

## Prepared Foodstuff

### *Facilitating Trade of Safe Food across ASEAN*



Prepared foodstuff is one of the 12 priority sectors identified for integration in ASEAN. In early 2003, the ASEAN Member States (AMS) started work to eliminate technical barriers to trade to facilitate trade in prepared foodstuff through various regional initiatives. The facilitation of trade in prepared foodstuff products across ASEAN, without compromising the safety and quality of the products, contributes not only to the acceleration of the integration of the agro-based sector but also to the overall food security of the region.

The harmonisation of standards and technical requirements related to the safety and quality of food products forms the foundation for the integration of the prepared foodstuff sector in the region. At present, AMS have completed and agreed on ASEAN guidelines on food hygiene, import/export certification, accreditation for food import and export inspection, and food control systems. The harmonisation of food safety standards for food additives, food contaminants, and food contact materials are currently underway.

The ASEAN Reference Food Testing Laboratory (AFRL) Network comprising of 9 laboratories, has also been formed. The AFRLs provide training, technical advice and services to the AMS, including the National Reference Laboratories in ASEAN. In addition, the AFRLs coordinate inter-laboratory comparisons or proficiency testing in the region. The current areas of expertise of the AFRLs include methods of analysis and sampling, organisation and management of food testing activities in the region, and compiling relevant information sources in the region. They aspire to become a resource centre for Certified Reference Materials (CRMs) by providing information on the sources of CRMs and to assist in obtaining Reference Materials (RMs).

The Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for Inspection and Certification System on Food Hygiene for Prepared Foodstuff Product is currently being finalized, and is expected to be signed by the end of 2015. The MRA will eliminate the duplication of inspection and certification requirements on food hygiene imposed by the regulations of the importing country, which will facilitate time to market the product and cost savings. As a measure to ensure food safety in the trade of prepared foodstuff, discussions to develop an ASEAN regulatory framework for food safety are also underway and an initial study has been proposed.

[TO LEARN MORE](#)

1. [ASEAN Guidelines on Food Hygiene, Import/Export Certification, Accreditation for Food Import and Export Inspection, and Food Control Systems](#)
2. [ASEAN Reference Laboratories \(ARLs\) for Prepared Foodstuff](#)

For more information, please visit <http://www.aseanfoodsafetynetwork.net> or send an email to [aimo@asean.org](mailto:aimo@asean.org)