

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP MEETING
6 FEBRUARY 2015, NUSA DUA BALI, INDONESIA**

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a critical economic sector within the ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN). With the exception of Brunei and Singapore, 8 of the ASEAN Member States are dependent on agriculture and its production. In the least developed of the member countries, agriculture constitutes more than 40% of GDP. In Laos, agriculture makes for 53% of GDP, 43% in Myanmar, and in Cambodia, 40%. The remaining 5 emerging economies of Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, the sector's contribution makes for a fifth or more of their GDPs.

1.1 ASEAN INITIATIVES AND THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Concerns over the socio-economic impacts of sharp increases in international food prices across ASEAN, as evident in 2007/2008, motivated ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) to conceptualise the *ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework* (2008) as an urgent need to develop a policy framework for strategic measures and actions including requiring common understanding among ASEAN Member States.¹ Supporting the AIFS Framework, the *Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region* (SPA-FS) of AMAF was “to ensure long-term food security and to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region.”²

In September 2012, AMAF reiterated, the importance of food security to the ASEAN Community, stating that, ASEAN needs to ‘remain vigilant on the opportunities and challenges of food security in the region and the world, particularly at a time of high volatility of commodity prices and economic uncertainties’ and to “recognise the importance of constructive platforms for private sector and civil society engagement in addressing food security in the region.

The Indonesian Government, in March 2014, gained legislative agreement to ratify the ASEAN Transboundary Haze Pollution Agreement – the first regional arrangement in the world binding a group of contiguous States to tackle transboundary haze population resulting from land and forest fires.³

In addition to being a critical economic sector in ASEAN, the sustainability of food and agriculture systems globally is at the nexus of climate change, food, water and energy security, sustainable livelihoods, rural development and human rights. These interrelated factors, with varying influence and impact on each member state of ASEAN, affects the overall food security of ASEAN.

These meant a need for greater education, capacity-building and harmonisation of efforts between businesses, policymakers and NGOs. To implement and enforce more responsible and sustainable agribusiness practices, ‘common guiding principles’ would be key for companies, regulators and NGOs.

¹ *The Special Senior Officials Meeting of the 29th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and forestry (Special SOM-29th AMAF), held on 5-7 August 2008 in Chiang Mai, Thailand*

² “*ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN, 2009-2013*”, ASEAN Secretariat

³ *ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary haze Agreement* : http://haze.asean.org/?page_id=185

Such principles would strengthen existing certification standards and also be practicable for smaller community farmers.

2. ASEAN CSR NETWORK (ACN) BUILDING ON INITIATIVES AND THE FABs PRINCIPLES

On 13 September 2013, in Singapore, the ASEAN CSR Network (ACN) convened the Consultation for Food and Agriculture Business Principles (FABs Principles) that commenced at the Corporate Sustainability Forum at Rio+20. Participants included businesses, NGOs, academics, and government agencies from the regional agricultural sector.⁴

The Consultation for FABs Principles address business as a critical partner for governments and other stakeholders in designing and delivering effective, scalable and practical solutions to make food systems secure and agriculture sustainable. The FABs Principles consolidate and reference the advances and aspirations of the private sector in practice, policy, technology, knowledge and innovation that operate and shape the food, agriculture and nutrition sector globally. They provide a common language and a holistic framework for companies to collaborate and align themselves towards the post-2015 agenda and beyond, on food security and sustainable agriculture.

While the AMAF initiatives and frameworks reflect positive progress in awareness and understanding of FSSA, effort can be more effective with collaboration.

In September 2014, the ASEAN Senior Officials for Agriculture and Forestry (SOM AMAF) endorsed the proposal jointly submitted by UN Global Compact (UNGC) and the ASEAN CSR Network (ACN) on *Leveraging Business in ASEAN for Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture (LAB)*, a three-year programme, using the FABs principles. Under LAB, the ACN and UNGC collaborate to optimise the contribution of the ASEAN business community to realise the objectives of SPA-FS and the effectiveness AIFS Framework, enabling food and agriculture sector business in ASEAN to contribute to realising ASEAN's economic, environmental and social objectives that are equitable, inclusive and sustainable.

LAB would specially focus on objectives as articulated in the SPA-FS to realise: (a) increase food production; (b) reduce of post-harvest losses; (c) promote conducive market and trade; (d) ensure food stability (e) promote availability and accessibility to agricultural inputs; (f) operationalise food emergency relief arrangements.

Recognising these objectives, the activities of the programme are geared to (a) link the private sector, policymakers and other stakeholders nationally; (b) extend the national food security imperative as a component of ASEAN regional food security; (c) correlate the strategy and practice of regional action by ASEAN businesses to the *Action Programmes and Activities* identified in the SPA-FS (d) coordinate activities outputs through/ with programmes of other multilateral agencies and NGOs; (e) develop a set of performance indicators; (f) monitor and evaluate the progress, successes and challenges of collaboration and partnerships (g) draw on relevant expert institutions and bodies, to better under collective action of actors, from different sectors.

⁴ The FAB Principles was formally launched at the UN Climate Summit in New York in September 2014 following a two-year multi-stakeholder process, comprising over 20 global consultations, including more 1,000 businesses, UN agencies and civil organisations involved in agriculture, nutrition and food systems.

3. SUSTAINABLE WORKING GROUP MEETING, Laguna Spa Resort, Nusa Dua, Bali, 6 February 2015

In the context of ASEAN post-2015 and beyond, the ACN with the support the UNGC, took the opportunity to convene a Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, on 6th February 2015, to introduce the *Integrated Sustainable Agriculture Programme* (ISAP) attended by 60 delegates, comprising representatives from the UNGC Local Networks within ASEAN, ACN affiliated organisations, and other relevant stakeholders

The ISAP is an evidence-based global registry mechanism that will show the history and trajectory of agribusiness/farmer-actor. The geo-spatial registry of the users and tracking mechanism would also mean that mapping can also be done on agricultural practices, management and, metrology that would aid to close gaps in their current method. This would be able to join the silos of research that are not currently connected

The Meeting helped to clarify the following:

- (i) ISAP as a tool to enable more actors in food and agriculture systems to adopt sustainable policies and evidence sustainable practices, permitting them to get to the next level of good practice and who would be able to get them there by providing free online access to big data information on farmers, SMEs and their practices. The data generated would be of use to companies, regulators, governments and stakeholders to assist supply chains respond better to local and global markets through policies.
- (ii) ISAP as a registry will be able to provide timely and reliable data and information needed to develop the policy framework and long-term agricultural development plan in the areas of sustainable food production and trade that is in line with the *AIFS Framework*. It would also meet the *SPA-FS* six strategic thrusts, namely (i) to strengthen food security arrangements in the region; (ii) enhance international competitiveness of ASEAN food and agricultural products/ commodities; (iii) enhance ASEAN cooperation and joint approaches on international and regional issues; (iv) develop and accelerate the transfer and adoption of new technologies; (v) enhance private sector involvement, and (vi) manage sustainable utilisation and conservation of natural resources.
- (iii) Users of ISAP, collectively, as part of the *Global Business Coalition for Food Security* (GBC), will lead policy-practice discourse at inter-governmental levels and convene the ISAP community.
- (iv) Being part of the *GBC* also means the actors have met the standards and practice required to achieve Sustainable Development Goal No. 2 (*SDG#2*): to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. It has in plan to have a GBC Network Label for members that will indicate that every actor involved in every aspect of the production of the food product has adhered to ISAP standards of practice and certification. By 2019 GBC will be accredited to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

ISAP will be piloted from June 2015 and rolled out in phases over a period of 2 years. At the end of which, evidence will demonstrate impact on 8,000 ISAP users with a view to enable private-public partnerships for SDG alignment. The outcome will be presented to the UN General Assembly.

In addressing this, the Meeting is in support of the SPA-FS, enabling the actors in the food and agriculture to adopt sustainable policies and practices; leverage influence in the supply chains; and work towards the next steps and outcomes as identified in the FABs Principles.

4. Follow-up Action

ASEAN's 10 Member States will be part of the pilot programme of ISAP. ACN, through LAB, will bridge the gaps working through supply chains with its partners to mainstream responsible business conduct to promote sustainable agriculture with the aid of the FABs Principles and incorporating ISAP using the following framework of action:

(i) Creating a Shared Vision

Through multi-sector collaboration, with its partners, ACN will guide stakeholders on its implementation through its mandate to promote responsible business conduct, capacity-building, and policy development, taking into consideration the goals of ASEAN and regional realities, especially as the region enter a new chapter of ASEAN integration post-2015

(ii) Build Capacity

Through partnerships, ACN will deliver training and capacity building services to their stakeholders. This will be done through workshops and forum organised by the ACN, local conferences and events run by partners at the national level.

(iii) Enabling Collective Action

Through harmonising efforts on corporate social responsibility at the regional level by providing a platform for coordination, cooperation and information exchange between businesses, policy makers and NGOs, to implement and enforce more responsible and sustainable agribusiness practices, using international guiding principles, including FABs Principles.

The initiative will be an effort to address the concerns raised during the meeting. Among them:

- (i) the need to communicate among ASEAN member states, MNCs, businesses, middlemen, and SME agri-business/ farmers in order to come to a common ground and understanding on sustainable agriculture and food security
- (ii) the need for KPIs and roadmaps to achieve the common objectives, with due consideration given for flexibility or adherence to be worked in on the targets/KPI to be achieved.
- (iii) the need for farmers to be incentivise in order to ensure participation
- (iv) the need to build consumer awareness and appreciation of the work done on sustainable agriculture
- (v) the need of support for farmers and have them understand the benefits that ISAP can bring to them