

# 2020 STATEMENT OF ASEAN MINISTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY IN RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY, FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION IN ASEAN

*Adopted on 15 April 2020*

**We**, the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) express our deep concern over the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which has affected the lives of people and economies, including food, agriculture and forestry sectors in ASEAN and globally.

**We** emphasise the importance of the food, agriculture and forestry sector, and urge to ensure that essential, safe and nutritious produce can continue to reach ASEAN markets during the outbreak of COVID-19.

**We** note with concern the potential impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on ASEAN cooperation in food, agriculture and forestry as well as disruption to the food supply chain in the region.

**We** note the FAO Policy Brief on COVID-19 and the risk to food supply chains: How to respond? and agree that as countries combat the COVID-19 pandemic, they must also make every effort to keep the gears of their food supply chains moving.

**We** note the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019, which expresses the solidarity and unity of ASEAN in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

**We** recall the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Statement on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), which resolved to remain committed in keeping the ASEAN market open for trade and investment.

**We** note that the COVID-19 outbreak has drawn our attention on the immediate danger of food shortage and its adverse effect on nutrition, given a sudden spike in demand and disruption in supply chains, ASEAN needs to also continue its efforts to ensure stable and sustainable food sources.

**We** acknowledge on-going efforts by individual ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Sectoral Bodies in monitoring and mitigating the spread of the COVID-19, as well as its social and economic impact.

In order to contribute to overcoming the challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak, and to ensure sustainable supply of sufficient, affordable, safe and nutritious foods that meet the dietary requirements of the ASEAN populations, we agree to:

- a. Reaffirm our commitments in the implementation of the Statement of ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry on Food Security and Nutrition to improve storage, preservation, transport and distribution technologies and infrastructure to reduce food insecurity, food nutrient loss and waste;
- b. Minimise disruptions in regional food supply chains by working closely together to ensure that markets are kept open and transportation of agricultural and food products are facilitated, and that quarantine or other non-tariff measures do not impede or slow down the free flow of agricultural and food products in the region;
- c. Ensure that trade lines remain open, including via air, sea and land freight, to facilitate the flow of agricultural and food products, and that critical infrastructure such as our air and seaports remain open to support the viability and integrity of supply chains;

- d. In accordance with the rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) covered agreements and the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), refrain from imposing new export control, restrictions and prohibitions, tariffs and nontariff barriers;
- e. Strive to reduce excessive price volatility particularly price spikes, ensure adequate emergency food and reserves and provide timely and accurate market information through the effective implementation of the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) and ASEAN Plus Three Rice Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR);
- f. Continue efforts to the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry to increase resilience to, and contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, natural disasters and other shocks;
- g. Strengthen AMAF's joint efforts in advocating, facilitating and implementing the ASEAN Food Safety Policy (AFSP) and the ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework (AFSRF) to provide direction to relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and ASEAN Member States with the goal of protecting the health of ASEAN consumers, ensuring fair practices in food trade and facilitating the free movement of safe food products in ASEAN;
- h. Reaffirm support towards ensuring food safety by working together in the region, recognising the importance of risk assessment in developing evidence-based food safety measures, which are coordinated with relevant sectors;
- i. Work towards sustaining nutrition security with other relevant sectors to maintain access and utilisation of adequate supply of nutrients to ensure healthy living;
- j. Strengthen the role of the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB) to promptly provide periodic exchanges of information on national food and agricultural policies and stocking policies as well as production, consumption and storage programmes pertaining to basic food commodities among ASEAN Member States;
- k. Undertake a periodic evaluation of the food situation and prospects in the ASEAN region as well as worldwide, including trade, prices, quality and stocks of basic food commodities (such as rice, maize and sugar) through the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB) as focal point, as well as AFSIS and APTERR in coordinating with relevant Working Groups (food, crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry) under SOM AMAF.

**We** look forward to further exchange of views and collaboration in food, agriculture and forestry development with other sectors and partners to address the adverse impacts of COVID-19. We will strive to keep ASEAN food, agriculture and forestry strong during the COVID-19 outbreak by continuously maintaining production, supporting value chains and ensuring access to workforce.

**We** urge ASEAN Member States to implement necessary measures, projects and programmes at the national level to meet the immediate food needs of ASEAN populations, particularly vulnerable groups in society, boost ASEAN Member States' social protection programmes and support all stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), to increase food production and ensure food security in the region.

Endorsed by AMAF on 15 April 2020