

Development of the AHKFTA Guidebook for Business

As an initiative by the AHKFTA Joint Committee and the ASEAN Secretariat to promote AHKFTA among stakeholders especially the business communities in ASEAN and Hong Kong, China, a Business Guidebook to Increasing Trade Competitiveness Using the ASEAN-Hong Kong, China Free Trade Agreement (AHKFTA) was developed and officially launched on 17 September 2022 at the sidelines of the 6th AEM-HKC Consultation.



In his opening remarks, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh welcomed the launch of the guidebook which will help stakeholders, particularly enterprises operating in ASEAN and Hong Kong to navigate the AHKFTA. He highlighted that “the first crucial factor in reaping the benefits offered under the AHKFTA lies in businesses’ deep understanding and technical know-how on how to leverage them. Lack of business awareness on tangible benefits of FTAs remains the top hindrance in utilising FTAs.”

Algernon Yau, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of Hong Kong, China commended the ASEAN Secretariat for developing the business guidebook which is a useful tool for business community to help expand their business through the utilisation of the AHKFTA.

The business buidebook is an initiative under the aegis of the Economic and Technical Co-operation (ECOTECH) Work Programme, a feature of the AHKFTA that facilitates parties to enhance and promote the implementation of the Agreement through capacity building and technical assistance activities.

Funded by the AHKFTA Economic and Technical Cooperation Work Programme Fund, the guidebook was developed to provide a snapshot of the AHKFTA, including illustrations on the application of relevant rules and procedures. It highlights salient provisions in the AHKFTA and the benefits and trade and investment opportunities that the business community can tap from it. Further, it provides step-by-step guide to claiming preferential tariffs under AHKFTA, accompanied by the applicable rules and qualification procedures.

The guidebook can be downloaded from [here](#).

To promote the Guidebook, a dissemination event on ASEAN-Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement (AHKFTA) with the theme “Increasing Trade Competitiveness using AHKFTA”, organised by the ASEAN Secretariat with the support of Hong Kong Trade and Economic Office (HKETO), Hong Kong Trade Development Council, and Trade and Industry Department of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, took place on 2 August 2023 at Pullman Hotel, Jakarta. Participants in Jakarta attended the event physically while participants from ASEAN Member States and other countries around the world attended virtually.



Director General of the HKETO Jakarta Shuen Yuen Lee delivered the welcome remarks followed by the keynote speech by Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh. DSG Singh underscored the importance of facilitating growth and expansion of businesses in the region as part of post-pandemic economic recovery.



Consultant to the AHKFTA Business Guidebook, Maes Alconcel, discussed the salient features of the AHKFTA and its Investment Agreement and how AHKFTA could be the engine of economic growth in the region.

In a panel discussion that followed, Deputy Director General of Department of Trade Negotiations of Thailand's Ministry of Commerce and ASEAN Co-Chair of the AHKFTA Joint Committee Rachvitch Piyapramote discussed the benefits of AHKFTA for businesses in ASEAN, how to promote its utilisation, and how AHKFTA could support ASEAN in achieving its economic integration agenda.

Deputy Director General of Trade and Industry, Hong Kong, China and Hong Kong, China Co-Chair of the AHKFTA Joint Committee Francis Ho discussed how AHKFTA benefits businesses in Hong Kong, China, strengthens trade and economic relations, and supports the development of the global supply chain. He also discussed the utilisation of AHKFTA and its interplay with other ASEAN FTA, including the RCEP Agreement.

Alternate Chairperson of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council Bernardino Vega discussed business opportunities and challenges in utilising ASEAN+1 FTAs, including AHKFTA and RCEP. He highlighted the importance of addressing non-tariff measures as means to promote trade and investment in the region, and the necessity for business associations to take a more active role in promoting trade agreements, including the AHKFTA.



In his closing remark, Senior Project Officer of the AHKFTA ECOTECH Support Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat Kris Sandhi Soekartawi highlighted key takeaways from the event and mentioned the upcoming AHKFTA ECOTECH events which can be participated in by businesses to enhance their capacities and capabilities to thrive in the regional and global supply chain.

About AHKFTA ECOTECH Work Programme

The AHKFTA ECOTECH Work Programme is a unique feature of the AHKFTA meant to showcase the joint commitment of ASEAN and Hong Kong, China to enhance capacity building and to contribute to sustainable growth in the region.

The programme covers 10 areas of co-operation namely customs co-operation, professional services, SMEs co-operation, trade facilitation and logistics, e-commerce co-operation, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) co-operation, standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessment procedures (STRACAP) co-operation; intellectual property (IP) co-operation; digital technology to facilitate trade; and promotion and facilitation of investment.