



Exclusive Interview



Mr. Yong Ye

Country Director Pakistan,
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ICMA: What are the key challenges facing Pakistan's agriculture, and how is ADB helping to address them?

Yong Ye: Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy and vital to ensuring food security, economic growth, livelihood, and employment. It is one of the major sources of industrial material supply and demand, exports, and foreign exchange earnings. Despite large scale cropped area damages in floods 2022, the recent government's economic survey FY 2023-24 shows that the agriculture sector achieved better growth. Key challenges exist. Notably, low productivity is driven by inadequate water, quality seeds, fertilizers, and farming practices specifically with changing climatic requirements. Pakistan's agriculture productivity per unit of water and area is below global and regional averages. Gaps in supply chains and small farm holdings constrain better rural livelihood and profitable farming. Climate change impacts, pest and disease attacks, and disasters shocks impact sector and economic growth. Fragmented and low digital informatics prevent a vibrant agribusiness and decision support for policy and regulatory

ecosystem. Environmental degradation of water and land lowers the quality and productivity.

ADB has been working with the government of Pakistan for the development of Pakistan's agriculture sector for many years. In the last two decades and complementing with other development partners like the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the United States Agency for International Development, and the World Bank amongst others, ADB supported (a) improving the agricultural productivity through better irrigation and water resources infrastructure and service delivery; (b) strengthening government and local community capacity for water management; (c) improve the natural resource base in the arid and semi-arid areas of Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab, (d) strengthening government capacity to address the emerging challenges for food security, and (e) supporting the vulnerable farming communities, food security and irrigated agriculture infrastructure through post disaster response.

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ICMA: How do ADB's projects align with Pakistan's agricultural development priorities?

Yong Ye: ADB and Government of Pakistan formulated Pakistan's 5-year country partnership strategy on three key pillars: (a) lifting growth, (b) increasing resilience, and (c) boosting competitiveness to attain economic prosperity for Pakistan's people. The new generation of investments in the agriculture sector supports increasing factor productivity, ensuring sustainable use of land and water resources, improving natural resource and livestock management, market connectivity by transforming agricultural value-chain links. It focuses on integration of producers, agribusinesses, and consumers in the marketing systems. During 2025-2027, about \$1 billion has been allocated to the sector through various projects spread across all provinces including collaboration with the federal government and other implementing partners. The focus is on promoting inclusive and sustainable agriculture growth and improving food security and nutrition.

ICMA: Can you explain ADB's efforts to increase climate resilience in Pakistan's agriculture sector?

Yong Ye: Projections to 2050 for Asia and the Pacific show that with rising temperatures, crop yields may decline significantly. The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are expected to have serious and enduring consequences for agriculture. Pakistan ranks among the countries most vulnerable to climate change and most adversely affected by extreme weather events. In planning for new investments, ADB is supporting (a) improving climate-resilient water storage and regulatory capacity for surface, groundwater, and water harvesting and irrigation system upgrades; (b) adopting climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies such as use of speed breeding for

development of climate resilient seed, alternate wetting and drying technique to save water in rice, and crop residue management through modern machinery; (c) climate resilient agriculture and natural resources development assessment and adaptation planning; and (d) promoting the low carbon agriculture in KP, Punjab and Balochistan.

ICMA: Could you provide details on the recent \$8.32 million financing agreement for irrigation projects in Punjab?

Yong Ye: This relates to ADB's support for preparing the Punjab water resources management investments. The financing agreement provides an upstream small financing window for achieving project readiness before committing large investments in ensuing pipeline projects. This modality promotes (a) integrated and holistic climate-smart agriculture and efficient water resources management, (b) comprehensive preparation of a quality project through the collaboration between the project readiness financing and supporting technical assistance, (c) ensuing project is founded on rigorous environmental and social safeguards, climate change, and technical assessments and (d) achieve project quality-at-entry through ready engineering designs, procurement actions, safeguard evaluations, and other due diligence.

ICMA: How do ADB's initiatives contribute to ensuring food security in Pakistan?

Yong Ye: ADB's investments under the new programming cycle focuses on following: (a) improving the agriculture value chains, digital, market access; (b) adoption of quality farm inputs, sustainable mechanization, advanced technologies to improve productivity and profitability; (c) farmers' income, and livelihoods in rural communities; and (d) integrated nature resource management of coastal areas and hill torrents combining green-grey investments. Improving water security, climate smart agriculture, value chains, and disaster risk management are key integration approaches for food security and rural infrastructure development.

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ICMA: What measures are being taken to ensure environmental sustainability in ADB's agricultural projects?

Yong Ye: ADB screens agriculture projects at various stages of preparation through environmental assessments, identifying potential environmental impacts and measures to minimize adverse effects on ecosystems, water resources, and biodiversity. This includes for example environmental flows, sustainable farming practices, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and capacity building of the stakeholders. Projects are regularly monitored—environmental sensitive projects employ independent third-party environment experts. ADB provides technical assistance and project readiness financing for upstream assessments which enable better project design.

ICMA: How does ADB collaborate with local governments in Pakistan to implement agricultural projects?

Yong Ye: ADB maintain a strong federal and provincial collaboration in project implementation. This includes annual project reviews and periodic portfolio reviews to monitor the progress, identify problems and agree on remedial measures. ADB projects include grievance redressal mechanism to facilitate consultations with local governments, farmers, community groups, and other relevant stakeholders. In selected projects including disaster response, supporting technical assistance builds the project implementation capacity of the executing and implementing agencies. The project implementation

follows design and monitoring framework for monitoring, reporting and disclosures.

ICMA: How is ADB supporting the adoption of advanced agricultural technologies in Pakistan?

Yong Ye: The adoption of advanced technologies is through pilot- and scale-up, demonstrations, field trials, trainings, supply, and demand assessments and building awareness and knowledge. Recent pilot studies on modern rice, wheat, and maize harvesting machines, use of remote sensing for crop damage assessment in floods, crop stress monitoring and crop area estimation, remote sensing surface water productivity improvements, development of ICT-based pest surveillance and monitoring system, development of unified farmers database linked with e-subsidy and e-advisory system, amongst others are few examples towards agriculture technologies adoption. Where tested and proven, ADB emphasizes support for large up-take, for example for

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precision farming and mechanization. The adoption is supported by academia, research institutes, development partners besides the executing and implementing agencies.

The Editorial Board thanks Mr. Yong Ye, Country Director Pakistan, Asian Development Bank (ADB) for sparing from his precious time to give exclusive interview for Chartered Management Accountant Journal.