



H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN
Pre-Recorded Remarks

**At the Inaugural Session of the Policy Roundtable and Inception Workshop on
Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration – Phase II (ATMI-II)**

Sheraton Grand Jakarta, Gandaria City Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia

4-5 August 2025

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

1. It is my honor to deliver these opening remarks at the inaugural session of the Policy Roundtable and Inception Workshop for the Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration – Phase II (ATMI-II). Although I regret not being with you in person, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to IFPRI¹, IFAD², SEARCA³, and BIMSTEC⁴ for organizing this important regional forum and for your unwavering commitment to advancing inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems in our region.
2. Let me begin by highlighting some important developments from ASEAN, particularly following the 46th ASEAN Summit in May 2025 in Malaysia. One of the most significant outcomes was the adoption of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, which reaffirms our commitment to placing people at the heart of ASEAN's integration efforts. The Vision promotes meaningful, inclusive participation across all sectors. In support of this, ASEAN introduced the AEC Strategic Plan 2026–2030, which positions agriculture as a key enabler for green economic growth and the decarbonization of regional supply chains.
3. In line with this strategic direction, the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) are now developing the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sectoral Plan 2026–2030 as well as the Cooperation Framework for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry Towards 2045. These documents outline ASEAN's long-term goals for the food and agriculture sector that supports farmer livelihoods, promotes sustainability, strengthens climate resilience, and maintains ASEAN's global relevance in agri-food trade.

¹ IFPRI: International Food Policy Research Institute

² IFAD: International Fund For Agricultural Development

³ SEARCA: Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture

⁴ BIMSTEC: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Food security and nutrition remain among ASEAN's most urgent priorities. We recognize that sustainable agriculture lies at the intersection of health, environmental protection, and economic opportunity. Over the years, ASEAN has put forward regional guidelines and action plans to integrate environmental and social sustainability into our food systems. Notably, the Leaders' Declaration on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Times of Crisis, adopted in 2023, underscored our commitment to reducing food loss and waste—essential steps in building resilient food supply chains.
5. Nonetheless, significant challenges remain. Food insecurity persists in some areas, and the affordability of healthy diets continues to decline. Climate change further compounds these difficulties, with increasingly frequent extreme weather events causing billions of dollars in agricultural losses annually.
6. To address these challenges, ASEAN is investing in climate-smart agriculture, digital innovation, inclusive financing, food waste reduction, and the decarbonization of agricultural systems. Strengthening food reserves and enhancing trade facilitation are also essential measures we are taking to safeguard food access across the region. In this context, ASEAN has identified three strategic priorities for advancing our regional agri-food agenda:
 - First, we must promote sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices—such as organic farming, water conservation and agroecology. These techniques not only boost productivity but also ensure environmental protection and equitable access to nutritious food.
 - Second, we need to accelerate the application of science, technology, and innovation. Tools like precision agriculture, biotechnology, and digital platforms can transform farming practices and help smallholders adapt to changing conditions, improving yields and lowering costs.
 - Third, we must harness sustainable finance and investment. Mobilizing both public and private capital is crucial to scaling up resilience and adaptation efforts. Innovative financing instruments, such as blended finance and sustainability-linked loans, can help us meet long-term development goals.
7. At the same time, external developments continue to test our sector's resilience. However, such challenges may also drive ASEAN to strengthen regional collaboration, diversify export markets, and make our agricultural supply chains more resilient in the face of shifting global trade dynamics.
8. In navigating these internal and external challenges, strong partnerships are more important than ever. Our collaboration with institutions such as IFPRI, equips ASEAN with the technical expertise and evidence-based insights needed to adapt to evolving trade realities, strengthen regional food systems, and advance our shared vision for inclusive and sustainable agri-food development.
9. ASEAN remains firmly committed to building partnerships that transcend borders and sectors. Regional cooperation—grounded in shared values, mutual respect, and

sustainability—is essential to addressing both immediate and long-term challenges in food and agriculture. Initiatives like ATMI-II are timely and vital in supporting this transformation.

10. As you engage in discussions over the next two days, I encourage you to share your insights, offer your expertise, and explore opportunities for deeper collaboration. The outcomes of this workshop will play a crucial role in shaping the next phase of ATMI-II and will contribute to ASEAN and BIMSTEC's wider efforts to ensure food security, foster sustainable agriculture, and promote regional market integration.
11. Let us seize this opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment, mobilize our collective strengths, and take bold, coordinated action to build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for all.
12. I wish you a productive and forward-looking workshop.

Thank you.
