



THE FORTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN MINISTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY (The 46TH AMAF)

24 October 2024, Myanmar

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) held its 46th Meeting on 24 October 2024 virtually, under the Chairmanship of Myanmar. The Meeting reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to promoting cooperation in the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors.

2. Recognising the importance of sustainable agriculture, sustainable forest management, decarbonisation, and digitalisation in the ASEAN region, the Meeting urged all stakeholders, including academia, international organisations and the private sector to work with the ASEAN Member States, through the ASEAN Secretariat, the implementation of sustainable and circular food, agriculture and forestry policies, which have been adopted by ASEAN.

Policy framework related to ASEAN cooperation in food, agriculture, and forestry 2023-2024

3. In 2023-2024, policies regarding food, agriculture, and forestry within ASEAN focus on sustainability and circularity in response to urgent global and regional challenges. These initiatives are driven by the need to combat climate change, address resource scarcity, and preserve biodiversity. ASEAN aims to enhance food security and create economic opportunities, while also protecting vital ecosystems by promoting sustainable practices and efficient resource use. Additionally, these policies align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), positioning ASEAN as a responsible leader committed to environmental stewardship and social equity in the international arena.

4. The Meeting emphasised the critical importance of enhanced cooperation, innovation, and resilience within the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors. The Meeting identified several key priority areas for collaboration in the coming years and encouraged the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Working Groups to continue their efforts in implementing vital initiatives concerning food, agriculture and forestry. These initiatives encompass a range of significant objectives, including:

- Promoting sustainable agriculture through the Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture.
- Minimising crop burning reduction in the region through the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Crop Burning Reduction.
- Reducing the use of harmful agrochemicals and eliminating crop burning.
- Advancing Nature-based Solutions/Ecosystem-based Approach through the implementation of the ASEAN Strategy on Sustainable Management of Mangrove Ecosystem.
- Combating antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the livestock, aquaculture and fisheries
- Promoting the use of Biocontrol Agents (BCAs) in the agriculture sector, including crop, livestock, aquaculture and fisheries.

- Ensuring sustainable soil and water resources through the application of good agricultural practices.
- Encouraging the adoption of regenerative agriculture and digital technologies in the food, agriculture and forestry sectors.

5. ASEAN Member States are encouraged to tailor their initiatives in alignment with regional priorities. The ASEAN Secretariat will provide support to ASEAN Member States and collaborate with various partners to facilitate the implementation of these initiatives. This collaborative approach aims not only to address the immediate challenges facing the ASEAN region but also to foster long-term sustainability and resilience in crucial sectors that underpin economic growth and food security.

Sustainable Development of the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sector

6. The Meeting emphasised that promoting sustainable agriculture in the ASEAN region is crucial for ensuring food security, protecting biodiversity, and mitigating the impacts of climate change. As one of the most diverse and densely populated regions in the world, ASEAN faces significant challenges such as soil degradation, water scarcity, and increasing demand for food. Embracing sustainable agricultural practices not only enhances productivity and resilience in farming systems but also promotes ecological balance and conserves valuable natural resources for future generations.

7. The Meeting agreed that ASEAN Member States can empower farmers, improve rural livelihoods, and create a healthier and more sustainable food and agriculture system that supports both economic growth and environmental preservation by investing in innovative technologies, sustainable land management, and eco-friendly practices. Following this direction, the following priorities will be ASEAN's focus in the years to come:

- **The ASEAN Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture**, a pivotal framework formulated in 2024 aimed at transforming agricultural practices across the region. This comprehensive plan is deemed one of the most significant documents in the agricultural sector and underscores ASEAN's commitment to sustainable development. The primary objective of the ASEAN Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture is to foster a resilient agricultural ecosystem that ensures food security while promoting environmental sustainability. The Action Plan aims to empower farmers, improve livelihoods, and protect the region's rich biodiversity by integrating innovative farming techniques, improving land management, and enhancing resource efficiency. The ASEAN Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture marks a significant step forward in building a sustainable future for the region's farming communities, ensuring that they remain competitive, resilient, and capable of meeting the evolving demands of population growth and climate change.
- **The ASEAN Guidelines on Crop Burning Reduction** underscores an urgent need for a transformative approach to agricultural practices across the region. As ASEAN confronts the escalating challenges posed by climate change, air pollution, and environmental degradation, it has become increasingly clear that reducing crop burning is essential for promoting sustainable agricultural practices and protecting public health. The guidelines encourage the adoption of alternative practices, sustainable land management techniques, and the integration of innovative technologies that can enhance productivity while minimizing environmental harm. Moreover, a coordinated, region-wide approach will facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building among farmers, ensuring that they are equipped with the tools and resources needed to

transition away from crop burning. This initiative is vital not only for fulfilling ASEAN environmental commitments but also for safeguarding the livelihoods of farmers and communities reliant on agriculture.

- **The ASEAN Strategy on Sustainable Mangrove Ecosystem Management (2024-2030)** marks a significant milestone in ASEAN collective efforts to protect and enhance one of the most vital ecosystems in the region. Mangroves are not only essential for supporting biodiversity but also play a crucial role in climate change mitigation, coastal protection, and nature-based solutions/ecosystem-based approach. This strategy serves as a comprehensive framework for ASEAN to work collaboratively in addressing the pressing challenges facing mangrove ecosystems, including deforestation, land conversion, and climate change impacts. The strategy aims to reverse the trend of mangrove degradation and strengthen the resilience of coastal communities.
- **The Study on the ASEAN Pathways for Carbon/GHG Neutrality in the Agriculture Sector** is of paramount importance as it provides a good reference for addressing the challenge of greenhouse gas emissions within our critical food, agriculture, and forestry sectors. As we confront the realities of climate change, ASEAN needs to collaborate in identifying, implementing and monitoring practical solutions that not only reduce emissions but also enhance sustainable agricultural practices and ensure food security. We call upon all ASEAN Member States to engage actively with this study, leveraging its findings to innovate and adopt effective strategies that support both environmental sustainability and economic resilience in our communities.

8. Concerning the two Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs) under Lao PDR's ASEAN 2024 Chairmanship—the ASEAN Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture and the ASEAN Guidelines on Crop Burning Reduction—the Meeting expressed its appreciation for the support provided by ERIA. The ASEAN Secretariat will enhance its collaboration with ERIA to accelerate the implementation of regional priorities that align with the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality and the ASEAN-Japan Midori Cooperation Plan, fostering sustainable, circular, and regenerative development in the region.

9. In this connection, the Meeting commended ASEAN partners that have provided support for implementing regional policies on sustainable agriculture and crop burning reduction during Lao PDR's ASEAN initiatives. These initiatives include the Regional Workshop on Building a Climate Smart ASEAN, organised by Lao PDR in September 2024 with support from ERIA; the Mangrove Ecosystem Management project in the ASEAN region, implemented by Indonesia in 2023-2024 and supported by Japan; the project piloting the sustainable use of rice straw, which is implemented by GIZ in 2023-2024 and supported by Germany; and the Study on Promoting the Production of Sustainable Aviation Fuels from Agricultural Waste in the ASEAN Region supported by Canada, to name a few. The Meeting encouraged all relevant stakeholders working with the ASEAN Secretariat to identify practical projects and programmes that align with these priorities.

Food Security and Nutrition

10. The Meeting strongly endorsed the development of an Action Plan on Food Security in the ASEAN Region for the period 2026-2030, emphasising the critical role of digitalization in enhancing food security. Recognising that innovative technologies are essential for transforming our food systems, the Meeting encouraged all ASEAN stakeholders and partners to prioritise food security and nutrition initiatives. ASEAN can improve agricultural productivity, streamline

supply chains, and enhance data accessibility, ultimately ensuring a resilient and sustainable food ecosystem for all member states by leveraging digitalisation and cutting-edge technologies.

11. In addition, the Meeting discussed Ready-to-Eat (RTE) Food. Building on the experience of APTERR, RTE food packs are indeed a crucial component of food security during emergencies. These food packs are specifically designed to address the challenges faced during crises where access to food, cooking facilities, and clean water may be severely limited. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged all relevant ASEAN partners to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat to develop a comprehensive stocktaking of the capacity of ASEAN Member States to produce and distribute RTE food packs during emergencies.

Regenerative Agriculture, Food Safety, Handling and Product Quality

12. The Meeting further commended the sectoral bodies for their efforts and achievements in promoting regenerative agriculture that supports a sustainable agenda, harmonising standards, and developing guidelines to facilitate trade in agricultural products within ASEAN. The following documents were adopted, among others:

- Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transition in ASEAN;
- ASEAN Standard for Black, White, and Green Peppers; and
- Regional Guidelines for the ASEAN GAqP Certification Scheme.

13. Regarding the Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transition in ASEAN, the Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to align their national programmes and projects to further improve soil health, water resource management, and biodiversity in pursuit of the objectives of regenerative agriculture. In this context, the ASEAN Secretariat will collaborate with various partners and agencies to ensure the effective implementation of the guidelines to promote regenerative agriculture in the ASEAN region. Capacity building and knowledge sharing could serve as starting points for advancing this agenda in the ASEAN region.

Preparation for the Post-2025 Vision and Sectoral Plan for Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 2026-2030

14. The Meeting discussed the preparation for the Post-2025 Vision and Sectoral Plan for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry for the period 2026-2030. The Meeting encouraged all relevant stakeholders, international organizations, and ASEAN partners to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat and the Task Force responsible for developing the Post-2025 Action Plan for the Food, Agriculture, and Forestry sector. This collaboration should initiate the review process and the development of the sectoral plan, taking into account the following elements, among others: promoting sustainable agriculture, decarbonising the agriculture sector, enhancing standards and quality within the sector, strengthening food security and water resource management, sustainable forest management, and boosting public-private partnerships. The detailed sectoral plan will be developed by the ASEAN Secretariat in consultation with the Senior Officials Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM AMAF) in 2025 for implementation.

15. In this context, the Meeting endorsed Malaysia's proposal to develop the "ASEAN Vision of ASEAN Agriculture: Towards 2045" as a Priority Economic Deliverable (PED) under Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2025. This initiative aims to identify trends within the agriculture sector and to highlight advancements in technology, innovation, and digital solutions, all intended to fully realize the priority agendas of the agricultural sector. Key strategies will include promoting carbon neutrality, reducing harmful agrochemicals, and advancing

sustainable and regenerative agriculture, along with other relevant topics to ensure sustainable sector development. The Meeting encouraged all stakeholders to collaborate with ASEAN in the development of this Framework, which will be announced alongside the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Vision of Agriculture 2045.

Moving together with Dialogue Partners and International Organisations

16. As ASEAN partners play a crucial role in advancing the regional agenda, the Meeting acknowledged and expressed gratitude to ASEAN's partners—particularly Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, the European Union, Germany, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Switzerland, and the US—for their valuable contributions and support in enhancing cooperation in food, agriculture, fisheries, and forestry in the ASEAN region through close collaboration in various areas.

17. The Meeting appreciated the support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development (CTIF), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Economic Research Institute for East Asia and ASEAN (ERIA), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry 2016-2025.

The 47th AMAF Meeting

18. The Meeting took note that the 47th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry will be held in the Philippines in 2025.

19. The Meeting expressed its sincere appreciation and gratitude to Myanmar for hosting the 46th AMAF Meeting and for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the event.
