Food, Agriculture and Forestry
ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF)

ASEAN is embarking on building an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015, which will be a single market and production base. In the process of working towards the AEC, the enhancement of competitiveness of food, agricultural and forestry products in international markets, and the empowerment of farmers through the promotion of agricultural cooperatives has become regional priorities. Emerging and cross-cutting related issues such as food security, mitigation and adaptation of climate change to the agriculture and forestry sector, and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) are also part of the priorities.

Initiatives towards the Realisation of ASEAN Integration

Through the harmonisation of quality and standards, assurances of food safety, and standardisation of trade certification, ASEAN agricultural products are expected to be ready to compete in the global market by offering safe, healthy and quality foods. ASEAN has been developing good agricultural practices (GAP), standards for the production, harvesting and post-harvest handling of agricultural produces, the ASEAN maximum residue limit of pesticides, criteria for the accreditation of livestock and livestock products establishments, guidelines on good management practices for shrimp, and a code of conduct for responsible fisheries to be used as references for developing national priorities and means to support the agro-industry.

Ensuring food security continues to be the fundamental goal of ASEAN. In response to the increasing concern on food security in the region recently, the ASEAN Statement on Food Security, ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Food Security (SPA-FS) have been adopted to ensure long-term food security and to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region. The ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change (AFCC): Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security is another initiative to address the impact of climate change to the agriculture and forestry sector.

Forest remains a very important natural resource for the ASEAN region in terms of economical, environmental and socio-cultural benefits. The promotion of Sustainable Forest Management (SFMI), Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG), and Climate Change and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) are of utmost interest and priority to ASEAN. This has led to the formulation of the following guidelines, and criteria and indicators: (i) ASEAN Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management of Tropical Forest and its monitoring, assessment, and reporting (MAR) format; (ii) ASEAN Guidelines for the Implementation of IPF/IFF (Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests) Proposals for Action; (iii) ASEAN Guidelines on Phased Approach to Forest Certification (PACt); (iv) ASEAN Criteria and Indicators for Legality of Timber. ASEAN has also reaffirmed its commitment in combating illegal logging and its associated trade in the Ministerial Statement on Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN.

Challenges and Future Outlooks

Production of tradable agriculture and forest products at the national level is an essential component for the realisation of an ASEAN single market. This calls for an appropriate set of macro-economic policies; country’s specific economic conditions; quality education for farmers; adoption of suitable technology; and communication and marketing arrangements to enable the access by farmers to information, capitals and inputs for efficient production at reduced cost.

The increase agricultural and forest production, in terms of quantity and quality that are economically and environmentally sustainable would also need to be addressed.

For more information:
Agriculture Industries & Natural Resources Division
Suriyan Vichitlekarn (Suriyan@asean.org)
ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Food Security (SPA-FS)

Food security has long been an important agenda of ASEAN. In response to the high fluctuation of food prices coupled with the global financial crisis that started in 2008, ASEAN needs to take a strategic and comprehensive approach towards long-term food security in the region.

To ensure long-term food security and to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region, ASEAN Leaders adopted the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Food Security (SPA-FS) at the 14th ASEAN Summit in 2009. The AIFS Framework and the SPA-FS, which are planned for a five-year period (2009-2013), provide measures, activities and timelines to facilitate cooperation in the implementation and monitoring process.

Key Components of the AIFS Framework

Strengthening food security and emergency/shortage relief is a core measure in addressing food security in the region. It is aimed at strengthening national food security programmes and activities, and developing regional food security reserve initiatives and mechanisms.

Sustainable food production is an important aspect of securing food security, which could be achieved through improving agricultural infrastructure development, minimising post-harvest losses, reducing transaction cost, promoting efficient utilisation of resource potential for agricultural development, promoting agricultural innovation including research and development on agricultural productivity, and accelerating transfer and adoption of new technologies.

In addition, food security-related initiatives will be identified and promoted. These include providing a conducive food market for sustainable food trade development, encouraging greater public and private sector investment in food and agro-based industry development, and strengthening integrated food security information system (i.e. mechanisms for an early warning, monitoring and surveillance information system for food security). Emerging issues related to food security such as the development of bio-fuels and impacts of climate change on food security also will form an integral part of the AIFS Framework.

The ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry in coordination with other relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the AIFS Framework and SPA-FS. Consultations with relevant bodies and stakeholders at the regional and national levels will be promoted to obtain relevant inputs and cooperation and to promote a greater sense of ownership. In addition, partnership and cooperation arrangements with international organisations and donor agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Bank, International Rice Research Institute, International Fund for Agricultural Development and Asian Development Bank will be encouraged and promoted.

For more information:
Agriculture Industries & Natural Resources Division
Suriyan Vichitlekarn (Suriyan@asean.org)
Food Safety

Food safety is an important aspect of ASEAN’s cooperation in the areas of food and agriculture under ASEAN’s economic integration programme. Over the years, ASEAN has made a concerted effort to enhance food control systems and procedures to ensure the freer movement of safe, healthy and quality foods within the region. As it is also essential for food and agricultural products from ASEAN to meet internationally recognised standards to increase the region’s competitiveness in international markets, ASEAN has been focusing on the harmonisation of quality and standards, assurance of food safety, as well as the standardisation of trade certification for food and agricultural products.

Key Measures Ensuring Food Safety

In 2006, the ASEAN Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, or ASEAN GAP, was adopted as a standard for the production, harvesting and post-harvest handling of fruits and vegetables in the region. The practices in ASEAN GAP aim to ensure that the fruits and vegetables produced in the region are safe to eat and of the right quality for the consumers. In addition, ASEAN GAP also ensures that the food is produced and handled in a manner that will not harm the environment, health, safety and welfare of workers in the agriculture and food sectors.

To-date, ASEAN has established a total of 775 harmonised maximum residue limits (MRLs) for 61 pesticides. Common standards for mango, pineapple, durian, papaya, pomelo and rambutan have also been adopted to ensure that these fruits are available fresh with right quality and standard to the consumers after preparation and packaging. A total of 49 standards for animal vaccines, 13 criteria for the accreditation of livestock establishments and 3 criteria for the accreditation of livestock products also have been endorsed as harmonised ASEAN standards.

Significant progress also has been made in other important areas. ASEAN is strengthening its genetically modified food testing network, developing guidelines on good management practices for shrimp, developing a code of conduct for responsible fisheries, and implementing the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HCCP) in the production of fish and fisheries products.

In 2004, the ASEAN Food Safety Network was established as an integrated platform for ASEAN officials to exchange information on food safety.

Tackling the Threat of Avian Influenza

The outbreak of avian influenza in recent years has brought greater attention to the issue of food safety in the region. Human cases of avian flu have been linked to direct exposure to dead or diseased poultry during slaughter and food preparation. As such, ASEAN has been reinforcing its activities, including capacity building, on assuring food safety and standardising poultry handling. This has been undertaken with close collaboration from stakeholders, donor countries and international organisations such as Asian Development Bank (ADB), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and Office International des Epizooties (OIE).

For more information:
Agriculture Industries & Natural Resources Division
Suriyan Vichitlekarn (Suriyan@asean.org)
Many reports and studies demonstrate that Southeast Asia is one of the world’s most vulnerable regions to climate change, due to its long coastlines, high concentration of population and economic activity in coastal areas, and heavy reliance on agriculture, fisheries, forestry and other natural resources.

The impacts of climate change are affecting all sectors. The threat of climate change to environment and economic development has become ASEAN’s priority as the Agriculture and Forestry sectors are highly vulnerable to climate change. On the other hand, they have the potential for adaptation and mitigation.

In partial response to this challenge, and acknowledging its potential to strengthen the resilience of its people and ecosystems, and to mitigate climate change through a coordinated response, the region has developed the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change and Food Security (AFCC).

The Initiative
The AFCC addresses elements of the Blueprints for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), as well as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework and IAI Work Plan 2.

The AFCC, which was endorsed by the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) Meeting in November 2009, covers the Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and Forestry sectors and other relevant sectors such as Environment, Health and Energy. The broad coverage of AFCC shows that climate change is a cross-sectoral issue, therefore cooperation among sectors in adaptation and mitigation effort is indispensable.

With the goal to contribute to food security through sustainable, efficient and effective use of land, forest, water and aquatic resources by minimizing the risks to and impacts of its contributions to climate change, the AFCC has the following objectives:

- Coordination on the development of adaptation and mitigation strategies;
- Cooperation on the implementation of integrated adaptation and mitigation measures;

ASEAN Member States are already contributing towards addressing the adverse impacts of climate change. The existing components and initiatives will further strengthen the AFCC’s components which include:

- Integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies into the economic and social development policy framework;
- Cooperation on the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures;
- Strengthening of national and regional knowledge sharing, communication and networking on climate change and food security; and
- Developing a more comprehensive multi-sectoral strategic framework and a roadmap for implementation.

Challenges and Way Forward
As climate change is a cross-sectoral issue, and requires inter and intra-sectoral coordination, enhancing the collaboration and coordination among the economic, environment, development, energy, agriculture, fisheries, livestock and forestry sectors is therefore essential.

Capacity building and public awareness is also a challenge in pursuing a response to the adverse impacts of climate change. With this initiative, it is expected that a regional strategy in adaptation and mitigation will be developed and put in place to anticipate threats to food security due to the impacts of climate change.

For more information:
Agriculture Industries & Natural Resources Division
Htain Lin (htain@asean.org)
Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) has a multi-dimensional perspective, taking into account the economical, social and environmental aspects of forest management. SFM aims to ensure that the goods and services derived from the forest meet present-day needs, while at the same time securing their continued availability and contribution to long-term development.

Initiatives towards the Realisation of ASEAN Integration

The strategic objectives in SFM is to promote the implementation of sustainable management of forest resources in the ASEAN region and eradicate unsustainable practices including combating illegal logging and its associated trade through capacity building, technology transfer, enhancing public awareness and strengthening law enforcement and governance.

To guide the achievement of SFM, the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) has endorsed the ASEAN Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Management of Tropical Forest, as well as the Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting (MAR) Format for SFM. The C&I for SFM was developed to provide countries with a framework for defining sustainable forest management and assessing progress towards this goal. It is a tool to help identify trends in the forest sector and the effects of forest management interventions over time, and to facilitate decision making in national forest policy processes. The ultimate aim of this tool is to promote improved forest management practices, and to further the development of a healthier and more productive forest resource base. ASEAN has also developed the online and offline MAR Format for SFM to help Member States monitor their progress on SFM.

In pursuing SFM, it is recognised that Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) is a pre-condition and an important measure towards better forest management. Recognising this, a Work Plan on FLEG (2008-2015) was endorsed in 2008. The overall goal of FLEG implementation is the attainment of sustainable forest management for enhancing the sustainable and legal supply of timber and competitive trade in forest products which would contribute to poverty reduction in the region. The objectives of the work plan include to strengthen forest law enforcement and governance and to enhance intra- and extra-ASEAN trade and long-term competitiveness of ASEAN’s forest products. In this regard, the ASEAN Guidelines on Phased Approach to Forest Certification (PACt) and the ASEAN Criteria and Indicators for Legality of Timber have been endorsed by ASEAN.

In supporting the FLEG initiative, ASEAN reaffirmed its commitment in combating illegal logging and its associated trade in the Ministerial Statement on Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN.

Challenges and Way Forward

Capacity building and public awareness remain as challenges in pursuing SFM. In view of this, since 2008, ASEAN, in collaboration with FAO, has been carrying out the project “Strengthening Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting on Sustainable Forest Management in Asia” (MAR-SFM).

The timely implementation of the Work Plan on FLEG (2008-2015) and the MAR Format for SFM at the national level would also need to be addressed.

For more information:
Agriculture Industries & Natural Resources Division
Htain Lin (htain@asean.org)