI team

During a one-day workshop with the study team of Mekong Institute, the consultant and additional staff members from MI, the results of the twin-province workshops were discussed. The action plans were prioritized with regards to the outcome of the interventions, considering standard evaluation criteria, such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The consultant introduced the MI staff to a specific stakeholder analysis tool², which would be applied by the MI staff members, after the final decision on the action plans to be supported by RLED-EWEC.

3.2.5 Limitations and shortcomings of the methodology

When drafting the methodology of the study, the research team was very much focused to elaborate a standardised and well-structured questionnaire, which would be used during the interviews of the stakeholder. Practice showed, that this approach was not feasible due to the lack of time and the questionnaire was used in combination with guiding questions instead, focusing on the task and responsibility of the interview partners. Consecutive translation and interpretation of

² The consultant used elements of the Theory of Planned Behaviour of Ayzen (1991) combined with Stakeholder Analysis of Mindtools (2018), Bishoff et.al. (1996) and referring to GIZ (2015) Cooperation Management for Practitioners. Additional literature was recommended such as Beckhard and Pritchard (1996), Skinner (2017) and Wehinger T., Freyer B. und V. Hoffmann (2002a).

limited available time additionally, as well as partly difficult logistics during the missions in Lao PDR and Thailand.

4 Cross-border trade along EWEC

This chapter summarises relevant background information for those who are not familiar with the region and the subject of agricultural production and trade in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). The more advanced and informed readers may also find this chapter useful as it presents the most recent publications and statistics. The focus of the study is on the countries, which are located along the East-West Corridor (EWEC) in the GMS, in respective Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam.

4.1 Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Fig. 1: Map of the GMS with the EWEC



The GMS is a geographical area in South-East Asia, which covers an area of 2,6 million square kilometres with a population of approximately 330 million. It includes Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China (CH), Cambodia (CM), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LA), Myanmar (MM), Thailand (TH), and Vietnam (VN).

The major road in the transportation network of this region includes the Southern Economic Corridor, the North-South Economic Corridor and the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC). Particularly, the EWEC (highlighted turquoise) connects in the East the seaports in Vietnam with the Myanmar in the West, via Lao PDR and Thailand. Certainly, the improvement of the road infrastructure of the GMS is a major concern of the local stakeholders (especially the Thai and Vietnamese trading and logistic companies) for the economic development and for the trade facilitation in the region. However, due to the scope and the objective of this study the transport infrastructure is not subject of the study.

Source: GMS Information Portal (GMS)³

³ GMS Information Portal, 2012: Greater Mekong Subregion. Atlas of the Environment (2nd Edition). Downloaded from <http://portal.gms-eoc.org> on 2018-03-23.

The strategic development of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) with the GMS countries of Cambodia, PRC (specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, began in the early nineties with a programme of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The UN still recognises Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar as Least Developed Countries (LDC).

ADB considers Trade Facilitation in the GMS as a key for the economic development of the region (ADB 2017a). Its programme supports the development of transport infrastructure, public reform and human resource development to enhance cross border trade on different regional, national and sub-national level. Currently, wide-range measures to reduce trade barriers are ongoing (ADB, 2015a).

The six countries (including two provinces of China) of the GMS fully ratified the main agreement of the Cross Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) in the years 1999 (LA, TH, VN), 2001 (CM), 2002 (CN) and 2003 (MM). Annexes and Protocols to the CBTA are under process of being ratified by all member countries.

The CBTA and its related Cross Border Trade Facilitation programme of the GMS are linked to other regional and global trade agreements and treaties.

The GMS Program of ADB outlines the priorities for the period 2012-2020 as:

- Developing the major GMS corridors as economic corridors;
- Strengthening transport linkages, particularly roads and railways;
- Developing an integrated approach to deliver sustainable, secure, and competitive energy;
- Improving telecommunication linkages and information and communication technology (ICT) applications among the GMS countries;
- Developing and promoting tourism in the Mekong region as a single destination;
- Promoting competitive, climate-friendly, and sustainable agriculture;
- Enhancing environmental performance in the GMS; and
- Supporting human resources development initiatives that facilitate the process of GMS integration while addressing any negative consequences of greater integration.

Fig. 2: Map of the ASEAN members



In addition, except for the two provinces of China, all countries of the GMS are at the same time members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Its total population accounts for approximately 600 million. Together with Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore. These 10 countries have formed the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). Meanwhile the ASEAN member countries have signed several free trade agreements with China, India, Korea and Japan. Negotiations on other free trade agreements

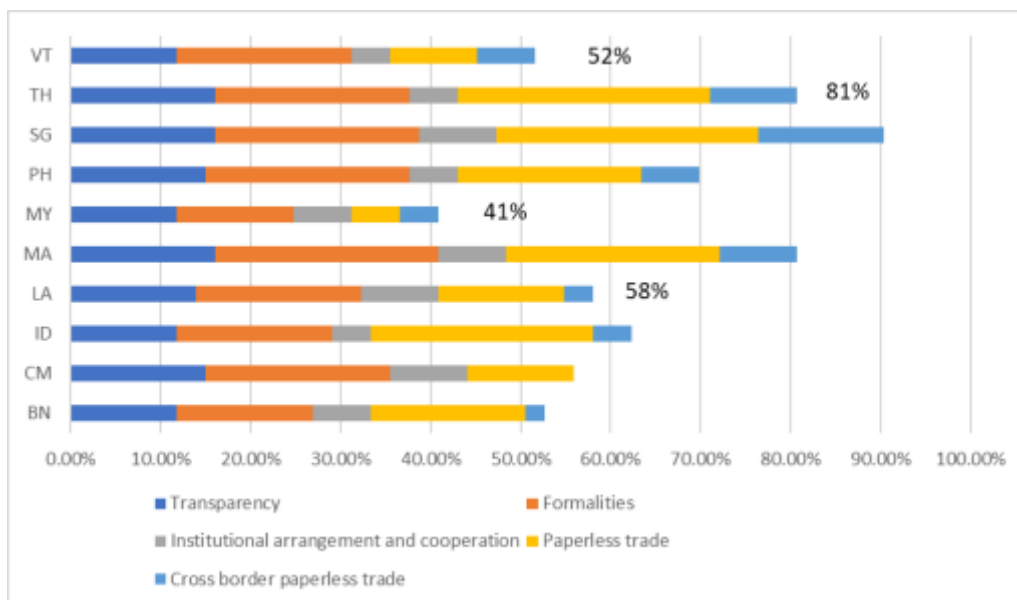
e.g. with the EU are underway.

The ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement regulates the standards and features for the development of a common market with a common objective to reduce tariff and non-tariff measures, which hinder and/or distort the free trade of goods and the development of a common market.

The ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement at the same time refers to global agreements on trade of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO, 2014a, 2014b and 2015). In this manner, the members of the GMS are integrated into regional and global negotiations and roadmaps for the development of a global market. Nevertheless, the countries of the GMS demonstrate different levels of the implementation of the signed agreements, especially when it comes to trade facilitation.

This point is indeed the focus of this study. The regional report of 2017 on trade facilitation (TF) and paperless trade implementation in ASEAN, published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2017), verifies the significance of this study focus. It demonstrated the different levels of implementation in nine topics: transparency, formalities, institutional arrangement and cooperation, paperless trade, cross border paperless trade, transit facilitation, TF and SMEs, TF and agricultural trade, as well as women and TF (UNESCAP, 2017). The 47 questions underlining the assessment are partly related to the WTO TFA. Fig. 3 displays 5 out of 9 criteria, which were part of the questionnaire. Thailand (81%), Malaysia and Singapore (SG) is quite advanced, whereas Lao PDR (58%), Vietnam (52%) and Myanmar (41%) range in the middle field with a number of challenges still to overcome.

Fig. 3: Implementation of trade facilitation measures in the ASEAN (UNESCAP, 2017)



Country Codes: SG=Singapore, PH=Philippines, MA=Malaysia, ID=Indonesia, CM=Cambodia, BN=Brunei Darussalam)

The main weaknesses reported are the institutional arrangements and cooperation with neighbouring countries, the implementation of paper less trade in general and at the border crossing in Vietnam, Myanmar and Lao PDR.

In addition, a significant impact can be expected with introduction of the sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) and certification in the respective countries. According to the results of the UNESCAP survey Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam need to emphasise on the implementation of these measures in order to fully comply with international standards.

Tab. 1: Implementation stage of agriculture-related trade facilitation measures in EWEC countries

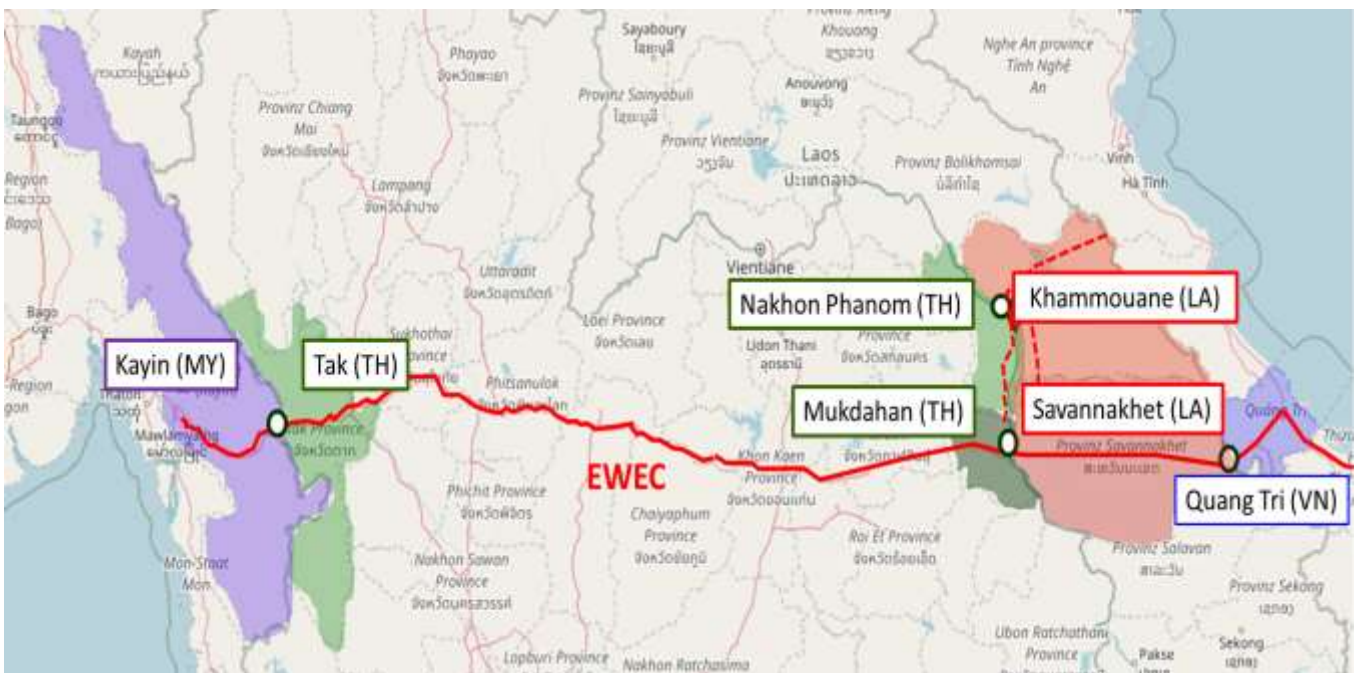
Agriculture-related facilitation measures	LA	MM	TH*	VN
Testing and laboratory facilities are equipped for compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards in your country:	<i>not implemented</i>	partially implemented	<i>n.a.</i>	planning stage
Application, verification and issuance of SPS certificates is automated:	<i>not implemented</i>	<i>not implemented</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>not implemented</i>
National standards and accreditation bodies are established for the purpose of compliance with SPS standards in your country:	<i>not implemented</i>	<i>not implemented</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	partially implemented

* data not available

4.2 The border crossings of the Twin Provinces along EWEC

The geographical focus of this study is on the border crossings along the EWEC and its' corresponding twin-provinces, marked with a circle. Concretely, they are from East to West: Quang Tri (VN)/Savannakhet (LA), Savannakhet (LA)/Mukdahan (TH), Khammouane (LA)/Nakhon Phanom (TH) and Tak province (TH)/Kayin State (MM).

Fig. 4: The Twin-Province along the EWEC



Source: Open street map

Along the EWEC and especially at the border crossings a number of Special Economic Zones have been established (ADB 2016d), where investors and businesses receive incentives such as tax reduction.

4.2.1 Twin-province Quang Tri (VN) and Savannakhet (LA)

Quang Tri province is located in North Central Vietnam, with the province of Quang Binh to the North, and Thua Thien – Hue province to the South. Savannakhet (LA) borders with Quang Tri province in Vietnam to the east and with Mukdahan Province in Thailand to the west.

The Quang Tri provincial capital of Dong Ha City is located 80 km away from the Lao Bao border crossing and 190 km away from the Danang seaport. The National Highway No. 1A runs through the province from South to North and National Highway No. 9 the Trans-Asia Highway connects the Lao Bao international border gate with Lao PDR.

The border checkpoint at Lao Bao-Dansavan was established in 1978 and upgraded to an international border gate in 1994. It got included under the CBTA Protocol 1, which led significant increase in the volume of traffic and economic opportunities along GMS corridors.

Five sector agencies operate at Lao Bao: Animal Quarantine and Plant Quarantine, Customs, Border Guard (Immigration), Human Health Quarantine, and two service agencies (a bank and an insurance company), as well as the Border Gate Management Centre (BMC).

In 2005, the Vietnamese and Lao governments signed a MoU on the initial implementation of the GMS CBTA, agreeing to pilot the Single Stop Inspection/Single Window Inspection (SSI/SWI) model at Lao Bao-Dansavan international border checkpoint. Various donor organisations such as ADB supported the local public authorities with financial and capacity building programmes. However, the four stages of implementation of the SSI/SWI have still not been fully completed.

The procedure has been started in 2005 with 4 stages:

- Stage 1: Relevant stakeholders signed a MoU to jointly inspect goods once at the Common Control Area (CCA) of the entry nation (from 30 June 2005).
- Stage 2 and 3: The Customs and Plant Quarantines of both countries collaborate to implement all relevant procedures at the nation of entry.
- Stage 4: All relevant authorities coordinate to complete their missions and all procedures of one-stop check system at Lao-Vietnam border (officially conducted on the 8 February 2015).

This procedure is conducted on the basis of regulations which indicate that goods exported from Vietnam to Laos would carry out procedures at Laos border gate and vice versa.

The regions on both sides of the border crossing were appointed as Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The SEZ on the Lao PDR side at Dansavan stretches for 19 km along the EWEC with a total of 529 ha of commercial centres and 1,220 ha of industrial areas. On the other side of the border, the Lao Bao economic zone offers 15,803 ha for businesses and industries.

4.2.2 Twin-province Savannakhet (LA) and Mukdahan (TH)

These twin-provinces have a long history of trade. Savannakhet is the largest province of Lao PDR (21,774 km²) and consists of 15 districts with Savannakhet, its provincial capital and the second biggest city of the country. The neighbouring province in Thailand is Mukdahan (4,340 km²), which consists of 53 subdistricts and 493 villages. Since 2007, the Second Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge connects the two provinces of Savannakhet and Mukdahan. The linguistic similarity is an important advantage for these twin-provinces.

The Mukdahan international border checkpoint ranks second in terms of cross-border trade value between Thailand and Lao PDR. For Thailand, it is a gateway to Vietnam via Lao PDR but also to East Asian counterparts (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) and most importantly a channel to Southern China.

The regions on both sides of the border are appointed as SEZs (Savannakhet much earlier, Mukdahand only lately). It provides incentives to businesses and investors, e.g. lower taxes, longer land leases, work permits, etc. Due to various reasons such as road infrastructure, connectivity, this border crossing is competing with the border crossing at the twin-province of Khammouane (LA)-Nakhon Phanom (TH). In spite of the infrastructure availability, the SSI/SWI with a CCA has not been fully implemented yet.

4.2.3 Twin-province Nakhon Phanom (TH) and Khammouane (LA)

Nakhon Phanom in the North-East of Thailand is the provincial capital at the banks of the Mekong river bordering with Khammouane province on the Lao PDR side. The province Nakhon Phanom is split into 12 districts and more than 1,000 villages. The capital of Khammouane province is Thakhek, which is connected with Nakhon Phanom with the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge since 2011. The newly completed border crossing provides modern facilities for border control and customs procedures. The infrastructure on the Thailand side in respect to phytosanitary measures is fully in place, the practice of one-stop windows for migration across the border is smooth and easy for international customers. Signboards indicate clearly the fees to be paid (on Thailand side), the signboards at the Laos crossing are only indicative to the international traveller. Agricultural CBT has increased over the years with agricultural transit trade (fruits) from Thailand via the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge to China. The road-condition in Lao PDR is yet not favourable to agricultural trade and maintenance is requested for by Thai officials. The infrastructure for CCA is in place but the officials are still awaiting clarity of benefits from CCA implementation, as implemented at Lao Bao-Dansavan. Language difficulties do not arise across this border, as common history and language are assured on both sides of the border.

4.2.4 Twin Province Tak (TH) and Kayin State (MM)

Tak province is neighbouring Kayin State at the border crossing at Mae Sot in Thailand and Myawaddy in Myanmar. 90 km east of Mae Sot is the provincial capital Tak. Apart from app. 35.000 inhabitants of Thailand a number of refugees from Myanmar live in the border province. Due to past

and ongoing conflicts, the ethnic minority of Karen and other minorities had to leave the country. The administration of the Kayin state is partly in the hand of the local minorities of Myanmar. Due to the threats of conflicts, the minorities have stepped into trade with business in Thailand directly, selling agricultural products across the small river along the border, separating Thailand from Myanmar.

The official border crossing until now has limited capacities for the processing of trade and migration. The authorities have established several small border crossings for pedestrians and trade of goods, where small ferries and boats are used to cross the border. On the side of Thailand temporary customs offices along the river have been established (ports). At these ports warehouses and facilities are in place mainly on the side of Thailand. More details on the situation of CBT along the border of Tak province (TH) and Kayin State (MM) are outlined in the most recently elaborated report by MI (Bollinger & Company Ltd., 2016a and 2016b).

Despite existing bilateral MoU on traffic rights, the facilitation of frontier crossing formalities and cross-border transport of goods and the establishing of a Joint Trade Commission (JTC) between Thailand and Myanmar, little progress in this matter has been achieved (own consultations with stakeholders in February 2018).

Meanwhile the construction of a new customs house and border crossing north of the existing official border crossing is ongoing and expected to be finished by 2019. SSI/SWI are the common objectives of the customs from both sides, when the new facilities are fully operational (Bollinger, 2016a). Cooperation of the responsible public authorities from both sides of the border is scarce. Progress is small, and communication is limited. Everyone has high expectations on the implementation of SSI/SWI at the new border crossing, once it is fully operational.

The government from both sides of the borders have established SEZs to promote investment and employment. Especially on the Thai side, many labour-intensive industries use the cheap labour force, crossing the border every day.

4.3 Agricultural trade in countries along the EWEC

Agriculture does have a significant part in the economy of the EWEC countries, with 27% in Myanmar, 20% in Lao PDR and Vietnam with 19% value added in percent of the GDP, and 50% of the population of Thailand, 61% of Lao PDR, 65% of Myanmar and 55% of Vietnam live in rural areas (Worldbank, 2018).

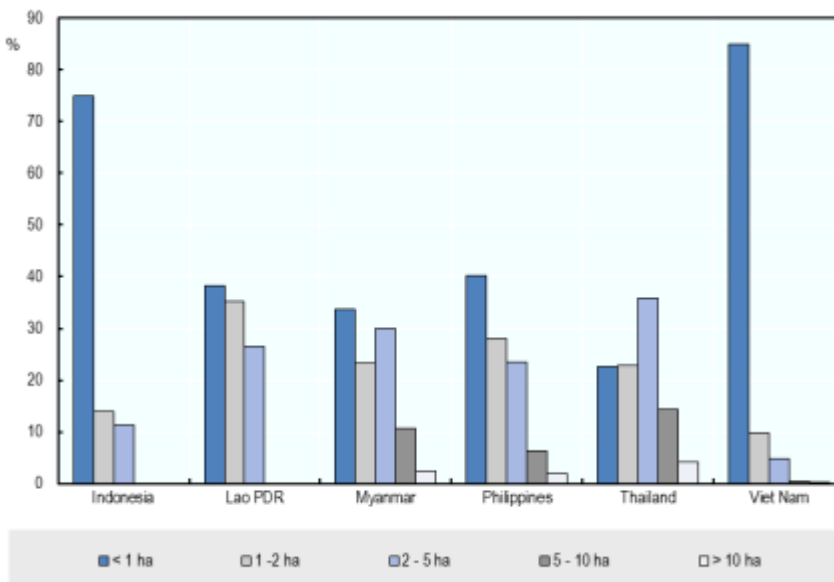
The GDP differs from USD 1,139 in Myanmar to USD 5,815 in Thailand with Vietnam and Lao PDR ranging just above USD 2,000. Tab. 2 describes some few of the most relevant indicators. The percentage of the value of exports of goods and services of the GDP is significant different from Vietnam with 90% and Myanmar with 21%.

Tab. 2: Contextual indicators for the countries along EWEC

		LA	MM	TH	VN
Population, total	Unit	6.7	52.4	68.7	91.7
Population growth (annual %)	%	1.3	0.9	0.4	1.1
Rural population (% of total population)	%	61	66	50	66
GDP per capita (current USD)	US\$	2,159	1,139	5,815	2,065
Land area (sq. km)	sq. km	230,800	653,080	510,890	310,070
Agricultural land (sq. km)	sq. km	23,690	127,350	221,100	117,100
Agricultural land (% of land area)	%	10	19	43	38
Arable land (hectares per person)	ha	0.23	0.21	0.24	0.07
Agriculture, value added (% of GDP)	%	20%	27%	9%	19%
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	%	34%	21%	69%	90%

Source: Data from database: World Development Indicators, Last Updated: 03/01/2018
([www.http://databank.worldbank.org/data](http://databank.worldbank.org/data))

The majority of farms in all four countries have a size below 2 ha (see Fig. 5). Especially in Vietnam the farms with less than 1 ha are dominating with over 80%, whereas the share of farms with 1 ha in Laos and Myanmar is between 30% and 40% and in Thailand just above 20%. This indicates on one side a highly intensive farming system (e.g. rice production) but also a lack of economic of scales, with a slow introduction of innovations.

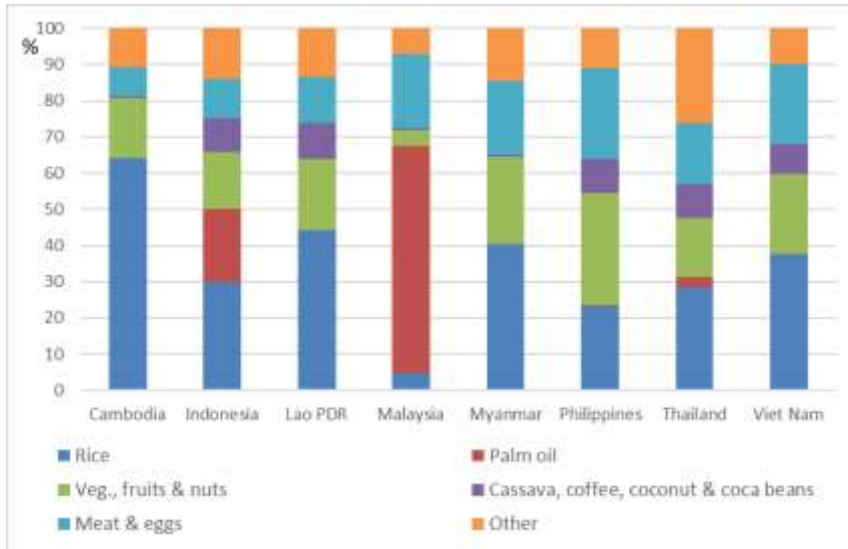
Fig. 5: Distribution of farm size in EWEC countries compared with Indonesia and Philippines


Source: OECD/FAO 2017

4.3.1 Production of agriculture products in the countries along EWEC

Rice production in Thailand has a share of 29% of the total agricultural production, whereas it is between 38% in Vietnam, Myanmar 40% and Lao PDR 44%. The product groups on (1) rice, (2) vegetables, fruits and nuts and (3) cassava, coffee, coconuts and coca beans make more than 60% of the total production in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Fig. 6: Share of selected products of the countries of EWEC compared with others in %



Source: OECD/FAO 2017a and 2017b

A more distinguished look at the production and trade volume provide

Tab. 3 and Tab. 4 on the next page.

Tab. 3: Production value of the 10 highest products in Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam in 2013

Lao PDR	M USD	Myanmar	M USD
Rice, paddy	1,084	Rice, paddy	5,645
Vegetables, fresh nes	982	Meat indigenous, chicken	1,541
Meat, pig	238	Beans, dry	1,437
Maize	217	Meat indigenous, pig	954
Bananas	177	Meat indigenous, cattle	666
Meat, cattle	175	Vegetables, fresh nes	641
Sugar cane	159	Milk, whole fresh cow	612
Cassava	154	Fruit, fresh nes	454
Tobacco, unmanufactured	137	Sesame seed	354
Meat, buffalo	119	Sugar cane	325
Thailand	M USD	Vietnam	M USD
Rubber, natural	10,473	Rice, paddy	12,953
Rice, paddy	9,444	Meat, pig	6,360
Sugar cane	2,987	Meat, chicken	2,600
Meat, pig	2,982	Coffee, green	2,117
Meat, chicken	2,834	Rubber, natural	1,938
Mangoes, mango steens, guavas	2,107	Maize	1,692
Cassava	2,086	Cassava	1,295
Oil, palm fruit	1,732	Meat, cattle	1,085
Maize	1,112	Eggs, hen, in shell	1,044
Eggs, hen, in shell	1,110	Sugar cane	940

Tab. 4: Export value of the 10 of the most exported products in the EWEC countries in 2013

Lao PDR	1,000 USD	Myanmar	1,000 USD
Coffee, green	72,589	Beans, dry	1,050,000
Maize	42,590	Rice total	157,910
Crude materials	4,894	Sesame seed	32,000
Fruit, fresh nes	4,411	Maize	18,480
Bananas	3,106	Chick peas	10,472
Beer of barley	1,672	Crude materials	9,355
Sesame seed	1,328	Onions, dry	7,965
Fruit, prepared nes	1,311	Fruit, dried nes	7,223
Soybeans	94	Cashew nuts, shelled	7,079
Fruit, dried nes	38	Spices, nes	5,596
Thailand	1,000 USD	Vietnam	1,000 USD
Rubber natural dry	6,453,393	Coffee, green	2,549,560
Rice total	4,429,582	Rice total	1,673,955
Meat, chicken, canned	2,152,596	Rubber natural dry	1,533,269
Food prep nes	1,874,875	Cashew nuts, shelled	1,076,470
Rubber, natural	1,779,871	Pepper (piper spp.)	889,917
Sugar Raw Centrifugal	1,472,986	Fruit, fresh nes	498,579
Sugar refined	1,386,943	Cassava dried	363,710
Cassava dried	1,317,646	Food prep nes	176,828
Starch, cassava	1,139,138	Starch, cassava	154,408
Pet food	907,679	Tea	122,496

Source: FAOSTAT 2018 extracted from <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en>

4.3.2 Cross border trade between the countries along EWEC

Tab. 5 outlines the trade balance on selected products between the countries along the EWEC, indicating the official figures on ASEANSTAT, which are provided by the respective countries. The reporting country (Rep) reports the figures related to trade of the partner country (Part). The total trade balance across some of the most relevant commodities are listed in column (Total A), where Lao PDR (USD 89M) and Myanmar (USD 62M) are considered net-exporter, whereas Thailand (USD 32M) and Vietnam (USD 83M) are net-importers.

Tab. 5: Cross-border trade between countries along EWEC in 1,000 USD (2016)

Rep	Part	Total A	Cassava	Coffee	Maize	Onions	Peas	Rice	Sugar	Total B
LA	MM									
LA	TH	10,615	50,260	3,626	11,848	1	217	-73,627	18,290	LA
LA	VN	78,448	11,546	32,846	17,142	-814		14,885	2,843	89,063
MM	LA	27						27		
MM	TH	22,745	12	30	-924	1,958	23,286	-273	-1,344	MM
MM	VN	38,768		-560	91	47	39,085	105		61,540
TH	LA	8,994	-55,618	-3,243	-13,875	613	-944	76,030	6,030	
TH	MM	-20,857		-24	-1,395	-3,423	-30,118	11,966	2,137	TH
TH	VN	-20,391	5	-86,341	1,675	-210	3,827	9,444	51,209	-32,254
VN	LA	-46,564	-14,560	-26,081	-164	247		-4,203	-1,804	
VN	MM	-39,412		904	-59	-295	-39,905	-62	5	VN
VN	TH	2,818		62,874	-1,752	199	-2,534	-11,527	-44,442	-83,158
Total Export			61,857	102,365	32,310	3,127	66,656	116,042	83,618	
Total Import			-70,211	-118,335	-19,723	-4,804	-73,742	-93,276	-50,693	
Difference Exp/Imp			-8,354	-15,970	12,587	-1,677	-7,086	22,766	32,925	

Source: ASEANSTAT, 2018: Extracted from https://data.aseanstats.org/trade_hs6.php on 180320
 "nes" = not elsewhere specified

The most relevant commodities traded between the four countries along the EWEC is rice and coffee with more than 100 M USD of value followed by sugar, peas and cassava.

Tab. 6: Trade value balance of maize in the countries along EWEC in 1,000 USD (2016)

Rep	Part	Balance	Exp '16	Imp '16
LA	MY			
LA	TH	11,848	11,850	-2
LA	VN	17,142	17,142	0
MY	LA			
MY	TH	-924	1,362	-2,286
MY	VN	91	91	
TH	LA	-13,875	113	-13,987
TH	MY	-1,395	73	-1,468
TH	VN	1,675	1,675	
VN	LA	-164	5	-170
VN	MY	-59		-59
VN	TH	-1,752		-1,752
Total Export		32,310		
Total Import		-19,723		
Total Balance		12,587		

The difference of the value of export from one country to the figures of import of the partner country on a specific commodity may arise from incorrect reporting or incorrect declaration of values by the shipping companies in order to avoid the payment of tax and/or customs duties. The least was reported by the interviewed shipping companies as a common practice. In the case of maize this practice becomes obvious, when looking at the imported maize of Viet Nam from Lao PDR with only USD 170,000, whereas the

Source: ASEANSTAT, 2018: Extracted from https://data.aseanstats.org/trade_hs6.php on 180320 export of Lao PDR to Vietnam is reported at USD

17 M.

The following list of agricultural products based on the above described figures was drafted to be considered during the interviews and consultations at the border crossings.

Tab. 7: Selected agriculture commodities along the EWEC

Reporter	Partner	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
Lao PDR	Myanmar [MM]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lao PDR	Thailand [TH]	Cassava	Coffee	Rice
Lao PDR	Vietnam [VN]	Coffee	Maize	Rice
Myanmar	Lao PDR [LA]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Myanmar	Thailand [TH]	Peas	Maize(1)	Sugar
Myanmar	Vietnam [VN]	Peas		
Thailand	Lao PDR [LA]	Rice	Sugar	
Thailand	Myanmar [MM]	Rice	Sugar	
Thailand	Vietnam [VN]	Rice	Sugar	
Viet Nam	Lao PDR [LA]	n.a.		
Viet Nam	Myanmar [MM]	n.a.		
Viet Nam	Thailand [TH]	Coffee		

Source: Own assessment based on available information of the MI team and data analysis

The selection of priority agriculture products was relevant only for the selection of interview partners and the assessment of NTMs, which would have a direct impact on trade of agriculture products traded at the specific border crossing.

For the border crossings of Thailand and Lao PDR as well as Lao PDR and Vietnam coffee and rice were considered most relevant. For the border crossing between Thailand and Myanmar maize and beans were considered as the most relevant products.

5 Findings and potential interventions on CBT along EWEC

5.1 Non-tariff measures (NTMs)

Non-tariff measures according to the classification of the United Nations were used for the questionnaire and consultations during the field study as guidance to evaluate the implementation of NTMs at the border crossings (ERIA-UNCTAD, 2016). ASEAN Member Countries have made significant progress in the lowering of intra-regional tariffs through the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) Scheme for AFTA. NTMs are categorized along international standards (see Tab. 8).

Tab. 8: Non-tariff measures implemented by EWEC countries (example of rice)

			LA	MM	TH	VN	
Imports	Technical Measures	A	Sanitary and phytosanitary measures	10	10	19	62
		B	Technical barriers to trade		2	5	14
		C	Pre-shipment inspection and other formalities	2	1		
	Non Technical Measures	D	Contingent trade protective measures				
		E	Non-automatic licensing, quotas, prohibitions and quantity control measures other than SPS or TBT reason	1	1		3
		F	Price-control measures, incl. additional taxes and charges	5	1	1	2
		G	Finance measures				
		H	Measures affecting competition				
		I	Trade related investment measures				
		J	Distribution restrictions				
		K	Restrictions on post-sales services				
		L	Subsidies (excl. subsidies under P7)				
		M	Government procurement restrictions				
		N	Intellectual property				
		O	Rules of origin				
Export		P	Export related measures	8	5	3	11
			Total	26	20	28	92

Source: extracted from UNCTAD 2018, www.trains.unctad.org

The NTMs implemented by the EWEC countries range from only 20 in Myanmar up to 92 in Vietnam. The majority of NTMs for rice and many other agricultural commodities are SPS measures.

5.1.1 NTM-A Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures

5.1.1.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

Chapter A of the NTMs is strongly related to agricultural commodities in order to prevent any harm to the public health by the control of ingredients and contents of food stuff. NTMs for SPS should also target on the potential of spreading of diseases. Therefore, SPS measures are the most important measures for agricultural trade. Well-developed certification and quality assurance schemes need to be in place and operational.

5.1.1.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

- SPS certification process (at border and at district level, including lab test) is lacking in GMS member states (Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam)
- Lack of appropriate facilities at the border gates of Lao Bao, Khammouane, Savannakhet and Myawaddy, as inspections only ‘eye-check’, pointing towards a need of international large development funds and programs
- Good laboratories are available in Thailand side of the border to Lao PDR
- Institutionalised, regular SPS certification of agricultural products effects especially agricultural trade negatively, as markets with high quality certification standards need to arrange for own certification and monitoring of quality products
- Poor quality of agricultural products and absence of international quality standards certification limits demand and increases quality certification costs for large agricultural commodity trade volumes, especially from Lao PDR to China.

5.1.1.3 Potential interventions / activities

A. Analysis on SPS certification in GMS member states and donor coordination

The SPS certification is a complex area of intervention. Ongoing initiatives from other donor organisations are already in place or foreseen. Investments for laboratories are high and way out of the schedule of the RLED-EWEC. Not all interview partners are aware of ongoing and foreseen initiatives in the field. The elaboration of the state of art of SPS certification in all member states could be valuable information to all stakeholders. MI could facilitate mapping and exchange of experience and policy dialogue on the SPS issues at stake.

SPS certification is one of the most important issues related to trade of agricultural products.

B. Support of the introduction and information on international accepted quality standards such as GLOBAL GAP, HACCP or BIO/Organic

Many of the features of quality standards such as GLOBAL GAP or HACCP are related to NTMs such as A-SPS, B-TBT and C-Pre-shipment inspections.

Lao PDR, Myanmar and Cambodia are member states of “Everything but arms” scheme of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) for trade with the European Union. Although this scheme provides opportunities for trade, quality standards have to be met. Even though the RLED-EWEC

project has been exemplary for GAP certification during its first phase, a lot still remains to assure systematic coverage of all agricultural products to high quality standards (Helvetas, 2017).

It is recommended to map and coordinate any activities with other donors, projects and initiatives (ADB 2017a and ADB 2017b). Other donor organisations such as GIZ or FAO are already involved in various projects and initiatives with regards to quality standards and good agriculture practice certification (GIZ, 2013).

5.1.2 NTM-B Technical barriers to trade (TBT)

5.1.2.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

TBT measures refers to measures such as labelling, packaging, quality requirements, etc. and are therefore most relevant for agricultural trade.

5.1.2.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

- Quality level and certification of quality standards of agricultural products is low or poorly developed
- Packaging and labelling of agricultural products is inadequate, especially in Lao PDR
- Market organisations or farmer cooperatives, which would collect products from small farmers have limited capacities or resources
- Even though this study focuses on formal agricultural trade across the borders of EWEC, it is important to highlight that the informal trade with agricultural products along the border regions is high and in the case of Lao Bao-Dansavan accepted as border-citizen exchange. Existing regulations for private belongings (small amounts of goods below a certain value) are free of any inspections or obligations. Hundreds of small agricultural producers in the two border areas of Lao Bao and Dansavan use this opportunity to sell products across borders. Considering this it is important to note that if looking at the formal agricultural trade increase between twin-provinces, we need to look especially also into agricultural production of other neighbouring provinces to use EWEC as trade-route; e.g. Savannakhet is – compared with Champasak (to the South) or Khammouane (to the North) less advantaged with agricultural development schemes by the government, and Savannakhet even defined as industrial zone. In such a context agricultural cross-border trade increase along EWEC must not only look at the twin-provinces along EWEC, but look also to the South or North in Lao PDR for sourcing of large agricultural volumes.

5.1.2.3 Potential Interventions / Activities

A. “Ongoing” support to market organisations and farmer associations

RLED-EWEC already supports small farmer groups with the preparation of market oriented quality schemes, storage facilities and other TA measures with a value chain approach. These activities should continue with a specific emphasis on quality standards and professional market organisation,

which would facilitate cross border trade, good agricultural practices (GAP) and other quality standards to be considered.

5.1.3 NTM-E Non-automatic licensing, quotas, prohibitions, and quantity control measures other than for SPS or TBT reasons

5.1.3.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

NTMs on quantity control measures, export licenses and quotas have a direct impact on prices and competitiveness of the production. Thailand for example allows trade with maize with tax exemption only between February and August. At the same time, only licensed trading companies are eligible for import quotas. The difference in production costs between the neighbouring countries has led to different prices across the border. Interview partners from Tak province reported a lower price of 7,500 Baht (240 USD) per tonne of maize in Myanmar to the price of maize in Thailand of 9,500 Baht (304 USD). The difference is USD 64 per ton.

5.1.3.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

- Quantity control measures with a quota system for various products are applied for imports to Thailand, and this also short-notice.
- Quantity control measures are not yet removed completely despite the road map of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA)

5.1.3.3 Potential interventions / activities (long-term measure)

A: Facilitating Policy dialog and negotiations on free trade of agricultural products and linking to other organisation and initiatives on monitoring the implementation of ATIGA and WTO obligations of members

The ATIGA/WTO provides the framework to negotiate and implement reduction of any NTMs. ADB involves in monitoring and evaluating of the implementation of ATIGA. Reports and documents prove a number of agreed measures not or not fully implemented in time.

RLED-EWEC should consider linking with other organisations and use the policy dialog platform to discuss the implementation and follow-up on ATIGA with the concerned public authorities and government institutions. The strong link of MI to governmental ministries and public institutions is an outstanding advantage.

5.1.4 NTM-F Price control measures including additional taxes and charges

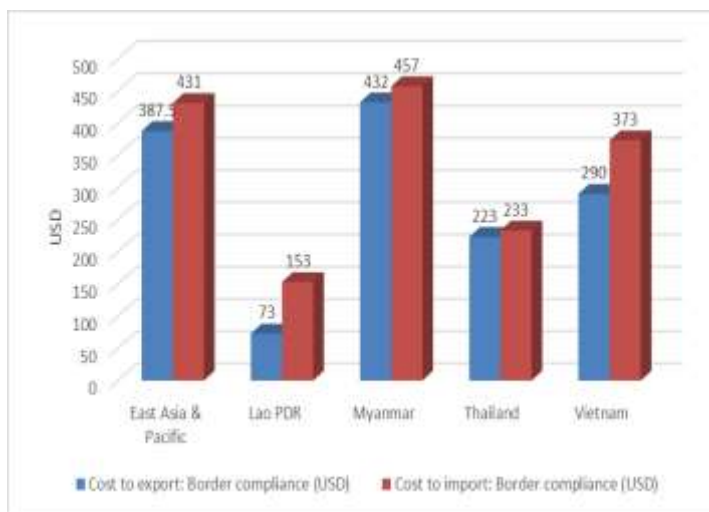
5.1.4.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

F6 are all the additional taxes and charges levied in connection to services provided by the government (additional charges, which are levied on imported goods in addition to customs duties and surcharges and which have no internal equivalents):

F 61 Customs-inspection, -processing and –servicing fees

- F62 Merchandise-handling or –storing fees
- F63 Tax on foreign exchange transactions
- F64 Stamp tax
- F65 Import licence fee
- F66 Consular invoice fee
- F67 Statistical tax
- F68 Tax on transport facilities
- F69 Additional charges

Fig. 7: Costs for Border compliance



Source: World Bank IBRD, 2018: Doing Business. Measuring Business Regulations Extracted from <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>

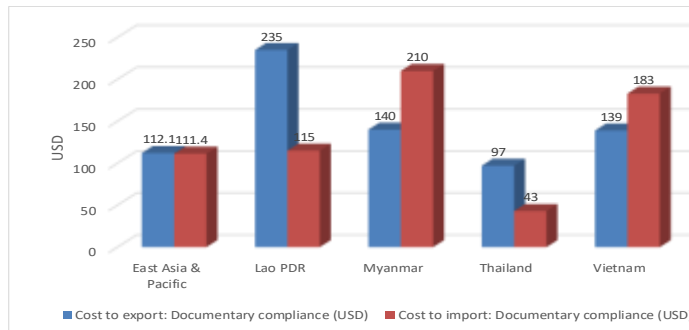
Additional taxes and charges are considered one of the major trade barriers especially to agriculture commodities, which by nature do not have a very high value per shipment. Most of the fees and charges are lump sums per shipment and do not correspond to its value.

Fees for border compliance are very different in the four countries Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. According to the “Doing Business” indicators of World Bank (IBRD, 2018a and 2018b⁴) the costs for export (USD 432) and import (USD 457) in Myanmar are highest, followed by Vietnam,

Thailand and Lao PDR. The costs to export for documentary compliance is highest in Lao PDR and for import in Myanmar for import compliance.

⁴ Doing Business records the time and cost associated with the logistical process of exporting and importing goods. Doing Business measures the time and cost (excluding tariffs) associated with three sets of procedures - documentary compliance, border compliance and domestic transport - within the overall process of exporting or importing a shipment of goods. The most recent round of data collection for the project was completed in June 2017. See the methodology for more information. Given the importance of trade digitalization, in Doing Business 2018, the ‘Trading across Borders questionnaire’ included research questions on the availability and status of implementation of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and SW systems. With this information, Doing Business built a comprehensive dataset on the adoption and level of sophistication of electronic platforms in 190 economies. These data are not used to compute the distance to frontier score or ranking of the ease of doing business. The new dataset on EDI and SW systems is available here (for further information visit www.doingbusiness.org)

Fig. 8: Costs for documentary compliance



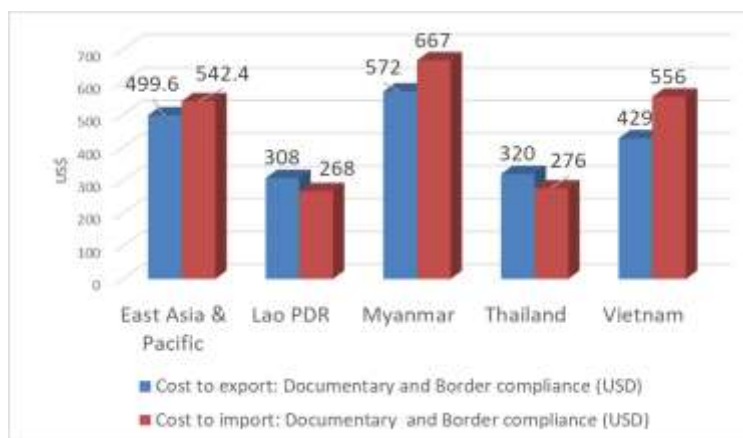
Source: World Bank IBRD, 2018: Doing Business. Measuring Business Regulations Extracted from <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>

The overall ranking of “Trading across borders” is for Lao PDR 124, Myanmar 163, Thailand 57 and Vietnam 94 (IBRD, 2018a and 2018b).

The figures indicated that the costs for import and the costs for export are quite different. And there is a wide range between the countries.

The figures implicate significantly higher costs in Myanmar (USD 572/677) and Vietnam (USD 429/556) compared with Lao PDR (USD 308/268) and Thailand (USD 320/276) for a standard shipment with a value of USD 50,000 (IBRD, 2018a and 2018b).

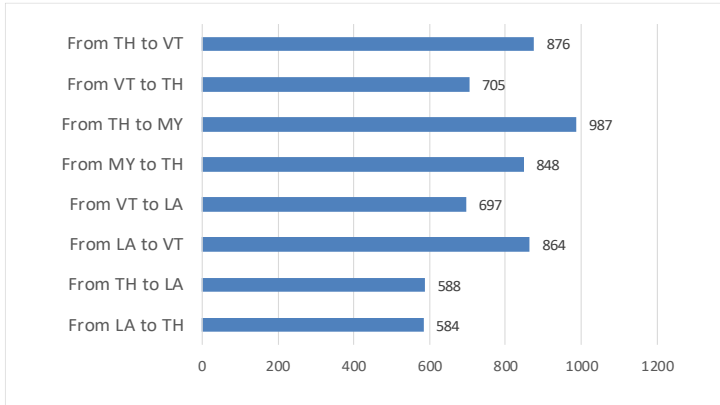
Fig. 9: Total costs for shipments for export and import



Source: World Bank IBRD, 2018: Doing Business. Measuring Business Regulations Extracted from <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>

The total cost for such a standard shipment from one country to the other indicates costs per shipment between USD 600 and up to USD 1,000. These figures were confirmed by trading companies involved in the RLED-EWEC project during a consultation.

Fig. 10: Total costs for documentary and border compliance for export and import in USD



Source: World Bank IBRD, 2018: Doing Business. Measuring Business Regulations Extracted from <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>

business in Feb. 2018 to MI staff and in separate project enterprise meetings. The shipment is considered a ‘lump sum cost’, not considering the shipment value, but all formal and informal fees and service charges.

5.1.4.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

- The charges and fees for crossing borders and using facilities are different along the international trade routes of Laos/Vietnam (e.g. La lay border, Lao Bao-Dansavan border).
- Private businesses complain not only about the official fees and charges but also about “informal fees”, which are considered as “normal and common”, and which are discussed commonly amongst business partners. The best way out is ‘the way around’, as mentioned during interviews with interviewees, which includes calculating ‘standard fixed costs’ instead of commodity-varying fees (‘each truck is a fixed amount at the border, and a fixed amount per check point’).
- Fees can be very diverse in each of the border crossings, such as
 - Customs-inspections, -processing and -service fees (KIP 1,5 M ~ USD 180) at Lao Bao-Dansavan border (source: own interviews on site)
 - Merchandise-handling or storing fees
 - Truck-deloding and up-loading fees

5.1.4.3 Potential interventions / activities

A. Full assessment and comparison of fees and charges – Exchange of experience

The fees and charges on both sides of the borders could be an issue for cooperation between the twin-provinces, although the many fees and charges are decided upon on the national level.

5.1.5 NTM-O Rules of origin

5.1.5.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

Rules of origin apply to all agricultural commodities and are issued by district-offices of the place of origin. The Certificate of Origin (CO) is an important certificate to assure the origin to eliminate health and epidemic risks for the place of destination. More often, the CO is a mere collection of papers and stamps, than a real inspection by the offices exercising the control over this instrument and it can ensure the exemption of taxes due to for example ATIGA.

All members have a common Form D implemented, which can be downloaded and filled, but the e-Customs system is only partly in place.

5.1.5.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings:

- E-Customs procedures are not fully implemented
- Human resources are not prepared to apply E-Customs services
- Human resources at the offices exercising the ‘Certificate of Control’-instrument have limited capacities to fulfil this efficiently

5.1.5.3 Potential Interventions / Activities

No need – ongoing projects of other donor organisations are operating in the field.

5.2 Customs procedures SWI/SSI and CCA, fees and charges at the border-crossings

5.2.1.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

Especially for the inspection of SPS measures and quarantine facilities, the customs procedures for SWI/SSI on a CCA are most relevant to reduce costs and time (Martin, 2016a). The fees and charges for customs clearance and migration are important to agricultural as well as industrial products.

5.2.1.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

- Sub-optimal display of relevant information (e.g. on fees and charges) and hence sub-optimal transparency of customs services for trade and cross-border customers; no control-right by customers exercised.
- Fees and charges are considered too high and very different at some borders (e.g. Lao Bao-Dansavan), and therefore other routes (e.g. La lay) are preferred and considered.
- SWI/SSI is still not fully implemented in Lao Bao-Dansavan (see Directive 6107/UBND-TM by Quang Tri province in December 2017 and interviews). According to interviews the sequence of process is not followed or cannot be followed as human resources are at times unavailable and in-charge not considered (Gov LA and VN, 2015 and 2017).
- At the border-gates of Savanakheth-Mukdahan, as well as at Khammouane-Nakhon Phanom doubts of ‘benefits from SSI and CCA at Lao Bao’ are omnipresent despite of the already available infrastructure for CCA for immediate start of the scheme at these borders.
- Lack of e-Customs system with different levels of implementation between borders (downloading form, but manual processing of paper work is common in Vietnam, Lao PDR and Myanmar). Other donors e.g. JICA will support Myanmar Government in implementation to make the systems compatible.

- At the Thailand Myanmar Friendship Bridge in Mae Sot (TH)- Myawaddy (MM) the SSI at CCA is foreseen for implementation in 2019. Preparatory work for procedures, CCA and cooperation of customs offices from both sides are lacking behind. Facilities most likely will not be fully used, unless procedures and regulations are in place.
- Increase of cross border trade and traffic does not correspond to allocation of human resources.
- No risk management strategy and procedures in place (ADB, 2015b).
- No integrity guidelines and good governance strategy (ADB, 2015b).
- Records on irregularities and fraud are not available (ADB, 2015b).
- Need for the three countries (Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam) to sit together on CCA topics: (i) human resource at border, (ii) opening hours, (iii) process in CCA, (iv) forms must become all same!

5.2.1.3 Potential interventions / activities

A. Exchange of experience on transparency measures on fees and procedures

Including e.g.:

- Documentation of all standard fees and procedures along EWEC border crossings
- Communication measures for displays, internet, etc.
- 'Smiley facility' for drivers or traders at the border (= review of process and fees) with possibility for regress- or control-system for customers

B. Target Group oriented communication of information on cross border trade along EWEC

Including e.g.:

- Elaboration of an EWEC cross border trade mobile App and/or website with user friendly access to relevant information
- Capacity building measures for border officers on public relation and communication

5.3 Knowledge and capacity management in transboundary programs

5.3.1.1 Relevance in transboundary programs

In transboundary measures the list of main stakeholders is usually very long, and - due to the border in between - an exchange of information and knowledge is not happening on a regular basis, if not explicitly planned for. This situation of knowledge gaps further aggravates, if the main stakeholders are from official institutions across the borders, and not only from the private/civil sector. In such cases the cross-border information flow is further hindered due to official processes for information exchange.

Therefore, transboundary programs, such as the RLED-EWEC, or transboundary measures, such as cross-border-trade measure and cross-border action-plans need a pro-active knowledge

management plan as a prerequisite and a fundament for success of the measure: New knowledge is as good as it reaches others who need to work with it. ⁵

5.3.1.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

Border officials of the twin-provinces shared about regular meeting with officials of the other side; this was so in the case of Mukdahan with Savannakhet, Dansavan with Lao Bao, Khammouane with Nakhon Phanom. Mostly these meetings are organised directly at the borders with invitations by the provincial administrations. In some cases these yearly meetings at the border for cross-border trade facilitation include also additional stakeholders like the chambers, the trade associations, as well as infrastructure department. Size, regularity and organiser diverse in the twin-provinces:

- Quang Tri (VN) – Savannakhet (LA):
 - Yearly large meeting with additional stakeholders related to CBT
 - Monthly meetings at the border with the other side border officials
 - Good informal contact to the other side border officials
- Savannakhet (LA) – Mukdahan (TH):
 - Regular formal and informal meetings at the border
 - Regular meetings
 - Good informal contact to the other side border officials
- Kammouane (LA) - Nakhon Phanom (TH):
 - Meetings with the other border officials
 - Good informal contact to the other side border officials
- Tak (TH) – Kayin (MM):
 - Meetings with the other border officials are needed
 - Follow up on meetings is not well practiced – the results of meetings have limited impact on the practical implementation

⁵ Successful knowledge management strategies in transboundary programs in the Himalayas (ICIMOD): www.icimod.org

Despite of the regular and good communication exchanges, as mentioned above, it is important to consider the hierarchical structures and processes underlying especially officials across borders. In additional horizontal and vertical exchange of knowledge amongst and within the border-authorities need special attention to assure that gaps and difficulties in handling agriculture trade through the border are minimised.

5.3.1.3 Potential interventions / activities

A. Knowledge and capacity management strategy

Transboundary programs need to elaborate knowledge and capacity management strategies and knowledge-distribution plans for every measure or action plan to clarify the following: What needs to be shared, by Whom, When, in What format and Where?

All action plans must pro-actively strategise the communication and dissemination plan.

B. Optimal knowledge exchange on agriculture trade/NTM for each border-crossing separately

Parameters for a knowledge and capacity strategy and/or a knowledge distribution plan:

- What: Which knowledge needs to be shared?
- Whom: Which of the main stakeholders is supposed to share the information?
- When: How often, at what specific dates should the information/knowledge be shared?
- What format: What is the best format to share the information/knowledge (letter, poster, website, App, training manual, write-up, policy paper, pamphlet, folder, movie, social media, etc.)?
- Where: What is the best place to share (geographical, internet, social networks etc.)?
- What budget we need to plan? Who will monitor?

The need for information exchange of border-officials, as well as the capacity needs of the border officials in respect to cross-border agricultural trade and NTM is therefore suggested as action plan for all borders: Training-Needs-Analysis for human resources capacity building at borders.

5.4 Transport infrastructure and transport regulations along EWEC

5.4.1.1 Relevance for agricultural trade

Transport infrastructure is a pre-requisite to link production and markets of any commodity, and in the case of agricultural trade the importance of infrastructure further increases due to the perishability of the product itself. Quality of road-infrastructure and corridor development to approach large markets is undoubtedly basic for agricultural trade for all agricultural based economies (Jouanjean, 2013) and surely for all countries along EWEC.

5.4.1.2 Findings, challenges, shortcomings

- High incidents of overloaded trucks result in accidents, especially in Laos PDR (route 9)
- Thailand understands the EWEC, as well as other corridor roads through Lao PDR in first place as trade routes to China, especially for transit trade of fresh fruits. The Route No 9 is preferred, if agricultural products are sourced from South Thailand; other bulk agricultural transit trade prefers the shortcut via route No. 12, where road improvements are important

for large-scale trade to China. A request for a road link between No. 9 and No. 12 was mentioned during interviews with Thai officials and the quality of the road infrastructure in Lao PDR, as well as in Vietnam needs further investment.

- GMS Cross Border Transport Facilitation Agreement partly or not implemented yet.
- Check points as control instrument against offences in CBT (e.g. smuggling, overload eg.) are perceived by logistic providers and traders as cost-increase measures only (more time, fixed payments), and not systematic integer control system of the State. Coordination with earlier checks, improved integrity capacities and improved understanding of control-systems by traders/logistic providers can help decrease difficulties of high number of check-points in Laos, Vietnam (decrease further), and also Thailand.
- Route No 9 and No 12 do not correspond to Cross Border Transport Facilitation Agreement in terms of road-standards.

5.4.1.3 Potential interventions / activities

Road infrastructure development must be seen as a key for improved agricultural trade along EWEC and is taken up by various financial development programs by ADB, JICA and others. Mekong Institute can support the improvement of this infrastructure through mapping of existing programs and emphasising the importance for agricultural CBT in international fora. An action plan was developed, but is out of scope for Mekong Institute to implement due to size of investment and duration of measure (long-term).

6 Road maps for twin-provinces derived from desk- and field data analysis

After detailed review of project reports, international literature and an analysis of the various discussions, collected field data from research missions, the consultant team captured in a first analysis the most critical steps/road maps on 'short-term', mid-term' and 'long-term' basis for the different twin provinces as follows:

6.1 Road map for Vietnam-Lao PDR border of EWEC Lao Bao (Quang Tri)– Dansavan (Savannakhet)

Short-term (<1 year)

- Standardise fee structures and assure its transparency, develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC
- Prepare communication / knowledge material regarding Thai and Laos agricultural producers, traders and logistic firms as well on CBT along EWEC and assure its distribution to stakeholder-network and public institutions in order to augment transparency in document procedures and fees (e.g. bilateral manuals on cross-border business investment, individual country-specific manuals on contract farming)
- Decrease the number of checkpoints along road in Laos; assure coordination with border checkpoint
- Improve CCA process at border for benefit and replication of other borders along EWEC
- Map and link up with long-term development programs (infrastructure and trade facilitation programs) in ASEAN of e.g. ADB, JICA, GIZ, China, France, UN
- Monitor existing provincial border-trade agreements

Mid-term (1-5 years)

- Develop common trade database and foster information sharing
- Organise fairs and trade shows to increase exchanges among private businesses along border
- Develop EWEC App or Website for CBT along EWEC
- Support contract farming arrangements along EWEC
- Support/develop cross-border agricultural value chains to assure benefits on all sites

Long-term (5-10 years)

- Improve road infrastructure in Laos and Vietnam and construct additional linked roads and railways to China (as requested by Thai stakeholders in transit trade to China).
- Coordinate with larger donors and infrastructure programs
- Assure common logistics standards between Lao and Vietnamese logistic firms
- Enforce Danang sealink as a strong container hub for transportation of goods

6.2 Road map for Thailand-Lao PDR border of EWEC. Nakhon Phanom - Khammouane

Short-term actions (<1 year)

- Prepare communication / knowledge material regarding Thai and Laos agricultural producers, traders and logistic firms as well on CBT along EWEC and assure its distribution to stakeholder-network and public institutions in order to augment transparency in document procedures and fees
- develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC
- Organise fairs and trade shows to increase exchanges and network among private businesses along border

Mid-term (1-5 years)

- Develop common trade database and foster information sharing
- Develop EWEC App or Website for CBT along EWEC
- Support contract farming arrangements between Laos and Thailand for fruit transit trade to China
- Foster exchange between Thai and Laos SEZs and establish common agreements to complement services for transit trade to China (Nakhon Phanom, Khammouane)
- Follow-up earlier recommendations

Long-term (5-10 years)

- Map and link up with long-term development programs (infrastructure and trade facilitation programs) in ASEAN of e.g. ADB, JICA, GIZ, China, France, UN for road-infrastructure improvements for foster agricultural trade in Laos
- Ease truck logistics regulation among Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam
- Seek three-country solution at the border-crossings on the CCA process, including HR, opening hours, common forms (borders Nakhon Phanom – Khammouane, Mukdahan – Savannakhet, Lao Bao - Dansavan)

6.3 Road map for Thailand – Lao PDR border of EWEC: Mukdahan – Savannakhet

Short-term actions (<1 year)

- Capacitate traders in Savannakhet (by Chamber) in agricultural trade procedures to increase the number of agricultural traders in Savannakhet province (specializing in specific on cross-border logistics),
- Improve transparency on procedures and fees of border crossing of vehicle, people and goods at the second Friendship bridge
- Prepare communication / knowledge material regarding Thai and Laos agricultural producers, traders and logistic firms as well on CBT along EWEC and assure its distribution to stakeholder-network and public institutions in order to augment transparency in

document procedures and fees

- Organise fairs and trade shows to increase exchanges among private businesses along border

Mid-term (1-5 years)

- Develop common trade database and foster information sharing
- Develop EWEC App or Website for CBT along EWEC
- Support contract farming arrangements between Laos and Thailand for fruit transit trade to China (e.g. simplified provincial contract farming manual Savannakhet and Khammouane)
- Foster exchange between Thai and Laos SEZs and establish common agreements to complement services for transit trade to China (Savannakhet, Mukdadan)
- Follow-up earlier recommendations

Long-term (5-10 years)

- Map and link up with long-term development programs (infrastructure and trade facilitation programs) in ASEAN of e.g. ADB, JICA, GIZ, China, France, UN for road-infrastructure improvements for foster agricultural trade in Laos
- Ease truck logistics regulation among Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam
- Seek three-country solution at the border-crossings on common CCA process, including HR, opening hours, common forms (border of Nakhon Phanom-Khammouane, Mukdahan-Savannakhet, Lao Bao-Dansavan)

6.4 Road map for Myanmar-Thailand border of Kayin State and Tak province.

Short-term (<1 year)

- Foster communication and exchange of experience between the public authorities of both countries by regular meetings and follow-up on the decisions and recommendations of these meetings
- Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC
- Facilitate better coordination of the public institutions on each side of the border by organising regular meetings of the relevant institutions and organisations
- Organise study / exposure visits to other border areas, which implement Single Stop Inspections and support the preparation for their implementation at the new border crossing in cooperation with chamber of commerce and customs office.

Mid-term (1-5 years)

- Support the development of a computerized customs system called Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System (MACCS) which will be relevant to agricultural product export in Myanmar (being financially supported and implemented by JICA); computerisation improves transparency for cross-border trade.
- Harmonise border trade online system (BTOS)

- Facilitate the formalisation of trade of agricultural products from Myanmar to Thailand by linking up with private companies, which buy already products from Myanmar

Long-term (5-10 years)

- Improve road infrastructure
- Harmonisation of agriculture trade policy and agriculture policy in general
- Support to the implementation of Transport Facilitation Agreements of the GMS countries.

After due consideration and exchange with the MI team a further shortlist was derived from the above short- mid- and long-term action/road maps. The consultant team then developed based on existing knowledge Action Plans to be prioritised in the next step of this research: During twin-provincial stakeholder workshops. Chapter 7 describes the Action Plans and inputs from the stakeholders during the workshop followed by Chapter 8 describing the final prioritisation for each twin-province after the workshop. Only chapter 8 describes in final view the results of the whole research process (including debriefing workshop at MI).

7 Action plans and stakeholder prioritisation

The Action Plan template

The Action Plan targets to assure the CB agricultural trade increase in the region. Firstly, the consultant team developed 9 measures based on the results of interview analysis and of discussions with stakeholders in the field as well as literature study. Secondly, the stakeholders discussed and set priorities among these measures during the workshops in Dong Ha (March 13th, 2018) and Khammouane (March 15th, 2018). The Action Plan was delivered by shaping these 9 measures into concrete implementation steps. The Action Plan features 10 parameters:

The Action Plans featured the following parameters:

- Title of the measure (with update and Number)
- Objective
- Indicators
- Location and duration
- Manager
- Cooperation partners
- Lead partners
- Steps with duration, start, support, resources
- Dissemination plan with location, recipient and format
- Risks
- Reporting

At the Workshop at Dong Ha (13.03.2018) and Khammouane (15.03.2018), the stakeholders discussed the Action Plan. As a result, all the Action Plans have been given priority status by at least one province, except for Action Plan Nr.8. Besides the prioritisation, the participants had also the opportunity to:

- Discuss and add comments, specific needs and requested elements for implementation.
- Elaborate own/new ideas and align ideas and processes from both sides of the border crossings.
- Define and discuss needs of assistance and support for implementation from MI or from other donor organisations.
- Form agreement on the proposed action plan among the respective parties

Certainly, the fruitful interventions will require the stakeholders staying highly committed to the objectives and activities described overtime. However, these comments have a great potential to facilitate the process of implementation.

Finally, the consultants note that the limited information were available on implemented, on-going or foreseen activities regarding this issue.

7.1 The suggested Action Plans

7.1.1 Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC

There are noticeable regional differences in terms of transparency on fees and procedures. This may lead to the possible application of regionally different handling and fees as well as procedural inconsistency and double charges across borders. In order to avoid these cases, transparency on fees and procedures must be established. For customers, border gates may be the first window to understand their obligations in terms of payments and process. Thus, the information regarding fees and procedures must be displayed at the border gates at well frequented places, with the same sizes of boards, as well as the explanation of redress systems. The objective of the Action Plan is to install common high-standard information boards regarding fees and procedure at the EWEC borders to establish transparency for border customers. This action plan has been assigned the highest priority from all the 6 border-provinces during the workshops.

Comments to be considered:

(i) Border of Lao Bao (VN)– Dansavan (LA)

<p><i>Vietnam: Quang Tri/Lao Bao</i> Objective: Add to the objective: to increase transparency and reduce time for completing procedures and resulting costs for traders and people who are eligible to border crossing compliances Stakeholders: Customs, border army (Police in Laos side), Health Quarantine, Animal Quarantine, Plant Quarantine, support agency: MI; Lead: Mgt. Centre for Lao Bao Border Gate Steps: Note: Agreement of MI/RLED-EWEC with partner countries; tripartite agreements with twin-border provinces and MI Step 1 needs 1 month; Step 5 needs 3 months</p>	<p><i>Lao PDR: Savannakhet /Dansavan</i> Objective: The transparency to cross-border of passenger, vehicle, products and also to make it fast and smooth Stakeholders: Customs Office, Immigration Office, Plant and Animal Quarantine, Public Health (Food and Drug Sector), Administrative at border check point, Government Administrative Office; Lead: Provincial Leaders provide advices; administrative sector at the border check point Steps: (1) Organise meeting of 2 borders monthly to discuss and find solution to solve problems (2) Develop manual to use in two sides (3) Improve infrastructure facilities (4) Human resource development</p>
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(ii) Borders of Khammouane (LA)-Nakhon Phanom (TH) and Savannakhet (LA)-Mukdahan (TH)

<p><i>Lao PDR: Khammouane and Savannakhet</i> Objective: No change Stakeholders: PAFO, DIC, Department of Public Health, Custom Office, Tax Office, Immigration Office, PCCI;</p>	<p><i>Thailand: Mukdahan and Nakhon Phanom</i> Objective: No change Stakeholders: (i) Government sector: Custom house, immigration office, plant quarantine, wild animal check</p>
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<p>Lead: PAFO, DIC, Department of Public Health</p> <p>Steps: Clear task allocation to all relevant departments to avoid overlapping of work; important topics to be aligned with regulations; 0% tax must be mentioned; obligations need to be fully followed by private sector</p>	<p>point, food and drug sector, district highway office; (ii)</p> <p>Private sector: Import-expert entrepreneurs;</p> <p>Lead: Custom house</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Collection all data about fee announcement (2) Working procedure of each sector (3) Organise meeting with relevant stakeholders (4) Disseminate to people
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Measure:	Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC borders			Update/No:	1; Feb-2018		SHORT MEASURES	(<1 year)	
Objective:	Common high standard of fee- and procedure boards assured at all EWEC borders for transparency to border customers								
Indicators:	Exposure visits of border mgt. to understand varying standards along all borders with common assessment for highest future transparency measures (visibility of fees and process) at all borders Twin-border agreements for common transparency standards or for all EWEC borders developed Workshop with twin-border agreements on common transparency measures along EWEC Implementation of new standards at all border								
Where:	All EWEC borders; exposure visit to Third Friendship Bridge, Nakhon Phanom								
Duration:	Start: May-2018			End: May-2019		Manager:	ABCDFGH		
Actively involved cooperation partners:						Lead partners:			
1) MoU of MI/RLED-EWEC with all partner countries / tripartite agreements with twin-border provinces and MI						Customs houses and management of EWEC borders			
2) Organisation of exposure trip with workshop on 'agreement on setting common minimum transparency standards at borders' to best practice borders (3rd Friendship Bridge) with Picture Collection of all fee- and procedure related boards with location specification from all EWEC borders						MI official with border-customs office			
3) Analysis and finalisation of lessons in form of report and PPP						MI official			
4) Workshop for finalising twin border agreements for transparency/visibility of fee and procedure processes along EWEC with common minimum standards						All border officials (customs, immigration, quarantine, phytosanitary)			
5) Implementation of agreed standards by all borders						Customs head / Head of border management			
MI role: Facilitation and budgeting of all steps (except step 6)									
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days			
1	Organising pictures from all borders	2 months	May-18	Agreement during workshop	MI personnel	7 days			
2	Logistics and overall organisation of exposure trip and workshop to best practice borders	2 months	Jul-18	Step 1	MI personnel	7 days			
3	Exposure visit cum workshop and standard setting by all decision makers of border officials at Third Friendship Bridge Nakhon Phanom with report on best practice on 'transparency at EWEC borders on fees and procedures' and desk-study on international best practices	2 months	Sep-18	Step 1,2	All decision customs officials with MI / Consultant	10 days			
4	Workshop report and distribution	1 month	Oct-18	Step 1, 2, 3	MI official	2 months			
5	Implementation of standards at all EWEC borders according to workshop agreement	2 months	Nov-18	Step 1-4	Responsible border officials at all EWEC borders	2 months			
6	Workshop for finalisation and implementation plans of twin-border agreements for minimum standards on transparency/visibility of fees and processes along EWEC borders	1 month	Dec-18	Step 1-5					
7	Monitoring and reporting on progress of implementation	7 days	Dec-18	Step 1-6		7 days			
Description of Dissemination Plan:				When	Format				
-					-				
-					-				
Risks:									
In-time service availability of implementation of agreed standards									
No fund availability with border officials to implement agreed standards									
Reports		Deadline	By Whom	To Whom					
1	Report: collection of pictures and analysis)		MI	All EWEC border heads					
2	Report: Workshop agreements on standards for EWEC border transparency (fees and procedures)		MI	s.o. + EWEC donors					
3	Report: Achievement on transparency		MI	s.o.					

7.1.2 Individual country-specific manuals on contract farming

There exist keen interests in increasing contract-farming activities in Lao PDR by Vietnamese, as well as by Thai private businesses across the border. PAFO also sees contract-farming in Lao PDR as a potential target for investment in the agricultural sector. This points at the possible increase in investments in agricultural trade along EWEC by making the contract-farming more attractive for national and international investors and business.

Against this ground, objective of the Action Plan is to ‘assure standardised manuals and effective dissemination for contract-farming’. This Action Plan was prioritised especially by Nakhon Phanom and Mukdahan provinces in Thailand and by Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces in Laos.

Comments to be considered at the workshop at Khammouane:

<i>Lao PDR: Khammouane and Savannakhet</i>	<i>Thailand: Mukdahan and Nakhon Phanom</i>
<p>Objective: No change</p> <p>Stakeholder: DPI, PAFO, DIC, Department of Public Work and Transportation, Department of Finance</p> <p>⁶Lead: PAFO, DIC, DPI, PCCI, (Customs Office, Tax Office)</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Study the potential (2) Organise meeting (relevant stakeholders) (3) Seek proposal to get approval (4) Implementation of other steps 	<p>Objective: No change</p> <p>Stakeholders: Department of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, Department of Agriculture, Department of Finance, Department of Justice, Custom House, MoFA, BOI (Body of Interest on trade)</p> <p>Lead: MoA, Department of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce, Custom House, MoFA, BOI (Body of Interest on Trade)</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Study on cross border contract farming from neighbouring countries (2) Develop cross border contract farming manual of each country to national and international business investors (3) Disseminate manual to entrepreneur/investors to invest in agriculture sector (4) Assign team to facilitate and coordinate monitoring the progress of implementation and solve problems coming up.

⁶ During the workshop the ‘one lead’ could not be derived. In case of choosing to work on this action plan, the stakeholder analysis and detailed planning with MI as facilitator will derive at the ‘one lead’ needed to assure efficient process management of the activity.

Measure:	Individual country-specific manuals on contract farming for national and international investors with dissemination plan to main EWEC stakeholders for improved agricultural trade and investment			Update/No:1, Feb-2018	SHORT TERM MEASURE (< 1 year)	
Objective:	Assure standardised manuals and effective dissemination for contract farming (national and international investors) along the EWEC for increase of investments along EWEC on agricultural trade					
Indicators:	1) MoU between MI and all 4 countries for development initiative 2) Analysis of Vietnam, Lao PDR, Thailand and Myanmar regulations for contract farming for local AND international investors by mid 2018 3) Individual country-specific manuals developed for national and international investors in similar format by Oct-2018 4) Dissemination plan of manuals through chambers (hard-copy and online) with identified mode of transfer by the mid 2018 5) Distributed manuals to all main stakeholders (chambers, business associations, international webpages etc.) by the end of 2018					
Where:	Study in all 4 countries; distribution in all 4 counties through various channels					
Duration:	Start:15-May-2018	End: 31-Dec-2018	Manager:	MI personnel with identified agricultural department officials of all 4 countries		
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:			
Agricultural departments of 4 countries (to be decided: of twin provinces or national level)			MI personnel along EWEC with TIF (also possibly: contracted consultant)			
Departments of Industry of all 4 countries (to be decided: of twin provinces)			-			
Chambers of all twin provinces			-			
Twin provincial administrative heads of all 4 countries			-			
MI role:			Support needed from:			
Lead facilitator			bilateral and international cross-border trade programs in the 4 countries			
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	MoU with all 4 countries/participating countries and MI (drafting by MI)	2 months	May-18		MI personnel	20 days
2	Analysis and finalisation of manual structure by TIF/external consultant/MI specialised personnel	1 month	Jul-18	Step 1	MI / TIF / external consultant with main stakeholders in 4 countries	30 days
3	Data collection in collaboration with main stakeholders of all 4 countries	3 months	Aug:Oct-18	Step 1, 2	MI/TIF/external consultant	30 days
4	Finalisation of manuals	2 months	Nov:Dec-18	Step 1,2,3	MI/TIF/external consultant	30 days
5	Dissemination plan development for all 4 countries with assured budgeting	2 months	Jun-18	Step 1, 2	MI/TIF/external consultant	20 days
6	Possibility: International workshop for dissemination with main stakeholders; website launch of document; hard-copy distribution to main and other		Jan:Mar-19	Step 1,2,3		
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
Risks:						
Budgets for distribution plan not assured						
Not all countries agree to format of manuals; too many exceptions to the rule						
	Reports	Deadline		By Whom	To Whom	

7.1.3 Bilateral manuals on cross-border business investment

For the countries along EWEC to development with sustainability, it is important to balance cross-border investment for agricultural trade between twin-provinces. Especially among stakeholders from Vietnamese and Thai private sector, the interest in agricultural investment is high ‘just across the border’. This points to low level of transparency and thus the sentiment of intrust; conversely put, it indicates a high level of risk for investors. In order to overcome this obstacle, publication of a border provincial business manual will be beneficial. For the particular purpose of fostering investment, its contents should be designed to connect the targeted area of investment – processing, packaging, labelling and logistics in agriculture, and the relevant information for investors –tax, VAT, re-import, one-stop-window and redress system.

Against this ground, the objective of the Action Plan is to assure standardises – up to date – business manuals and effective dissemination for cross-border business investment for national and international investors along EWEC. This Action Plan was chosen by the Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces of Lao PDR for CBT facilitation with Thailand, during the workshop in Khammouane. Comments to be considered:

<p>Lao PDR: Khammouane and Savannakhet</p> <p>Objective: No change</p> <p>Stakeholders: PAFO, DIC, DPI, Department of Public Work and Transportation, Immigration Office, DoFA, PCCI, Custom Office</p> <p>Lead: DIC and PAFO</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Form working group (from above stakeholders) (15 days) (2) Draft ad signed MoU or Agreement with relevant partners (2 months) (3) Field data collection & analysis by partners (45 days) (4) Develop draft manual (2 months) (5) Distribute draft manual to get inputs and finalise; printing (1 month) (6) Disseminate manual to all relevant partners (15 days) <p>Note: Is has been mentioned that the manuals will abide to national and internal law of investment, the manuals are utmost important, budget must be confirmed for Laos, and the format should be easy comprehensible and standardised as much as possible for all border provinces alike.</p>	<p>Thailand: Mukdahan and Nakhon Phanom</p> <p>Objective: No change</p> <p>Stakeholders: Department of Agriculture, Vice President Chamber of Industries, Plant and Animal Quarantine, Public Health, Chamber of Commerce, Department of Agriculture and Cooperatives, DoFA, Business Association, Department of Trade Negotiation, Department of Industry, Association of Logistic</p> <p>Lead: DoA, Chamber of Commerce, Department of Industry, Custom House, MoA, MoFA⁷</p> <p>Steps: Assure simplicity of manual; otherwise follow suggested steps.</p>
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⁷ During the workshop the ‘one lead’ could not be derived. In case of choosing to work on this action plan, the stakeholder analysis and detailed planning with MI as facilitator will derive at the ‘one lead’ needed to assure efficient process management of the activity.

Measure:	Bilateral Manuals on cross-border business investment (in agriculture collection, logistics, processing and packaging) with dissemination plan to main EWEC stakeholders and beyond for improved agricultural trade and investment			Update/No:1, Feb-2018	SHORT TERM MEASURE (< 1 year)	
Objective:	Assure standardised up to date manuals and effective dissemination for cross-border business investment (national and international investors) along the EWEC and international for increase of investments along EWEC on agricultural trade					
Indicators:	1) MoU between MI and all 4 countries for development initiative 2) Analysis of Vietnam, Laos PDR, Thailand and Myanmar regulations for contract farming for local AND international investors by mid 2018 3) Manual development for all countries for national and international investors on agriculture collection, logistics, processing, packaging in same format by Oct-2018 4) Dissemination plan of manuals through chambers (hard-copy and online) with identified mode of transfer by the mid 2018 5) Distributed manuals to all main stakeholders (chambers, business associations, international webpages etc.) by the end of 2018					
Where:	Study in all 4 countries; distribution in all 4 counties through various channels					
Duration:	Start: 15-May-18	End: 31-Dec-18	Manager:	MI personnel with identified agricultural department officials of all 4 countries		
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:			
Agricultural departments of 4 countries (to be decided: of twin provinces or national level)			MI personnel along EWEC with TIF (also possibly: contracted consultant)			
Departments of Industry of all 4 countries (to be decided: of twin provinces or national level)			-			
Chambers of all twin provinces			-			
Twin provincial administrative heads of all 4 countries			-			
MI role:			Support needed from:			
Lead facilitator			bilateral and international CBT programs in the 4 countries			
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	MoU with all 4 countries/participating countries and MI (drafting by MI)	2 months	May-18		MI personnel	20 days
2	Analysis and finalisation of manual structure by TIF/external consultant/MI specialised personnel	1 month	Jul-18	Step 1	MI / TIF / external consultant with main stakeholders in 4 countries	30 days
3	Data collection in collaboration with main stakeholders of all 4 countries	3 months	Aug:Oct-18	Step 1, 2	MI/TIF/external consultant	30 days
4	Finalisation of manuals	2 months	Nov:Dec-18	Step 1,2,3	MI/TIF/external consultant	30 days
5	Dissemination plan development for all 4 countries with assured budgeting	2 months	M6:8_2018	Step 1, 2	MI/TIF/external consultant	20 days
6	Possibility: International workshop for dissemination with main stakeholders; website launch of document; hard-copy distribution to main and other stakeholders		first quarter 2019	Step 1,2,3		
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
Risks:						
Budgets for distribution plan not assured						
Not all countries agree to format of manuals; too many exceptions to the rule						
	Reports	Deadline		By Whom	To Whom	

7.1.4 Optimised implementation of Phase IV – SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao (VN)/ Dansavan (LA)

The border between Lao Bao – Dansavan is the sole case, which is appointed both as SSI/SWI and as CCA (Common Control Area). For this reason, lessons from Lao Bao–Dansavan are invaluable for all International Border checkpoints in the GMS. The procedures of SSI/SWI pilot were carried out in 4 phases:

Stage 1: jointly inspect commodities at the CCA from June 2005 onwards

Stage 2: jointly with customs agencies and quarantine agencies

Stage 2-3: by country of entry

Stage 4: by all agencies for SSI/SWI from February 2015

In the SSI/SSW process, however, the specific attention has not been paid to 1. decreasing volumes of trade, 2. specific preferences by traders using this border and 3. difficulties faced by traders at the border.

Therefore, the objective of the suggested action plan is to assure optimisation of SSI/SWI and CCA of Lao Bao-Dansavan to develop a model for other EWEC borders. In order to address above-mentioned potential obstacles, it suggests to include (i) Analysis of human resources and capabilities at border crossing, (ii) Training needs assessment for procedures (SSI and CCA), (iii) Substitution plan for human resources with responsibilities, and (iv) Strategy and guidelines to achieve integrity and good governance of customs services. This action plan was prioritised by Thai stakeholders with great interest during the workshop in Khammouane, and the Vietnamese and Laos stakeholders during the workshop in Quang Tri. Comments to be considered:

Lao PDR: Savannakhet/Dansavan	Vietnam: Quang Tri/Lao Bao
Objective: Additional: Inspection procedure, build up trust, agreement and collaboration among relevant sectors, to build up the transparency to entrepreneurs.	Objective: No change
Stakeholders: PAFO, DIC, Immigration Office, Department of Public Health (Food and Drug Sector), Customs Office, Entrepreneur; Lead: PAFO and DIC	Stakeholders: Add business associations; Lead: No change
Steps: (1) Organise meeting with relevant stakeholders, disseminate about rule and regulation	Steps: (1) TOR formulation and sub-contracting international consultant for studies (TNA, HR, Process mgt.) to study status quo and existing process manuals, (2) Organizing separate trilateral conference for each side in Vietnam and Laos (MI, local authority and functioning agencies of both sides, business associations) with sharing of manual (step 1) and the output of minute/agreement on way forward; (3) Quadrilateral conference (MI, local authority and functioning agencies and business associations of both provinces) (4) Standardisation and sequencing optimisation for border traders

(2) Set up laboratory at the border and facilities	(5) Twin-border policy dialogue on agreement for human resources and risk mgt. capacity building
(3) Deliver capacity development to targeted staff	(6) Implementation of human resources capacity development
	(7) Implementation of risk management for agricultural commodities across the border
	(8) Monitoring and evaluation for exit strategy of MI

Measure:	Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao Dansavan with focus on agricultural trade as replication model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia			Update/No.:1; Feb-18	MIDTERM MEASURE (1-5 years)	
Objective:	Assure optimisation of SSI/SWI and CCA of Dansavan/Lao Bao to become replication model for other EWEC borders (as best practice example)					
Indicators:	Indicators: 1) Trilateral MoU with twin-provinces (SVK and QT) and MI 2) External analysis of 'operational CCA manual' for finalisation of improvement measures at D/LB by Sept 2018 3) SWI and CCA process steps standardised and sequence optimised at Lao Bao/Dansavan by Sept 2018 including processing, sequencing and capacity development needs for agriculture and/or all Cross Border trade 4) Risk management manual established for agricultural trade for D/LB by the end of 2018 5) Measure 'Human Resource Development Strategy for SSI/SWI - CCA at Dansavan/Lao Bao border gate					
Where:	Dansavan/Lao Bao border					
Duration:	Start: 01-May-2018	End: 01-July-2019	Manager:	MI personnel as facilitator for border officials		
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:			
Lao Bao and Dansavan twin provinces administration and customs offices including plant quarantine, immigration, border management and other officials involved in CCA checking			Customs officials			
MI role:				Support needed from:		
Facilitation of expert-contracting for external study and risk management manual preparation; facilitation of workshop for action plan; monitoring of implementation of improvement measures			ADB GSM program			
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	Trilateral agreement (drafting, signing processes, official signing)	2 months	May-18		MI personnel with Provincial administrations and border agencies	30 days
2	TOR formulation and subcontracting international consultant for studies (TNA, Human Resources, Process mgt.)	3 months	May-18		MI, border head, ADB (?)	30 days
3	Standardisation and sequencing optimisation for border traders (CCA=>Immigration) from study analysis	1 month	Aug-18	Step 1, 2		
4	Twin-border policy dialogue on findings of study and agreement for Human resources and risk mgt. Capacity building	2 months	Oct-18	Step 1, 2, 3		
5	Implementation of Human Resources Capacity Development	2 months	Jan-19	Step 1, 2, 3, 4		
6	Implementation of Risk Management for Agricultural commodities across LB/D border	2 months	Jan-19	Step 1, 2, 3, 4		
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
Risks:						
-						
	Reports	Deadline		By Whom	To Whom	

7.1.5 Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points (in specific Quang Tri-Savannakhet-Mukdahan)

Private stakeholders in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand are concerned with the existence of too many checkpoints along the road. Particularly, they pointed out the situation along the road 9 in Laos. Each checkpoint costs stakeholders extra time, trips and also formal and informal fees. Due to the sensitivity of the matter, private and public sector must jointly tackle this issue. Possible methods include the capacity building in respect to an improved control system and the reduction of the number of checkpoints.

The objective of the Action Plan is therefore to improved agricultural trade conditions by eliminating checkpoints along the road while still assuring necessary control-systems.

Comments to be considered:

Vietnam: Quang Tri / Lao Bao

Objective: No change; add: optimization and standardization of the check point in both sides; reduce to have only traffic police station on the road from the border gate

Stakeholders: Include Forest Inspection Force (with right to check/inspect trucks with agricultural commodities)

Lead: No change

Steps:

(1) Trust-building through right doing of enterprises: register their business (e.g. agricultural product business) with local government and functioning forces (e.g. traffic police) can allow to go through without checking. Good doing business improves trust on functioning forces.

(2) Need for installation of GPS device to track route.

(3) Need for enterprise logo on trucks (for easy recognition of trustful business operators)

(4) Improve facilities

Measure:	Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points as efficient 'control instruments' of illegal and criminal agricultural trade forms in all border provinces of EWEC (in specific Quang Tri-SVK-Mukdahan)			Update/No: 26-FEB-2018	MIDTERM MEASURE (1-5 years)	
Objective:	Improved agricultural trade conditions by eliminating check-points along the road while still assuring necessary control-system					
Indicators:	1) Risk management optimisation along EWEC based on detailed assessment in all border provinces 2) Capacity Building (CB) of check-point officials to assure 'international integrity standards' 3) Knowledge information exchange material for main stakeholders (state officials and main civil society stakeholders) on check-point-control systems in border areas					
Where:	border provinces along EWEC in Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar					
Duration:	Start: 01-June-2018	End: 31-Dec-2019	Manager:		Provincial departments	
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:			
All EWEC border provincial administration			Provincial administrations of border provinces and police			
Police and customs departments (provincial/state) of 4 countries along EWEC						
Chamber of commerce, in specific logistic firms, drivers						
MI role:				Support needed from:		
Facilitator for integrity capacity building measure and dialogues facilitation within provincial administration			-			
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	Assessment of check-point policies in all border provinces	2 months	Jun-18	State agreements		
2	Twin-provincial agreements on ccheck-point optimisation with MI for coordination	2 months	Aug-18	Step 1		
3	Capacity needs assessment for policing and check point officials	1 month	Sept:Dec-18	Step 1,2		
4	Enforcement of twin-agreements between Quang Tri-SVK and SVK-Mukdahan with monitoring through trader-analysis.	3 months	Mar-18	Step 1-3		
5	CB measures on 'international integrity standards' and UNESCAP transport facilitation resource tools	2 months	Jan-19	Step 1,2,3		
6	Analysis and publication on new agreed upon standards		May-19	Step 1,2,3,4		
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
Risks:						
-						
	Reports	Deadline		By Whom	To Whom	

7.1.6 Quality standards for agricultural products

The flow of agricultural cross-border trade depends on assured production standards; marketing into Global Value Chains (GVCs) needs even further quality and testing facilities. Quality standardisation of agricultural products, specifically in Lao PDR, is an urgent matter. In addition, the current situation of quality checks by foreign consultants for the China or other markets needs immediate address.

The Action Plan has the objective to increase capacities for high quality agricultural production for certified product testing.

Comments to be considered:

Lao PDR: Khammouane and Savannakhet

Objective: No change

Stakeholders: PAFO, DIC, Agriculture Institute, Department of Public Work and Transportation

Lead: PAFO

Steps:

Note: Information on time-horizon: Step 2 = 1 month, starting from June 2018; Step 3 = 1 month, starting from July 2018; Step 4 = 6 months, starting from August 2018; Step 5 0 6 months, starting from December 2018; Step 6 = 6 months, starting from December 2018; Step 7 = 1 month, starting from October 2019

Measure:	Quality standards for agricultural products			Update/No:1; Feb-2018	MIDTERM MEASURE (1-5 years)		
Objective:	Increase capacities for high quality agricultural production for certified product testing						
Indicators:	Agricultural production along GAP, HACCP assured Agricultural certification along international standards assured in all border provinces Capacity building measures for farmers, traders and agricultural officers on quality production Investment into SPS institutional structures assured Exchange of best practices on improved agricultural production						
Where:	All border provinces						
Duration:	Start: 2018-XX-XX	End: 2018-XX-XX	Manager:		MI as facilitator for Agric.		
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:				
Agricultural departments in all countries at provincial level			Agricultural departments at provincial level				
Private sector investors for certification (int.)			External consultant for in-depth analysis				
Bilateral / int. Programs							
ESCAP							
MI role:				Support needed from:			
Facilitator for agricultural depts.; for dialogue and workshop; for TOR and in-depth study, as well as donor mapping			-				
			-				
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days	
1	MoU between MI and border provinces on CB for quality improvement in production and testing of agricultural products	2 months	May-18		Workshop participants		
2	Donor mapping to assure support measure budgets	2 months		Step 1	MI personnel		
3	Assessment of SPS process in all border provinces	1 months		Step 1,2			
4	Setting up of minimum standards for production (CB/trainings) in all border provinces	6 month					
5	Setting of minimum standards for production in all border provinces	6 months					
6	Setting up of minimum standards to assure SPS in all border provinces	6 months					
	Setting up of capacity for certified testing in all border provinces	6 months					
7	Exchange and exposure of upgrade of quality production, quality testing institutional set-up through policy dialogue	1 month					
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format		
-					-		
Risks:							
-							
Reports		Deadline		By Whom	To Whom		

7.1.7 Human Resources Development Strategy for border control

Human Resources Development of border-personnel along EWEC is a concern raised by main stakeholders. This issue includes such as an in-depth training needs analysis for the human resources, a detailed substitution plan for personnel at the borders, good governance and integrity trainings for border officials. This measure can be combined with the Action Plan on SSI/SWI implementation improvements (Action Plan 4) at the Lao Bao-Dansavan border, or it can be a standalone measure for all borders along EWEC.

The suggested objective of the Action Plan is to analyse human resource capacities, training needs assessment for HR at the border and substitution plan for staff members, along with good governance and integrity trainings of custom officers. This Action Plan has been prioritised by stakeholders of the Khammouane and Savannakhet provinces during the Khammouane workshop.

Comments to be considered:

Lao PDR: Khammouane and Savannakhet

Objective: No change

Stakeholders: Immigration Office, Custom Office, PAFO, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Public Health (Food and Drug sector), Department of Finance, DoFA

Lead: Administration Office at the border

Steps: (Notes on time horizons)

Step 1 = 1 month, starting April 2018

Step 2 = 3 months; Step 3 = 1 month

Step 3.1 = 3 months, starting from October 2018

Step 3.2 = 1 month, starting from May 2018

Step 4 = 1 month, starting from October 2019

Measure:	Human Resources (HR) Development Strategy for border control			Update/No: 1; Feb-2018	SHORTTERM MEASURE (< 1 year)	
Objective:	Capacitate HRs and the HR management to optimise cross-border(CB) trade process					
Indicators:	Analysis of HR capacities Training needs assessment for HR at the border substitution plan for staff members good governance and integrity in CB customs					
Where:	All border provinces of EWEC, in specific Lao Bao / Dansavan					
Duration:	Start: 03-Jun-2018	End: 30-Mar-2019	Manager:		MI personnel	
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:			
All border officials at Lao Bao/Densavan border			Customs control at the border			
All border officials of EWEC border (if all EWEC borders agree to measure)			-			
TNA consultant and trainer			-			
-			-			
MI role:			Support needed from:			
TOR development, facilitator to consultant; facilitator to border adm			-			
-			-			
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	MoU between: MI and twin provinces of Lao Bao / Dansavan on HR optimisation at the border	1 month	Jun-18			
2.1	HR capacity analysis	3 months	Jul-18	2.1 - 2.3 together 4 months	External consultant	
2.2	TNA HR at the border	1 month				
2.3	Substitution plan development for staff members	1 month				
3.1	Good governance and integrity training to border officials	1 month	Dec-18	Step 1,2	TIF / consultant	
3.2	HR CD along analysis	1 month	Jan-19	Step 1,2	TIF / consultant	
4	Border customer feedback study	1 month	Jun-19	Step 1,2,3	MI personnel	
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
Risks:						
No interest amongst border officials; no cooperation with border agencies						
-						
Reports		Deadline	By Whom	To Whom		
Midterm report Sept-2018						
Final report Jul-2019						

7.1.8 Digital information exchange improvement along EWEC

The consultant team suggested common data platform for EWEC for private sector and government sectors in order to facilitate information sharing and possible database may be beneficial for the purpose of cross border agricultural trade increase. Particularly, Lao PDR was assigned a high priority. At present, existing international data platforms (e.g. Asian Trade Repository, ATR) and/or other national platforms are operational and in use. During the workshops, the main stakeholders did not put highest priority to this matter. Reason might be the development of common information platform is a long-term measure, which requires financial investment and continuous update and monitoring of information. Other possibility might be its difficulty to find effectiveness in twin-province approach, and others.

Measure:	Digital information exchange improvement along EWEC			Update/No: 1; Feb-2018	MIDTERM MEASURE (1-5 years)	
Objective:	The information sharing of improvement measures for increased agricultural trade along EWEC are efficiently used by all stakeholders in agricultural trade along EWEC					
Indicators:	List of most important info on cross-border (CB) agricultural trade developed 4-country agreement on common platform for launching info on CB trade related to agriculture Assessment of existing data base and definition of final layout and instrument Dissemination of new platform Re-alignment after user-verification of data					
Where:	Internet based: website or EWEC App					
Duration:	Start: 15-May-2018		End: 31-Dec-2018		Manager:	MI personnel as facilitator
Actively involved cooperation partners:				Lead partners:		
Provincial administration of all border provinces and provinces along EWEC Agricultural departments Institutions in charge of transportation along EWEC MI, ESCAP and other trans-boundary cooperation institutions in South East Chambers and Business Associations				MI institute (TIF and consultant for App)		
MI role:				Support needed from:		
Facilitator for information gathering on EWEC important info on CB agricultural trade (rules, regulations, manuals, step-by-step investments, PPP regulations, contract farming, business cooperation)				International donor or UNESCAP		
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	MoU between 4 States and MI for development/improvement of common App / Website for EWEC agricultural trade improvement	3 months	Jun-18			
2	Find sustainable funding structure for website / App	2 months	Aug-18	Step 1		
3	Develop info-sharing and updating formats; develop instrument and link existing info	3 months	Oct-18	Step 1,2		
4	Launch at inter-state workshop/conference	1 month	Jan-19	Step 1,2,3		
5	Follow a strict dissemination plan for high user-quota	2 months	Feb-19	Step 1 - 4		
6	Re-assess use of instrument and re-align accordingly	1 month	May-19	Step 1 - 5		
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
-					-	
Risks:						
No sustainable fund structure						
Reports		Deadline		By Whom	To Whom	
Midterm report		Sep-18		MI	Main stakeholders	
Final report		Jul-18		MI	Main stakeholders	

7.1.9 Special Economic Zone (SEZ) cross border cooperation

Coordination across border SEZs can contribute to create win-win situations for both sides of the border, as comparative advantages and complementarities can add up. For example, the border-SEZs of Savan-Seno in Savannakhet, and the newly built SEZ in Mukdahan can complement each other, and/or use complementary advantages from the twin province (labour, skills, education institutions etc.). The same is true for the SEZ of Thakek and the newly built in Nakhon Phanom: both SEZs.

The importance of twin-provincial approach towards SEZ cooperation was prioritised especially from the Thai main stakeholders of Nakhon Phanom and Mukdahan during the workshop in Khammouane. Therefore, a team was formed from these two provinces to deliberate on the Action Plan with an objective to embrace full advantages between border SEZs along EWEC.

Comments to be considered:

Thailand: Mukdahan and Nakhon Phanom

Objective: No change

Stakeholders: Department of Treasury, Department of Industry, Department of Agriculture, Governor Office, Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, Custom House, Immigration Office, Department of Transportation

Lead: Vice Governor of Nakhon Phanom and Mukdahan

Steps:

- (1) Study details of SEZs from different countries, parameters being: type of business, activities, priority right, labour movement, machine and technology imported
- (2) Build up and strengthen the collaboration between Thailand and Laos in each sector to assure the linkage of each sector such as technology center, warehouse, labour skills, products etc.
- (3) Build up the market linkage between Thailand and Laos – based on the need for consumers from SEZs, and also exchange marketing plan, market intelligence, and advertising

Measure:	Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Cross Border Cooperation			Update/No:	XXX	
Objective:	Embrace full advantages in the border areas along EWEC					
Indicators:	1) Comparative advantages of Savan-Seno Economic Zone (Lao PDR/SVK) and Mukdahan SEZ (Thailand/First Phase SEZ) to create 'win-win' situation of both SEZs (complementarity of services, capacities, resources) 2) Comparative advantages of Takhek SEZ (Lao PDR) with Nakhon Phanom SEZ (Thailand/Second Phase SEZ) to create 'win-win' situation of both SEZs (complementarity of services, capacities, resources) 3) Comparative advantages of Dansavanh SEZ (Lao PDR) with Lao Bao SEZ (Vietnam) to create 'win-win' situation of both SEZs (complementarity of services, capacities, resources)					
Where:	Savan-Seno SEZ with Mukdahan SEZ Nakhon Phanom SEZ					
Duration:	Start: 2018-XX-XX	End: 2018-XX-XX	Manager:	ABCDFGH		
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:			
Management of border SEZs			Provincials			
Agricultural Departments of twin provinces						
Chambers and Trade Associations of twin provinces						
Supported by			Support needed from:			
MI (TIF dept. Or consultant for comparative advantage assessments)			ADB collaboration / GIZ collaboration?			
-						
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days
1	(up to three) Twin-border MoUs for border-SEZ comparative advantage use	3 months	May-18			
2	Follow-up with main stakeholders of the province to assess / list comparative advantages and disadvantages of all involved SEZs	1 month		Step 1	MI with main stakeholders	Each twin-province 20 days
3	(up to three) Workshop/dialogue between main stakeholders of border-SEZs to define follow-up steps/action plan to assure win-win-situation for both border SEZs	3 months	Jul-18	Step 1,2		
4	Follow-up by main stakeholders to assure 'complementarity MoU between border SEZs' of each twin-province	3 months	Oct-18	Step 1,2,3	Main stakeholders	
5	Common approaches to development by border-SEZs recognised through agreements in workshops	3 months	Feb-19	Step 1,2,3,4,		
6						
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
-					-	
-					-	
Risks:						
-						
-						
	Reports	Deadline		By Whom	To Whom	

7.2 Action Plan priorities by the stakeholders in three Workshops

During the three stakeholder workshops for all the twin provinces along the EWEC, deliberations on most important actions / Action Plans were held as follows:

- The workshop for the twin-border stakeholders of Kayin State and Tak province in early February 2018 brought out first actions through brainstorming and in-depth discussions with stakeholders, based on a power point presentation by the consultant (right after field data collection). No suggested action plan was prepared in advance for the stakeholders' discussion.
- The two stakeholder workshops in Dong Ha and Khammouane in March 2018 with its' respective relevant twin provincial stakeholders were – with more time for in-depth analysis and processing of the collected data - given the results of the elaborate desk- and field data collection analysis in form of a power point presentation and pre-arranged recommended action plans by the consultants. With translations of the presentation and Action Plans into all relevant languages by the consultant and RLED-EWEC team, the stakeholders were introduced to the main activities, which could be achieved with the RLED-EWEC program and its stakeholders within the given project framework (time and finances). With a participatory method the stakeholders of twin-provinces could decide on their Action Plan priorities.
- During the Workshop at Khammouane in March 2018, the main stakeholders on agricultural cross-border trade came together to prioritise priority actions to increase agricultural trade across their border.
- The two twin-provinces of Nakhon Phanom – Khammouane, and Mukdahan – Svannakhet deliberated on their best way forward during the next 1.5 years of duration of the RLED-EWEC program, with MI as partner and supporter.

Prioritisation of Action Plans by workshop participants:

During the two stakeholder workshops in Dong Ha and Khammouane, the workshop participants were given voting points for prioritisation of 3 Action Plans out of a list of 9 Action Plans suggested for implementation in their respective provinces. Additional plans could have also been added, but the participants in both the workshops considered the list of Action Plans as very accurate and were able to choose the three most important once for their own province. This participatory approach offered to all participants to cast their individual perspective-vote and consequently the most important priority Action Plans could be derived by counting the points given by participants from different provinces. Through mediation the final choice of Action Plans derived and further details on the Action Plans could be brainstormed in separate country-teams.

The deliberations on action/Action Plan priorities by the stakeholders of the twin provinces are given in the following subchapters.

7.2.1 Vietnam-Lao PDR border of EWEC: Action Plan priorities of Dansavan/Savannakhet and Lao Bao /Quang Tri twin province

During the Workshop at Dong Ha in March 2018, the main stakeholders on agricultural cross-border trade came together to prioritise priority actions to increase agricultural trade across their border.

The following red-marked Action Plans got priority and further discussed during the workshop:

- Action plan 1: Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures (by both provinces)
- Action plan 2: Optimised implementation of Phase IV – SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao-Dansavan as replication model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia (by both provinces)
- Action Plan 5: Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points as efficient ‘control instruments’ of illegal and criminal agricultural trade forms in all border provinces of EWEC (by both provinces)

Quang Tri – Savannakhet Action Plan priorities for RLED-EWEC

VN		LA
16	1. Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC borders	19
7	2. Individual country-specific manuals on contract farming for national and international investors	5
14	3. Bilateral Manuals on cross-border business investment (in agriculture collection, logistics, processing and packaging)	6
8	4. Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao Dansavan as replication model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia	12
15	5. Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points as efficient 'control instruments' of illegal and criminal agricultural trade forms in all border provinces of EWEC (in specific Quang Tri-SVK-Mukdahan)	13
6	6. Quality standards for agricultural products	7
5	7. Human Resources Development Strategy for border control	12
1	8. Digital information exchange improvement along EWEC	0
2	9. SEZ Cross-border cooperation	6

Note:

- Bold regular marked action plans were deliberated by Laos and Vietnam teams parallel and presented for discussion

7.2.2 Thailand-Lao PDR border of EWEC: Action Plan priorities of Nakhon Phanom – Khammouane twin province

During the Workshop at Khammouane in March 2018, the main stakeholders on agricultural cross-border trade came together to prioritise actions to increase agricultural trade across their border. The two twin-provinces of Nakhon Phanom – Khammouane, and Mukdahan – Svannakhet deliberated on their best way forward during the next 1.5 years of duration of the RLED-EWEC program with MI as partner and supporter. Among 9 action plans, the ones selected with high priority and further deliberated during team-work by the twin provinces of Nakhon Phanom and Khammouane are:

- Action plan 1: Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures (both provinces)
- Action plan 2: Individual country-specific twin province manuals on contract farming for national and international investors (both provinces)
- Action plan 3: Bilateral manuals on cross-border business investment (in agriculture collection, logistics, processing and packaging) (both provinces)
- Action plan 6 and 7: Quality standards for agricultural products and Human resources development strategy for border control (Khammouane only)
- Action Plan 9: SEZ cross-border cooperation (especially Nakhon Phanom)

Twin provinces Nakhon Phanom – Khammouane: Action Plan priorities for RLED-EWEC

SVK	Kham.	Action Plan	Mukd.	N.Ph
12.5	11.5	1. Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC borders	3	9
7.5	6.5	2. Individual country-specific manuals on contract farming for national and international investors	3	8
7	4	3. Bilateral Manuals on cross-border business investment (in agriculture collection, logistics, processing and packaging)	0	5
0	3	4. Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao Dansavan as replication model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia	2	0
8	5	5. Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points as efficient 'control instruments' of illegal and criminal agricultural trade forms in all border provinces of EWEC (in specific Quang Tri-SVK-Mukdahan)	2	1
7.5	9.5	6. Quality standards for agricultural products	1	1
6	7	7. Human Resources Development Strategy for border control	2	1
0	1	8. Digital information exchange improvement along EWEC	0	4
2.5	3.5	9. SEZ Cross-border cooperation	3	7

Note:

- Bold regular marked action plans were deliberated by Thailand and Laos teams parallel and presented for comments
- Bold italic marked action plans were deliberated by Laos teams and presented for discussion
- Bold underline marked action plans were deliberated by Thailand team and presented for discussion

7.2.3 Thailand-Lao PDR border of EWEC: Action Plan priorities of Mukdahan and Savannakhet twin province

Among 9 action plans, the ones selected with high priority and further deliberated during teamwork by the twin-province of Mukdahan (Thailand) and Savannakhet (Lao PDR):

- Action plan 1: Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures (both provinces)
- Action plan 2: Individual country-specific twin province manuals on contract farming for national and international investors (both provinces)
- Action plan 3: Bilateral manuals on cross-border business investment (in agriculture collection, logistics, processing and packaging) (both provinces, especially Savannakhet)
- Action plan 6 and 7: Quality standards for agricultural products and Human resources development strategy for border control (especially Lao side: Khammouane and Savannakhet)
- Action Plan 9: SEZ cross-border cooperation (especially Thailand side: Nakhon Phanom with Mukdahan)

Twin provinces Mukdahan – Savannakhet: Action plan priorities for RLED-EWEC

SVK	Kham.	Action Plan	Mukd.	N.Ph.
12.5	11.5	1. Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC borders	3	9
7.5	6.5	2. Individual country-specific manuals on contract farming for national and international investors	3	8
7	4	3. Bilateral Manuals on cross-border business investment (in agriculture collection, logistics, processing and packaging)	0	5
0	3	4. Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao Dansavan as replication model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia	2	0
8	5	5. Optimise quantity and quality of national check-points as efficient 'control instruments' of illegal and criminal agricultural trade forms in all border provinces of EWEC (in specific Quang Tri-Savannakhet-Mukdahan)	2	1
7.5	9.5	6. Quality standards for agricultural products	1	1

SVK	Kham.	Action Plan	Mukd.	N.Ph.
6	7	<i>7. Human Resources Development Strategy for border control</i>	2	1
0	1	8. Digital information exchange improvement along EWEC	0	4
<u>2.5</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>9. SEZ Cross-border cooperation</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>

Note:

- Bold regular action plans were deliberated by Thailand and Laos teams parallel and presented for comments
- Bold italic marked action plans were deliberated by Laos teams and presented for discussion
- Bold underline marked action plans were deliberated by Thailand team and presented for discussion

7.2.4 Myanmar-Thailand border of EWEC: Action priorities in Kayin State and Tak twin province

The situation at the border crossing between Tak province (TH) and Kayin State (MM) is very much different from the other border crossings. The key objective of both countries is the successful establishment and operations at the newly constructed border crossing. Preparations for a common control area and single stop inspections are ongoing. With the new border crossing being operational expectedly by end of this year, the government of Thailand and the customs office as implementing agency plan to close some of the provisional customs posts at the “ports” along the bordering river. This may have a major impact on the existing cross-border agricultural trade. This very sensitive issue has to be approached in the near future, considering existing formal and informal agreements between the national government of Myanmar and the ethnic minorities, which live along the border to Thailand in Kayin state.

The following action plans may be considered for the border crossing at Tak province and Kayin state:

- Action plan 1: Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures
- Action plan 2: Individual country-specific twin province manuals on contract farming for national and international investors
- Action plan 7 Human Resources Development Strategy for border facilitation

Due to restriction of the time, which the research team spent at the border between Thailand and Myanmar, the details of the action plans could not be discussed with the stakeholders. From the feedback of the stakeholders of the workshop in Myawaddy on February 3rd 2018, the most feasible and most attractive actions plans are the above mentioned. Especially the action plan 7 on human resource development strategy would be well received, since the common control area will be completed in 2019. Details need to be discussed with the responsible institutions by MI implementation unit.

8 Priority setting of Mekong Institute and final recommendations

After priorities were set by the stakeholders, the Mekong Institute conducted a further analysis to prioritise the suggested action plans by the stakeholders in the twin provinces of during a one-day workshop at Khon Kaen with staff members of the RLED-EWEC project and other MI staff members, which are highly knowledgeable and familiar with the subject.

The RLED-EWEC project – supported by SDC – will be the framework, within which a final prioritisation was made during a debriefing workshop at MI.

In order to have a well-reasoned selection of priorities actions plans, the consultant introduced an evaluation scheme, which reflects the core objectives of the project on one hand and the expectation of the stakeholder on the other hand. At the same time MI has to carefully consider the limitations of time, financial means and human resource:

- Relevance, e.g. relevance to CBT of agric. commodities; expectation and needs of stakeholders;
- Effectiveness e.g. focus on agricultural commodities; reducing costs and time; reducing NTM; efficient implementation of necessary NTM;
- Efficiency, e.g. resources of stakeholders; capacities of stakeholders; resources and capacities of MI;
- Impact, e.g. reduced costs / time for CBT; higher price for agricultural products; increased trade volume; higher income;
- Cross cutting issues, e.g. gender equality; climate change mitigation and ethnicity.

The prioritisation was made in an informed and participatory manner, wherein the informed MI management and technical experts⁸ on the topic of RLED-EWEC, Mekong Institute Management, Trade and Investment Facilitation, and Agricultural Development and Commercialization ranked each action plan according to the parameters.

The action plans, which should be considered most for implementation are

Action plan 1	Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC
Action plan 2	Manuals on contract farming
Action plan 4	Optimised implementation of Phase IV – SSI/SWI at CCA at Lao Bao - Dansavan border crossing
Action plan 6	Quality standards for agricultural products

⁸ Executive Director, Program Director and a Program Manager of Agricultural Development and Commercialization, and a Program Specialist of Trade and Investment Facilitation, RLED-EWEC team

Action plan 7 Human Resources Development Strategy for border facilitation

Despite of all well-reasoned evaluation of the action plans, the management of the RLED-EWEC project has to consider the assessment of the stakeholder as well as synergies of the activities.

Tab. 9: MI prioritisation according to program-parameters of RLED-EWEC

	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Cross Cutting issues	Summary
1 Transparency on fees and procedures (all border crossings)	-	-	-	-	-	
2 Manuals on contract farming (Kammouane /Nakhon Phanom and Savannakhet / Mukdahan)	19	16	20	19	15	89
3a Manuals on cross-border business investment (Kommouane / Nakhon Phanom)	14	9	11	12	4	50
3b Manuals on cross-border business investment (Savannakhet / Mukdahan)	16	14	13	14	11	68
4 Optimal implementation of SSI/SWI (Quang Tri / Savannakhet)	26	21	19	23	10	99
5a Optimise quantity and quality of national check point (Quang Tri / Savannakhet)	16	23	13	16	8	76
5b Optimise quantity and quality of national check point (Savannakhet / Mukdahan)	25	23	20	18	17	103
6 Quality standards for agriculture products (especially relevant for MM, LA and VN)	25	21	21	17	22	106
7 Human resource development strategy for border control (Quang Tri / Savannakhet)	23	15	21	20	17	96
8 Digital information exchange along EWEC (not relevant according stakholder prioritisation)	-	-	-	-	-	
9 SEZ Cross border cooperation (Kammouane / Nakhon Phanom and Savannakhet/Mukdahan)	16	12	11	10	8	57

Recommendation 1: Utilise synergies for all border-crossings by implementing action plan 1

Action plan 1 on standards for transparency and fees and procedures along EWEC is a common ground for all border-crossings. Therefore, MI decided to focus on this action plan and allocate the

available resources most efficient, by designing the action plan in the way, that most components of the action plan are similar for all four border crossings. At the same time synergies can be developed, by the utilisation of best practice examples.

Recommendation 2: Combining action 4 with 7 will raise efficiency

Action plan 4 on the optimal implementation of SSI/SWI at the Lao Bao / Dansavan border crossing is most relevant for all border-crossings, since it is the political will, that SSI should be implemented in order to reduce time and costs of trade in the GMS member states. This action plan is rated very high with a total of 99 points. Under the condition that action plan 4 is implemented, the efficiency can be increased by combining this action plans with components of action plan 7, which are strongly linked to the implementation of SSI. The elaboration of a human resource strategy for the border control should consider the implementation of SSI as well.

Recommendation 3: Targeting agriculture related topics

Within the other components of the RLED-EWEC project, MI has the possibility to include minor components of action plan 2. The implementation of a new action plan on contract farming with a focus on cross border business investments and business cooperation seems not realistic considering the limited time and resources available for rest of the project duration.

Recommendation 4: Carefully consider implementation of action plan 5

The reduction and optimisation of check points is a highly sensitive issue, where MI does not necessarily have a mandate to discuss or advise the national decision-making authorities. Therefore, the consultants recommend being reluctant to take up an action plan, where MI does not have the capacity nor the decision-making power to change anything. Resources might be wasted, and the impact is very limited with respect to agricultural trade and income of the target groups.

Final recommendation:

Whichever final cross border trade measure will be taken up by MI it is highly recommended to follow an intensive stakeholder analysis and a detailed revision of the action plan with the most important stakeholder. MI would be in first place facilitator and coach of this process.

Following the findings and recommendations of the study team, the following action plans will be supported:

AP1a – Quang Tri (VN) / Savannakhet (LA) – Common Standards for transparency on fees and procedures

AP1b – Mukdahan (TH) / Savannaketh (LA) – Common Standards for transparency on fees and procedures

AP1c – Nakhon Phanom (TH) / Khammouane (LA) – Common Standards for transparency on fees and procedures

AP1d – Tak Province (TH) / Kayin State (MM) – Common Standards for transparency on fees and procedures

AP4a - Lao Bao (VN) / Dansavan (TH) – Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao / Dansavan with focus on agricultural trade as modell for other EWEC borders in South East Asia

Details of the implementation are outline in the following pages.

8.1 AP1 – All Border Crossings along EWEC - Common Standards for transparency on fees and procedures

Measure:	Develop common standards for transparency on fees and procedures along EWEC borders		Update: May 2018	SHORT MEASURES (<1 year)
Objective:	A: Increase transparency and reduce time for completing procedures and resulting costs for traders and people who are eligible to border crossing compliances B: Common high standards of boards and displays of fees and procedures assured at all EWEC borders for transparency to border customers			
Indicators:	Exposure visits of border management to understand varying standards along all borders with common assessment for highest future transparency measures (visibility of fees and process) at all borders Twin-border agreements for common transparency standards or for all EWEC borders developed Workshop with twin-border agreements on common transparency measures along EWEC Implementation of commonly transparent standards at all border			
Where:	AP1a Lao Bao- Quang Tri (VN) / Dansavan-Savannakhet (LA) AP1b Savannakhet (LA) / Mukdahan (TH) AP1c Khammouane (LA) / Nakhon Phanom (TH) AP1d Tak Province (TH) / Kayin State (MM)			
Duration:	Start: May 2018	End: July 2019	Manager:	MI Staff in the provinces
Actively involved cooperation partners:			Lead partners:	
Lao Bao - Quang Tri (VN): Customs, Border Army, Health Quarantine, Animal Quarantine, Plant Quarantine			Mgt. Centre for Lao Bao Border Gate	
Dansavan-Savannakhet (LA): Customs Office, Border Police/Immigration Office, Plant and Animal Quarantine, Public Health (Food and Drug Sector), Administrative Office at border check point, Government Administrative Office			Administrative sector at the border check point Provincial leaders provide advice	
Khammouane (LA): PAFO, DIC, Department of Public Health, Custom Office, Tax Office, Immigration Office, PCCI			DIC; Provincial leaders provide advice	
Mukdahan (TH): Custom house, immigration office, plant quarantine, wild animal check point, food and drug sector, district highway office; private sector: Import-expert entrepreneurs			Custom house	

Nakhon Phanom (TH): Custom house, immigration office, plant quarantine, wild animal check point, food and drug sector, district highway office; private sector; Import-expert entrepreneurs				Custom house		
Tak Province (TH): Customs administration / Mae Sot customs house, chamber of commerce, border police, public health department, quarantine department				Customs house administration / Chamber of commerce		
Kayin State (MM): Myawaddy Trade Zone, Customs department of Myawaddy District, Myawaddy Chamber of Commerce, Provincial Commercial Affairs Office, Plant Quarantine Dept., Food and drug administration Myawaddy				Customs department / Chamber of Commerce		
MI role: Facilitation of all steps						
No	Step	Duration	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days 4 x times
1	Meeting with lead partners in all provinces to have an agreement on the implementation strategy for AP1 Setting up monthly meetings for the working groups of twin provinces for the implementation of the AP Final decision of the members of the working group and the involvement of other stakeholder	1 m.	Jun 18		MI staff	15
2	A) Organising pictures from all borders with regards to information on fees and procedures in cooperation with lead partner B) Elaborate a documentation for each of the border crossings with data collection about the fee announcements	1 m.	July 18	Step 1	MI staff and partners	20
3	A) Desk-study on international best practices and documentation of the results B) Organisation of logistics and overall organisation of exposure trip and workshop to best practice borders	1 m.	Aug 18	Step 2	MI staff	15
4	A) Presentation of the desk-study on best practice on transparency and information at border crossings B) Exposure visit and workshop and standard setting by all decision makers of border officials at Third Friendship Bridge Nakhon Phanom	1 m.	Sep 18	Step 3	Partner at Nakhon Phanom, stakeholder	10
5	Report on the results of the workshop and distribution 'Transparency at EWEC borders on fees and procedures'	1 m.	Oct 18	Step 4	MI	10

6	Implementation of standards at all EWEC borders according to workshop agreement, desk-study findings and best practice examples	6 m.	Nov - April 19	Step 1-4	Partners with support of MI	30
7	Elaboration of a report on the implementation of commonly transparent standard at all border crossings	1 m.	May	Step 6	MI	10
8	A: Workshop for the review of the implementation; B: Exchange of experience	0,5 m.	June 19	Step 7	MI with partners	5
9	Report on findings and recommendations for the implementation of measures for transparency on fees and procedures at border crossings along EWEC Possibly - Summary on the best practice of transparency on fees and procedures at border crossings	0,5 m.	July 18	Step 8	MI	5
10	Monitoring and reporting on progress of implementation	10 m.			MI	10
Description of Dissemination Plan:			To Whom	When	Format	
1	Documentation of fee announcements and displays at each of the border crossings		Working group	Aug 18	PDF	
2	Desk-study on best practice on transparency and information at border crossings		WG	Sep 18	PDF	
3	Report on the implementation of the commonly transparent standards for transparency in all border crossings		all Stakeh.	July 19	PDF, Print version	
4	Final report on the overall implementation of the action plan with a summary on best practice examples		all Stakeh.		PDF	
Reports			Deadline	By Whom	To Whom	
1	Report on best practice and information at border crossings on fees and procedures		Sep 18	MI staff	Stakeholder	
2	Report on the implementation of the commonly transparent standards for transparency at all border crossings		July 19	MI staff	Stakeholder and Donor	
Risks:			Risk mitigation:			

Commitment of stakeholders is not sufficient, interests of single stakeholder are different from the objectives of the Action Plan	Clear communication of the objectives and activities for the implementation of the Action plan and involvement of the most influential stakeholder as lead partner
Implementation of the commonly transparent standards is not fully followed - takes more time than estimated	Support the practical implementation with follow-up visits, consultations and monitoring activities
National level decision making bodies object to local / regional approaches for transparency on fees and procedures	Early consultation with relevant decision makers

Estimated Budget		Unit	Units	\$/Unit	Sub-Total
1	MI personnel			in \$	in \$
	MI Implementation Unit	days	520	80	41,600
2	Service providers				
	Interpretation services (Simultaneous Interpretation)	days	40	500	20,000
3	Travel expenses				
	MI personnel	lump			20,000
	Partners and Stakeholder for meeting and workshops	lump			10,000
4	Workshops (Incl. Venue, Accommodation, Food)				
	Regular monthly meeting of working group	lump	30	500	15,000
	Exposure visit to Nakhon Phanom and WS on exchange of experience	lump	4	5,000	20,000
	Final workshop with all participants in each twin province	lump	4	2,000	8,000
5	Material etc.				
	Lump sum	lump			3,000
6	Overheads (from above in % covering supporting structures and administration of the MI)	20%			27,520
	Estimated cost for the implementation of the AP		Total		165,120

8.2 AP4 - Lao Bao (VN) / Dansavan (TH) – Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao / Dansavan with focus on agricultural trade as model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia

Measure:	Optimised implementation of Phase IV - SSI/SWI at CCA Lao Bao / Dansavan with focus on agricultural trade as model for other EWEC borders in South East Asia		Update: 2018-05-07	Short-term (1 year)
Objective:	1. Assure optimisation of SSI/SWI and CCA of Dansavan/Lao Bao to become replication model for other EWEC borders (as best practice example) 2. Increase transparency and reduce time spent for competing procedures and resulting costs for trader and people, who are eligible to border crossing compliances			
Indicators:	<p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Trilateral MoU with twin-provinces (SVK and QT) and MI on the implementation of the AP signed by June 2018 2) External analysis/report of 'operational CCA manual' for finalisation of improvement measures at Lao Bao/Dansavan by Sept 2018 3) Human Resource Development Strategy for SSI/SWI - CCA at Lao Bao/Dansavan border gate implemented by Oct 2019 4) SWI and CCA process steps standardised and sequence optimised at Lao Bao/Dansavan by Nov 2018 including processing, sequencing and capacity development needs for agriculture and/or all CBT 5) Risk management manual established for agricultural trade for Lao Bao/Dansavan by February 2019 6) Report on the implementation of the AP evaluable by July 15th 2019 			
Where:	Dansavan/Lao Bao border			
Duration:	Start: 2018-06-01	End: 2019-07-30	Manager: MI team VN and LA	
Actively involved cooperation partners:	<p>VN - Administration of Quang Tri Province, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Department of Industry and Trade (DoIT), Customs Office, Border Army, Dep. of Public Health and others</p> <p>LA - Provincial leaders, Border Police and other relevant customs administration units (details will be discussed in the kick-off meeting)</p>		Lead partners: (VN) Customs office (LA) Customs office	
MI role:			Additional support from...	
	Facilitation of expert-contracting for external support / technical assistance on the implementation of SSI, risk management manual preparation; facilitation of workshops and documentation and submission of results; monitoring of implementation of improvement measures		ADB GSM programme	

No	Steps	Time	Start	Depending on step	Resource Persons	W-days of MI
1	A: Trilateral agreement of the AP, setting up procedures and responsibilities for regular monthly meetings of a working group B: Final agreement of stakeholders to be involved in the working group, in workshops/consultations or by informing them on the results C: ToRs - Formulation of subcontract of expert on SSI / SWI and approval by working group /lead	1 m.	June 18		MI and partners	15
2	A: Assessment of the implementation of SSI at the border Lao Bao (Procedures, Processes, Training Needs Assessment) Output - Recommendation for optimisation of procedures, training needs assessment, risk management strategy, HR-Development strategy B: Workshop on results of the assessment on both sides of the border - agreement on findings and the way forward	3 m.	July-Sept 18	Step 1	MI and partners,	30
3	Twin-border dialogue on findings of study and agreement for HR development strategy, capacity building measures based on TNA, risk management, etc. with decision making bodies	1 m.	October 18	Step 1, 2	MI and LEADs	20
4	A: Implementation of Standardisation and sequencing optimisation for border traders (CCA=>Immigration) B: Implementation of human resource capacity development C: Implementation of risk management for agricultural commodities across Lao Bao / Dansavan border	6 m	Nov 18 to May 19	Step 3	Partners	60
5	Final workshop on the implementation of the AP - results achieved and further needs for all border provinces along EWEC (multi-language)	2 d	June 18	Step 4	MI with Lead	20
6	Monitoring and evaluation for the exit strategy of the Mekong Institute	12 m	Jun 18 - Jun 19	Continuing	MI with Lead	40

Description of Dissemination Plan:		To Whom	When	Format
1	Final and Approved AP	all Stakeh.	Jul 18	PDF - via email
2	Results of the assessment of the implementation of SSI	WG	Oct 18	PDF - via email
3	Reports on the implementation of the recommendations	all Stakeh.	May 19	PDF - via email
4	Report on project results in general	all Stakeh.	Jun 19	PDF - via email
Reports		Deadline	By Whom	To Whom
1	Report on the assessment the WS results	Oct 18	MI / Expert	Working Group internal
2	Implementation of the SSI within the AP	May 19	MI	Stakeholder
3	Final report on the implementation of the AP	July 19	MI	Donor and others
Risks:		Risk mitigation:		
Stakeholder commitment is lacking - interests are different		Regular clarification on agreements and activities		
Expert is not available - difficult to find		Early research on the availability of possible experts		
Lack of implementation of the findings from the assessment by subordinated staff		Monitoring and information to supervisors and decision-making bodies		
Slow moving and hindering national level administration and legal framework		Early involvement of national level stakeholder and openly discuss planned activities and gain support from the local partners and provincial leaders.		

Estimated Budget		Unit	Units	\$/Unit	Sub-Total
1	MI Personnel			in \$	in \$
	Implementation Unit in VN and LA	days	185	80	14,800
2	Service providers				
	Expert for assessment and technical assistance	days	20	600	12,000
	Interpretation services (Simultaneous Interpretation)	days	20	500	10,000
3	Travel Expenses				
	MI Personnel	lump			10,000
	Partners and Stakeholder for meeting and workshops	lump			5,000
	Travel Expenses int. Expert	lump			3,000
4	Workshops, Capacity Building Measures (Incl. accommodation, food)				
	Regular monthly meeting of working group	lump	10	500	5,000
	Dialog forum	lump	1	3,000	3,000
	Final Workshop	lump	1	5,000	5,000
5	Material etc.				
	Lump sum	lump			2,000
6	Overheads (from above in % covering supporting structures and administration of the MI)	20%			13,960
	Estimated cost for the implementation of the AP		Total		83,760

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