

UN Agencies To Publish Guideline For E-Agriculture Services

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BANGKOK, March 3 (Bernama) -- United Nations (UN) agencies will publish a strategy guide to implement e-Agriculture services.

"The applications of validated e-Agriculture processes will be a great addition to innovative agricultural production, attract the young generation in agriculture and help safeguard farmers from losses, especially smallholders.

"These applications can range from a farmer using a smartphone to scan the barcode of a packet of certified seeds, something that can ensure quality and a fair price, to the installation of low-cost sensors at the village-level for hyper local weather information," said Hiroyuki Konuma, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) assistant director-general and regional representative for Asia and the Pacific.

He said a lack of available and correct information at the right time and in the right format was a major obstacle to many activities along the traditional agricultural value chain and this was something that e-Agriculture could help address efficiently.

Konuma was speaking during the opening of an 'e-Agriculture Stakeholders Consultation' which has drawn government officials and researchers, primarily from Asia, Africa and Near East to the three-day event in the Thai capital.

While information and communication technology (ICT) has seen rapid advancements and implementation worldwide in industrial sectors, many countries have been slow to exploit ICTs in agriculture.

While some countries have implemented various ad-hoc ICT applications, there is presently no coherent international guidance on successful implementation.

However, that's about to change.

The e-Agriculture Strategy Guide is being developed jointly by the FAO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN specialised agency for ICTs.

Participants at the Bangkok consultation are discussing the finalisation of the e-Agriculture Strategy Guide and its applications for national context.

"Countries have tried to implement e-Agriculture solutions in isolation. This guide provides valuable guidelines and offers a template to implement sustainable e-Agriculture services," pointed out Konuma.

It is anticipated the new guidelines will be validated in Sri Lanka and Bhutan as pilot countries, and used at country level for the formulation of an e-Agriculture strategy in action plans for Asia and the Pacific region and beyond.

The e-Agriculture Stakeholders Consultation is co-convened by FAO, ITU and CTA - the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation.

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