

Opening Remarks

Symposium on Human Resource Development in Food-related Area through Partnership with ASEAN Universities

DSG H.E. Alicia Dela Rosa Bala

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

Your Excellency,

Mr. Takamori YOSHIKAWA, Senior Vice Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan

Ms. Takako Ito, Minister Counsellor and Japan's Deputy Chief of Mission to ASEAN

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Allow me to congratulate and thank the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan for taking the initiative to organize this event - Symposium on Human Resource Development in Food-related Area through Partnership with ASEAN Universities on the occasion of the 40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

As you all know, agriculture is considered as the engine of growth for the economy of ASEAN Member States (AMS) as most of the countries are heavily dependent on this sector. Twenty seven percent (27%) of ASEAN's total land area is devoted to agriculture. The sector accounts for about 50% of ASEAN's population whose livelihoods depend on it. Within ASEAN Member States, agriculture is fairly diversified, both with respect to staple food crops as well as cash crops. Likewise, amongst them, farming systems also vary from one to the other. However, there is one common feature, in that the crop area is dominated by rice cultivation. Rice cultivation occupies close to 60% of the annual cropped area in Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam and close to 90% in Cambodia and Lao PDR. The agricultural sector has supported the food and agro-based industries of the respective country.

In the food and agricultural industries, technology transfer plays an important role in assisting the competitiveness of products in line with market requirement. In this aspect,

developing capacity to take up new technology is vital to the sustainability of food industry not only in ASEAN, but also in the rest of the world. In this regard, I do expect that the proposal of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Japan to ASEAN Member States, focusing on technology transfer in food sector under private – public partnership will provide the initial steps to both ASEAN Member States and Japan to exchange and share experience on knowledge of food production, food safety and value chain with high technology.

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

As stated in the ASEAN Charter (Article 1(10), one of ASEAN's purposes as reflected on the Charter is to “develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for the strengthening of the ASEAN Community”. This highlights the very strong focus on the social dimensions of development in ASEAN as well as represents ASEAN's aspirations to promote greater educational cooperation among member states and to strengthen education within them, in order to; i) narrow the development gaps, ii) prepare youth for regional leadership, and iii) increase the competitiveness of the people.

In ASEAN, food and agricultural sectors have attained certain level of economic development. However, lack of proper technical knowledge and limited human resource are some of the constraints the sectors are still facing. In addition, improvement of livelihood and incomes of farmers is urgently needed so as to minimize the adverse effect of the development process. A workforce that is responsive to the needs of ASEAN is imperative. As such, capacity building in these sectors in ASEAN has to be strengthened.

In this connection, ASEAN universities play a critical role in becoming the platforms for both capacity building and technology transfers. These institutions will be instrumental

in our vision of a knowledge-based ASEAN, prepared to advance integration within ASEAN and stimulate development amongst ASEAN Member States.

It was indeed timely that during the AMAF+3 held on 27 September 2013 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Japan proposed a project under a public-private partnership scheme, by which programs for students would be established at major universities in ASEAN countries with the aims of achieving technology transfer in fields of manufacturing and distribution of food products. This proposal has been acknowledged and appreciated by the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry.

In relation to the public-private partnership scheme, I would like to recall that private sector cooperation between ASEAN and Japan has been enhanced through the establishment of the ASEAN Promotion Center on Trade, Investment and Tourism in 1993; and since then the strong mutual solidarity between ASEAN and Japan is well signified with various source of funding, including Japan – ASEAN Cooperation Promotion Program, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Japan – ASEAN General Exchange Program and Japan – ASEAN Integration Fund.

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

We all expect that human resources, especially amongst the young population, will be strengthened in the ASEAN region, and that the food value chain will be strongly promoted through scientific and technology exchange. I believe that the Symposium will give all participants good opportunities to exchange and share knowledge on Japanese food industry and education in food in ASEAN universities in the areas of technology development and transfer in food and agricultural industry.

In closing, I would like to congratulate again the Government of Japan through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for organizing the Symposium. I wish all participants a fruitful discussion with substantive, practical and doable outcomes.

Thank you very much.