

2023 ASEAN LEADERS' DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN RESPONSE TO CRISES

Adopted in Jakarta, Indonesia on 5 September 2023

WE, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, gathered in Jakarta on 5 September 2023 on the occasion of the 43rd ASEAN Summit.

RECOGNISING the important contribution of sustainable agriculture and food system (agri-food system) to ensure the availability, accessibility, utilisation, affordability and sustainability of food products for all, eliminate poverty in the region and achieve long-term resilience against current and future crises and economic uncertainties, consistent to our goal of securing ASEAN as epicentrum of growth;

RESPONDING to the global call for actions to prevent a worsening of the global food and nutrition security crisis, including the risk and unprecedented shock to agriculture and food systems in the region due to global population growth, increasing inputs costs, the devastating effect of climate change, natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and intensifying geopolitical tensions;

REAFFIRMING our earlier commitments to end global hunger, as stated in Sustainable Development Goal Number 2, and delivering on our regional food security priorities, including, among others, the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework, Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN (SPAFS) 2021-2025, and Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025 to ensure adequate food and nutrition for all;

LEVERAGING on the region's strengths in global agri-food systems, underpinned by increasing participation in regional and global food markets, comparative advantages in certain food products, and diversity of existing and potential natural resources, as essential foundations to address food security and nutrition challenges;

STRIVING to accelerate the transformation toward more resilient, inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems with strong support of leadership, innovation in all its forms, adequate finance, regional and international cooperation, and adaptation to local and indigenous capacities and necessities; and

REINFORCING the crucial role of ASEAN centrality to initiate regional actions and to strengthen multilateral support toward ensuring better food production, trade, seamless logistic system, livelihoods, and well-being, especially for most vulnerable people, in response to crises; and improving the long-term resilience and sustainability of future agri-food systems in the region;

WE HEREBY DECLARE our commitments as follows:

A. FOR RAPID ACTIONS TO FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN RESPONSE TO CRISES

1. **EXPLORE** an ASEAN Member States' Local Resource-based Food Reserve¹ (LRBFR) and **ENCOURAGE** each ASEAN Member States to strengthen its own LRBFR dedicated to Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) on food security and nutrition in response to crises in the ASEAN region.
2. **STRENGTHEN** the overall productivity of agri-food systems through actions that address the immediate bottlenecks in the availability and affordability of essential farm inputs, such as seeds and fertilisers, food storage and logistics facilities including cold chain, and post-harvest handling.
3. **INCREASE** concerted efforts among ASEAN Member States in sustaining food supply, in part based on local food sources, diversified food production, and improved food supply chain logistics, to ensure adequate, affordable and nutritious food for all, especially the most vulnerable population² in ASEAN and support them from the disruptions in the food supply chain.
4. **ENSURE** unimpeded trade and flow of agri-food products, and essential farm inputs by facilitating seamless logistics and transport distribution, refraining from imposing unjustified trade barriers, restrictions and other trade-distortive measures on agri-food trade, as well as optimising collaborative action within ASEAN and with its trade and dialogue partners.
5. **ENHANCE** market connectivity and distribution networks for agriculture and food products through intensifying intra-ASEAN trade.
6. **STRENGTHEN** existing ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserves (APTERR) mechanism under the APTERR Agreement by enhancing the effectiveness and quick release of emergency rice reserves.
7. **STRENGTHEN** social welfare and safety net programs including emergency food assistance and infant and school feeding programs.

¹ Food reserve in respective AMS based on local food sources dedicated to emergency preparedness for food aid for AMS that experiences crises. The commodities coverage will be flexible beyond rice, according to AMS's comparative advantages; could be source of carbohydrate or protein; plant-or animal origin; fresh or manufactured products. The establishment of local-based food reserve in each ASEAN member will be on voluntary basis].

Humanitarian crisis means an event that poses, or series of events that pose, an imminent threat to or affect the health, safety or well-being of, a community or a region, and may include natural or human-induced disasters and may occur throughout a large land area. Source: Upgrade AANZFTA agreed by ASEAN.

² The vulnerable population is those who have a high probability of becoming food insecure and may fall into food insecurity at any time, as a result of the external or internal factors mentioned above, e.g. as a result of deteriorating soil quality, a flood, a seasonal change in the price of food, an increasing spiral of indebtedness and impoverishment, the loss of an income-earner in the family, the presence of a chronically-ill person in the household. (Adopted from the 26th Session of Committee on World Food Security, September 2000; Source: <https://www.fao.org/3/x8018e/x8018e.htm>).

B. STRENGTHEN PREPAREDNESS FOR LONG-TERM RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

1. **STRENGTHEN** national policy frameworks particularly for rice and other priority crop commodities for food security and nutrition, and intensify coordination of food security and nutrition policies across ASEAN Member States.
2. **PROMOTE** investment in agricultural research and development (R&D) and agricultural infrastructure to address agri-food productivity issues.
3. **FACILITATE** access to finance for small-scale farmers and other stakeholders within the food value chains to enable them to invest and/or participate in sustainable agri-food systems.
4. **ACCELERATE** digital transformation, adoption of innovative technologies³ and practices through technical cooperation and appropriate transfer programs on mutually agreed terms to increase productivity and resilience in agri-food production, support technical upskilling, improve farmers' income, address challenges of climate change, reduce Greenhouse Gas emission, reduce food loss and waste, ensure food safety and meet consumer needs.
5. **STRENGTHEN** local and regional food value chains, including diversifying local food sources and optimising the utilisation of available resources in ASEAN for food production, especially for small-scale farmers, fishers, micro, small, and medium enterprises and other vulnerable groups to food insecurity.
6. **STRENGTHEN** efforts to ensure an adequate supply of fertilisers through the facilitation of investment such as on fertiliser production plants in the region and to maximise the use of regionally available natural resources and by-products for fertilisers.
7. **IMPROVE** resilience against climate change and natural disasters through facilitating investment in climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture, including early warning systems, agricultural insurance, and flood and drought risk management in the agriculture sector.
8. **ACCELERATE** and support national, regional, and international initiatives to tackle food loss and waste, such as "Food Rescues"⁴, "Save Food"⁵, and "Food Bank"⁶ which provide a platform for effective collaboration.

³ Innovative technologies means a new or improved product or process whose technological characteristics are significantly different from before. These technology aims to improve agricultural productivity, increase efficiency and competitiveness such as smart farming, precision farming and other related technologies. The implementation of those innovative technologies in accordance with each AMS relevant laws and regulations.

⁴ Food Rescue, also called food recovery, is the practice of collecting fresh, edible food that would have otherwise gone to waste from restaurants, grocers, and other food establishments and distributing it to local social service agencies. (Source: www.foodrescue.us/about/faqs).

⁵ Save Food is an initiative to drive innovations, promote interdisciplinary dialogue and spark off debates in order to generate solutions, across the entire value chain "from field to fork" in reducing food loss and waste (Adopted from Messe Düsseldorf and FAO, 2011, Source: https://www.save-food.org/en/Save_Food_Initiative/Mission).

⁶ Food Bank is usually non-profit organization that collect donated food and distribute it to people in need. (Source: Meriam Webster Dictionary).

9. **STRENGTHEN** the existing role, function, and sustainability of ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) to provide necessary data as well as early warning information that improves the monitoring of food prices and market risks, sharing of market information and consumer alerts.
10. **OPTIMISE** cooperation and collaboration for food security and nutrition by engaging all relevant sectors to sustainable agri-food systems in ASEAN, such as trade, finance, and transport, to synergise regional actions, including subregional efforts, and address cross-cutting issues and initiatives.
11. **ENHANCE** the collaboration with the private sector, international organisations, and think tanks through engagement with relevant initiatives and platforms such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), FAO's South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), the World Food Program (WFP), the World Bank, and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to promote public-private partnerships and provide technical knowledge and capacity building for the transformation of agri-food systems and their links to food security and nutrition.

INVITE Dialogue, Strategic, and Development Partners to support ASEAN efforts to strengthen Rapid Actions to Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crisis. Subsequently, encourage ASEAN Partners to identify meaningful projects and programs to promote sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition in the region including implementation of the ASEAN Regional Guidelines for Sustainable Agriculture.

TASK the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) to cooperate with ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM), ASEAN Transport Ministers (ATM) and other relevant ASEAN Ministers and their respective Senior Officials to take coordinated actions to implement this Declaration.

Adopted on this Fifth Day of September in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Three in a single original copy in the English Language.

Food Bank is a non-profit organization that collect and distribute overstock food from donor (retail, hotel, restaurant, café, food industry, and food store to people in need. (Source: Indonesian National Food Agency).