



THE FORTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN MINISTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY (The 45TH AMAF)

4 October 2023, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) held its 45th Meeting on 4 October 2023, under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Datuk Seri Haji Mohamad Bin Sabu Minister of Agriculture and Food Security of Malaysia. The Meeting reaffirmed commitments to promoting cooperation in the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors.
2. Recognising the importance of sustainable agriculture, food security and sustainable forest management, the Meeting emphasised the need for close collaboration to address challenges and seize opportunities in the region.

Policy framework related to ASEAN cooperation in food, agriculture, and forestry 2022-2023

3. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the progress of the implementation of the key deliverables for the food, agriculture and forestry sectors in 2022-2023, and adopted three (3) key deliverables of the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Cooperation for 2024, namely: Development of Lumpy Skin Disease Prevention and Control Strategy, Regional Guideline for Monitoring and Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in Bacterial Pathogens in Aquaculture, and Regional Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in ASEAN Customary Tenure (CT) Systems in Forested Landscape Handbook, and two (2) Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs) of Lao PDR's 2024 ASEAN Chairmanship, namely: the development of an Action Plan for the Implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Sustainable Agriculture and Strategy or Guideline for Crop Burning Reduction to Support the Implementation of the ASEAN Carbon Neutrality Strategy.
4. Considering the ongoing challenges facing the ASEAN region, which include climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical tension, the Meeting underscored the need for increased cooperation and collaboration, innovation, and resilience in the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors. The Meeting identified several areas where cooperation would be prioritised in the coming years. The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Sectoral Working Groups (ASWGs) to continue the implementation of key priority areas of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF), among others, but not limited to promoting sustainable and circular agriculture, reducing harmful agrochemicals and crop burning, promoting Nature-based Solutions/Ecosystem-based Approach, decarbonising FAF sectors, combating AMR, ensuring sustainable soil and water resources for agriculture, and promoting the use of digital technologies for FAF sectors. The Meeting further urged AMS to develop their country initiatives that are in line with the regional priorities and requested the ASEAN Secretariat to support the AMS and work with partners in the conduct of the initiatives.

Sustainable Development of the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sector

5. Recognising the importance of sustainable agricultural practices in ensuring long-term food security and environmental sustainability, the Meeting encouraged all relevant stakeholders to promote the practical implementation of the ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Sustainable Agriculture through the adoption of precision farming, climate-smart agriculture, agroecology to optimise resource use, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance the resilience of farming systems. The Meeting agreed to deepen cooperation in capacity building and knowledge exchange on sustainable farming practices among ASEAN Member States.

6. Regarding the development of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Sustainable Agriculture, the Meeting emphasised the need to establish a conducive policy environment that incentivizes sustainable agricultural practices and ensures regulatory compliance. The Meeting further agreed that market access and value chain development should be the focus of the Action Plan. The Meeting encouraged relevant stakeholders, including the private sector to work with the ASEAN Secretariat to identify meaningful projects and programmes that could be included in the Action Plan.

7. To support the implementation of the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality, the Meeting emphasised the essential role of the food, agriculture and forestry sectors. The Meeting reiterated ASEAN's effort in reducing carbon emissions through the promotion of Nature-based Solutions (NbS)/Ecosystem-based Approaches (EbA) such as reforestation, forest rehabilitation, restoration and carbon sequestration. By making the most of NbS/EbA, ASEAN could develop strategies that could enhance and complement innovative technologies and promote balanced growth and development, across the food, agriculture and forestry sectors.

8. The Meeting acknowledged the commendable progress of the ASEAN Climate Resilience Network (ASEAN-CRN) on their various engagements under the UNFCCC negotiation process through the ASEAN Negotiation Group on Agriculture (ANGA), including the review and contribution of food, agriculture, and forestry in developing climate change commitments, sharing of climate scenarios, and tools to achieve the target decarbonization and net-zero GHG emissions in the ASEAN. The Meeting also encouraged development partners to work with the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN-CRN, and ANGA in preparation for the UNFCCC 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) in Dubai UAE in November 2023.

9. The Meeting reiterated commitment to implementing initiatives that promote sustainable forest management and conservation, social forestry, cross-border collaboration in combating illegal logging, wildlife trafficking and its associated trade, forest law enforcement governance and trade (FLEGT) and nature-based solutions (NbS)/Ecosystem-based Approach (EbA). Considering the important role of forests in carbon sequestration, the meeting encouraged AMS to explore initiatives on social forestry/agroforestry, ecosystem restoration, reforestation and adaptation and mitigation of climate change in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to increase the forest carbon sink potential of the region.

10. Recognising the adverse environmental and health impacts of crop burning practices, the Meeting is committed to taking collective actions to minimise, and eventually eliminate crop burning in ASEAN. The Meeting recognised the need for sustainable alternatives to crop burning, including the adoption of innovative and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. To this end, ASEAN will develop and implement educational campaigns and training programmes that promote sustainable agricultural practices and provide technical guidance on alternative methods for land clearing and residue management. This will require collective efforts, sustained commitment, and collaboration among AMS, farmers, local communities, and relevant stakeholders.

11. The Meeting adopted the Statement of ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry to Reduce the Use of Harmful Agrochemicals to Ensure Food Safety, Public Health, Occupational Safety and Environmental Protection. The Statement aims to safeguard the health and well-being of farmers, agricultural workers, and consumers by reducing exposure to harmful agrochemicals. The Meeting recognised the potential risks associated with the use of such chemicals and emphasised the need to minimise the use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs), reduce pollution, and protect natural resources for the long-term benefit of the environment. The Meeting encouraged the adoption of alternatives such as Biological Control Agents (BCA), organic farming and agroecology as these practices prioritise the ecosystem, minimise harmful chemical inputs, and promote natural pest control mechanisms.

12. The meeting emphasized that sustainability and protection of the environment should not be used as means to unjust and discriminating trade barriers. This is to allow the smooth flow of agricultural commodities trade.

13. Recognising the vital role of water in agricultural production, food security and sustainable development, the Meeting emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation to ensure efficient and equitable water management practices in the agriculture sector. The Meeting acknowledged the need to invest in water infrastructure and irrigation systems to enhance agricultural productivity and water efficiency.

14. Regarding the exchange of electronic-Sanitary and Phytosanitary (e-SPS) certificates through the ASEAN Single Window, the Meeting noted with satisfaction the support from partners, particularly the ASEAN – USAID Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade and E-Commerce (ASEAN-USAID IGNITE), to assess the current readiness and challenges of AMS in the implementation of e-certificates. The meeting encouraged the ASEAN SPS Contact Points (ASCP) and Technical Working Group on ASEAN Single Window (TWG-ASW) to further explore support from partners to promote the exchange of the e-SPS certificate through the ASEAN Single Window.

15. The Meeting emphasised the role of digitalisation in enhancing productivity, sustainability, and resilience in the food, agriculture and forestry sectors in the ASEAN region, and further agreed that to fully harness the benefits of digitalisation, it is imperative to engage partners and research institutions such as Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to share knowledge and create a supportive ecosystem for digital transformation in the agriculture sector. In this regard, the meeting reiterated the importance of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting the Utilisation of Digital Technology for the ASEAN Food and Agricultural Sector and encouraged relevant stakeholders to work with ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat on this important agenda.

16. The Meeting noted the good progress made on the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (ASEAN-RAI) through the establishment of the ASEAN Academy on Responsible Investing and the alignment process of national agricultural investment policy with the ASEAN RAI guidelines for pilot countries. The Meeting encouraged AMS and Partners to support the implementation of the ASEAN RAI Action Plan Phase 2 (2024-2027) focusing on scaling up and deepening work with local stakeholders to integrate the ASEAN RAI into policies, promoting the use of the ASEAN-RAI Scoring Tool, developing the capacity to apply ASEAN-RAI, and generating knowledge on how ASEAN-RAI implementation can drive sustainable food system transformation.

Food Security and nutrition

17. The Meeting supported the implementation of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises. In doing so, the Meeting committed to reducing food loss and food waste and promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, among others.

18. The Meeting noted that addressing the challenges of food security and nutrition requires collaboration and partnership at various levels. The Meeting therefore encouraged international organisations, the private sector, civil society, and economic institutions to leverage expertise, resources, and innovation in achieving the shared goals to ensure food security and nutrition in the region.

Food Safety, Handling and Product Quality

19. The Meeting commended the sectoral bodies for the efforts and achievements made in the harmonisation of standards and development of guidelines to support trade facilitation of agricultural products in ASEAN, and adopted the following documents, among others:

- i. ASEAN General Guidelines on Animal Welfare: Pig Production System
- ii. ASEAN African Swine Fever Prevention and Control Strategy
- iii. Revised ASEAN Rabies Elimination Strategy
- iv. Intra ASEAN Phytosanitary Guidelines for Importation of a) Shallot Bulbs, and b) Coconut (for planting)
- v. ASEAN Standard for Oranges
- vi. Guidance Manual on the Alignment of National Good Aquaculture Practices with ASEAN Good Aquaculture Practices, and the Alignment Assessment Tool

20. Noting that AMR poses a significant threat to global and regional health, and the misuse of antimicrobial agents in agriculture, including in animal husbandry and aquaculture could contribute to the development and spread of AMR, the Meeting agreed to review and update existing regulations and guidelines to promote the prudent use and aim to phase out the use of antimicrobials in food production. The Meeting reiterated the importance of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on One Health Initiative to establish ASEAN One Health Network to strengthen multisectoral collaboration and coordination of One Health Initiative.

Preparation for the Post-2025 Vision and Strategic Plan for Cooperation on Food, Agriculture and Forestry

21. The Meeting agreed to establish a Task Force to steer the development of the vision and strategic plan of the ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry Post 2025. The Task Force will undertake a sectoral review of the Strategic Plan of Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (2016-2025) and prepare the development of a new vision and strategic plan for ASEAN cooperation in food, agriculture and forestry. The Meeting encouraged all partners to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat to work on the Post-2025 Vision and Strategic Plan.

Moving together with Dialogue Partners and International Organisations

22. The Meeting recognised that addressing the complex challenges in the food, agriculture and forestry sectors requires close collaboration and coordination among AMS. The Meeting

committed to enhancing regional cooperation through regular exchange, joint research projects, and sharing best practices of experience. The Meeting acknowledged and thanked ASEAN's Partners, particularly Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, European Union, Germany, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Switzerland, and the US for their valuable contribution and support in advancing cooperation in food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the ASEAN region through close collaboration in various areas.

23. The Meeting appreciated the support extended by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development (CTIF), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Economic Research Institute for East Asia and ASEAN (ERIA), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Grow Asia, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025.

The 46th AMAF Meeting

24. The Meeting took note that the date and venue of the 46th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry will be discussed intersessionally.

25. The Meeting expressed its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government and People of Malaysia for hosting the 45th AMAF Meeting and for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.