

2021 JOINT PRESS STATEMENT OF THE FORTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE ASEAN MINISTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Issued on 27 October 2021

1. The Forty-Third Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) was held on 27 October 2021 via video conference. The Meeting was chaired by His Excellency Dr. Syahrul Yasin Limpo, Minister of Agriculture, Republic of Indonesia.

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO THE FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SECTORS AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

2. The Meeting expressed concern over the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), and agreed that agriculture is one of the key sectors severely affected by the pandemic together with other sectors such as labour, logistic, quarantine requirement, trade, supply chain, and transportation. The Meeting agreed to exert efforts on implementing recovery measures to ensure sufficient and continuous food supplies and the functioning of business activities and services to the food and agricultural systems; and reiterated the following commitments to effectively address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: (i) continue to implement the 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, (ii) promoting government support on public-private partnerships to develop suitable food safety management systems such as HACCP for agricultural businesses of all scales, and (iii) strengthen regional efforts in controlling animal diseases and zoonoses by eliciting the expertise of members in the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Animal Health and Zoonoses (ACCAHZ). In this connection, the Meeting appreciated the support from Australia and FAO to assist the operationalization of ACCAHZ through the project on Strengthening Mechanisms in Animal-health for a Resilient ASEAN (SMART ASEAN).
3. The Meeting commended the ASEAN Secretariat's efforts for coordinating with the AMS in conducting the Study on the COVID-19 Pandemic Implications on Agriculture and Food Consumption, Production and Trade in the ASEAN Member States (Feb 2021). The Meeting appreciated the Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development (CTIF) for their support in the conduct of the Study.
4. The Meeting noted the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan, which serves as a consolidated exit strategy from the COVID-19 crisis. The Meeting welcomed and encouraged ASEAN partners to support the implementation of the ACRF, particularly activities related to sustainable agricultural development in the region.

POLICY FRAMEWORK RELATED TO ASEAN COOPERATION IN FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY 2021-2022

5. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the progress in the implementation of the key deliverables for the food, agriculture and forestry sector in 2021, including the ASEAN Framework to Support Food, Agriculture and Forestry Small Producers, Cooperatives and Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to Improve Product Quality to Meet Regional/International Standards and Ensure Competitiveness, which is a key deliverable of Brunei Darussalam's chairmanship 2021.
6. The Meeting adopted 16 indicative deliverables across livestock, crops, fisheries and forestry in 2022, among others: (i) Protocol for an Animal Vaccine Testing Network among ASEAN Reference

Laboratories, (ii) Guidelines for sharing, access to, and use of IUU fishing-related information for the AN-IUU interactive platform, (iii) ASEAN Strategy for Preventing Zoonotic Diseases Transmission from Illegal Wildlife Trade, and (iv) ASEAN Climate Smart Agriculture Guidelines Vol. 3.

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

7. The Meeting encouraged the ASEAN Member States, ASEAN partners and other stakeholders to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat to identify and implement priority actions under the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Food Security (SPA-FS) 2021-2025 to further ensure long-term food security and nutrition, and to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region. The successful implementation of the AIFS Framework will play an important part to fulfil our commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2 on Zero hunger. The Meeting agreed that in light of the pandemic's effects on the food and agricultural sector, prompt measures are needed to ensure that food supply chains are kept alive to mitigate the risk of large shocks that have a considerable impact on society, especially on the poor and the most vulnerable.

FOOD SAFETY, HANDLING AND PRODUCT QUALITY

8. The Meeting commended all sectoral bodies for their 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:
 - ASEAN Guidelines on Traceability for Food and Feed
 - ASEAN Strategy for Exotic, Emerging, Re-emerging Diseases and Animal Health Emergencies
 - ASEAN Guidelines on Genetically Modified Organism Analysis
 - ASEAN Standards for Loose lettuce (Romaine lettuce)
 - ASEAN Strategy on Sustainable Biomass Energy for Agriculture Communities and Rural Development in 2020-2030, and

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SECTOR

9. The Meeting commended the ASEAN Secretariat's efforts in ensuring sustainable development in the ASEAN region across the food, agriculture and forestry sectors, by focusing on the following initiatives: (i) the ASEAN Guidelines on Sustainable Agriculture, which is one of the key priorities under the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan, (ii) the Stocktaking paper on the use of agrochemicals in crop production, and (iii) conducting a study on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in the agriculture and forestry sectors. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged all ASEAN partners to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat and relevant Working groups under SOM-AMAF to develop and implement these regional activities.
10. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the endorsement of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting the Utilisation of Digital Technologies for ASEAN Food and Agricultural Sector that will equip the ASEAN with recommendations and implementation considerations for making an informed decision that will shape agriculture's digital transformation in the region. The Guidelines will outline conditions and actions needed to make use of digital technologies for agriculture and food system improvements, including interventions to facilitate digital technology uptake in the food and agricultural sectors. In this regard, the Meeting appreciated the support of the Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia in the preparation of the Guidelines.

11. The Meeting acknowledged the urgency to strengthen the food system's resiliency against the impact of the pandemic. In this relation, the Meeting supported Indonesia's initiative on urban farming through the home yard food garden model as one of the concrete programs for economic recovery during and post COVID-19 pandemic in the region.
12. Regarding the ASEAN Strategy on Sustainable Biomass Energy for Agriculture Communities and Rural Development in 2020-2030, the Meeting encouraged all ASEAN partners and stakeholders to work with ASEAN to implement relevant action plans to contribute to energy supply and energy security to rural communities by generating modern biomass energy through management of agricultural residues organic wastes, and fuel wood plantations.
13. The Meeting recognised that the risk of developing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) associated with aquaculture can pose a major threat to human, animal and environmental health, including the sustainability of the aquaculture sector in the region. As part of the concerted regional efforts to combat AMR in aquaculture, the Meeting adopted the following documents:
 - Plan of Action (POA) for the ASEAN Cooperation in Combatting AMR in Aquaculture Sector (2021–2025)
 - Regional Guideline on Performing Risk Analysis for Antimicrobial Resistance Arising from the Use of Antimicrobial Agents in Aquaculture.
 - ASEAN Guidelines for the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials in Aquaculture
 - Guideline on Techniques for Veterinary Drug Residue Detection in Aquaculture Products
14. The Meeting adopted the recommendation of the ASEAN General Fisheries Policy (AGFP) Feasibility Study to focus efforts on the full implementation of the existing twelve (12) regional fisheries policy frameworks with the inclusion of marine debris. The Meeting appreciated the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (EREADI) for the support in the conduct of the feasibility study.
15. The Meeting reiterated the importance of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (ASEAN-RAI), and encouraged the ASEAN partners to provide support on the implementation of the Guidelines at the national and regional levels to promote investment in food, agriculture and forestry in ASEAN.
16. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the on-going efforts of strengthening the sectoral collaboration on conservation agriculture, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable soil management initiatives to ensure the sustainability of the agroecological system in the region.
17. Noting that crop burning is still practiced by farmers and the practices have caused adverse impacts to the ecosystem and environment in the region, the Meeting encouraged the ASEAN partners, private sectors, research institutions, and relevant stakeholders to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Member States in providing suitable solutions to address the issues by sharing best practices and technologies, and formulating and implementing joint projects and programmes on minimising crop burning and circular agriculture.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT 2025:

18. The Meeting noted the completion of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the AEC Blueprint 2025, together with its assessment of the first half of the Blueprint's implementation, which related to food, agriculture and forestry. In this regard, The Meeting called upon all working groups under SOM-AMAF to consider the recommendations during the implementation of the relevant strategic plans of actions in 2021-2025.

MOVING TOGETHER WITH DIALOGUE PARTNERS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

19. The Meeting acknowledged and thanked the ASEAN's Partners, particularly Australia, Canada, China, EU, Germany, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and New Zealand for their valuable contribution and support in advancing cooperation in food, agriculture and forestry in the ASEAN region through close collaboration in various areas.
20. 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), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Grow Asia Partnerships, and the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025.

THE 44TH AMAF MEETING

21. The Meeting agreed to convene the 44th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR in 2022.
22. The Meeting expressed our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government and People of Indonesia for hosting the 43rd AMAF Meeting and for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.