



Draft for Circulation
(Discussed on 22 July 2015)

ASEAN
Common Position for Food Security and Nutrition

A. Background

1. While the ASEAN countries have achieved significant economic growth and poverty reduction, the countries continue to face challenges of rapid population growth, urbanization and industrialization, increased number of obesity and overweight and widening disparities between the rich and the poor and also among the countries in different economic status. Nearly 65 million people in ASEAN countries are still undernourished with high stunting rate of children under age of five in some countries. Many countries also suffer significant micronutrient deficiencies. Ending malnutrition is an essential part of sustainable development.
2. In 2014, the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry 36th Meeting endorsed revised ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action – Food Security (SPA-FS) 2015-2020, which incorporates a new component on nutrition, to enable ASEAN to address new developments and challenges in the realization of the common goal for sustainable food security and nutrition. At 24th ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Leaders reaffirmed to promote a common and unified position to ensure sustainable food security and nutrition in ASEAN. The importance to develop a common and unified position on food security and nutrition in ASEAN was reiterated at 25th ASEAN Summit in November 2014, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
3. The SPA-FS also acknowledges that there are many present and emerging threats to food security, arising from environmental and climate-related changes, declining natural resource base such as arable lands and water, degradation of ecosystems, frequent occurrence of trans boundary animal diseases and plant pests, food safety problems, as well as the negative impacts of globalization. The food and agriculture sector has the primary role in feeding people and providing nutritional needs by increasing availability, affordability, and consumption of diverse, safe, nutritious foods and promoting healthy diets. However, ensuring supply of sufficient, affordable, safe and nutritious foods that meet the dietary requirements of increasing populations of ASEAN continues to be a major future challenge for the region. This is compounded by lifestyles and poor dietary habits that lead to chronic non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension, ischemic heart disease, and diabetes, besides energy, protein and micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight problems.

B. Key Challenges related to Food Security and Nutrition in ASEAN

4. Increasing affluence in ASEAN accompanied by population growth

The countries of the ASEAN region vary in geographical, socio-cultural environment and level of economic development. All these differences affect the magnitude and nature of food security and nutrition problems across member states. The changing demographics and economic conditions of the ASEAN member countries are driving changes in food consumption patterns and lifestyles. This process is accompanied by changes in the way food is produced, handled and distributed, away from traditional markets to supermarkets. Moreover, the growing urban middle class desires better quality food which is safe. To provide these foods requires resources such as additional public expenditure on transportation, marketing and storage infrastructure. Demand for these resources competes with the needs of the sizeable portion of the population that still lives in poverty and undernourishment.

5. ASEAN in an interconnected world

ASEAN does not exist in isolation. All changes taking place in the region are interconnected globally. Policies, whether taken singly or together, can have worldwide impact just as what is happening to the rest of the world impacts on ASEAN. It should be recognized that the ASEAN food system is inextricably linked to the global food systems. The challenge is how to meet the growing food demand of the future generation without further deprivation of the resources. This implies the need to improve the efficiency of food chain as well as maximizing the benefits of international and regional trade.

6. High and volatile food prices

It has long been recognized that high food prices affect especially the urban poor disproportionately and negate any effort to reduce poverty. The poor spend as much as 70 percent of their income on food. Thus, a rise in food price can perpetuate rather than improve poor socio-economic conditions. Price volatility is another important concern.

7. Impact of climate change on agriculture

The impact of climate change on agriculture, including land degradation, increasing uncertainty about crop yields and the frequency of floods and droughts combined with inadequate disaster preparedness and response are factors contributing to food insecurity and malnutrition. The food production capacity of agro-systems, including farmlands, rangelands and aquatic resources are increasingly being affected by ecosystem degradation and climate change. It is also recognized that dietary patterns of population may also change, as certain crops may not be growing anymore.

8. Long-term pressures on food production due to conversion of agricultural lands and migration of labour from rural areas

The expansion of arable lands for non-agricultural purposes is no longer an option for most countries in the ASEAN. In fact, for the past decades, there has been an increasing trend towards converting agricultural lands for residential, industrial and commercial purposes. This has also contributed to rapid urbanization and increasing middle income population. It has also been observed that there is a strong pull for individuals, particularly young men, who used to provide farm labour to migrate to urban areas to work in non-farm labour market leaving women and an ageing population in the rural areas for food production.

C. Key Strategies in support of Meeting Adequate Nutrition for all population in ASEAN

9. Incorporate nutrition objectives, components, measurable indicators into the design of food and agricultural, trade, food security policies and programmes.
10. Build institutional capacity on incorporating nutrition in food and nutrition data collection, management and communication.
11. Ensure the sustainability of regional food systems and improving food value chains through diversification of food production, increase production of nutritionally enhanced foods, promotion of underutilized and indigenous crops prevention of deforestation, and protection of agricultural lands against conversion. This requires aligning nutrition objectives with agriculture and food system goals.
12. Promote agro-biodiversity for improved nutrition and climate change adaptation, including support the conservation of, access to, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources that can diversify available nutritious foods for consumption and also to adapt to changing climate.
13. Reduce poverty and food insecurity through pro-poor and inclusive agriculture and food security policies and strategies, and effective social protection mechanisms particularly for those left behind by rapid economic growth and poverty reduction programs. This implies the need for targeting the vulnerable and improving equity.
14. Improve policy coherence supportive to nutrition with special focus on market expansion and improvement of market access for vulnerable groups through food price policies, trade policies, and agricultural land conversion.
15. Implement nutrition awareness and education for farmers, traders and food and agriculture policy-makers, programme planners, including integrating nutrition education in agriculture extension services.
16. Conduct social marketing campaigns and lifestyle change communication programmes to promote physical activity, dietary diversification, consumption of micronutrient-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables, including traditional local foods and taking into consideration cultural aspects, better child and maternal nutrition, appropriate care practices and adequate breastfeeding and complementary feeding, targeted and adapted for different audiences and stakeholders in the food system.
17. Establish risk management system and tools to identify social safety nets especially during crises, build adequate emergency food reserves and relief systems as a buffer to natural and man-made disasters as well as mitigate effects of high food prices and price volatility.
18. Undertake research on innovative agricultural technologies focusing on improved production and productivity of non-cereals (pulses, fruits, vegetables, animal-source foods), reduction of post-harvest losses and food wastage along the entire value chain.

D. Regional Cooperation and Partnership

19. In keeping with the ASEAN motto of “One Vision, One Identity and One Community” regional as well as global cooperation and partnerships is a prerequisite to help ASEAN achieves its common goals. Now committed to achieving food security and adequate nutrition for all peoples of ASEAN, it is important that this common vision at all levels be facilitated by strategic actions. Regional cooperation must strive to reduce excessive price volatility, ensure adequate emergency food and reserves and provide timely and accurate market information and trade liberalization.
20. Within the ASEAN, there is a need to strengthen and promote better intersectoral collaboration and coordination mechanisms between ASEAN Sectoral Bodies related to agriculture, health, rural development, education environment, economic, labour, energy, social welfare and others. For agriculture, health and nutrition, this can be operationalized through regular consultations between SOM-AMAF and SOMHD with involvement of other relevant Sectoral Bodies.
21. Multi-stakeholder partnership is essential for achieving food security and nutrition, particularly engaging civil society, farmer organizations in policy dialogues, promoting the role of the private sector in the production of nutritionally enhanced foods and in generating resources or investments in agriculture, engaging training and research institutions in support of research, and human and institutional capacity-building. Multi-stakeholder regional fora should be encouraged to promote broad participation of different stakeholders.
22. Collaboration with other sectors (health, environment, social welfare, labour, education) and programmes through joint strategies with common goals to address the multidimensional problem of food insecurity and malnutrition should also be pursued.