



Working with ASWGAC



The ASWGAC (ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Agricultural Cooperative), linked within other strategic ASEAN-level forums and working groups, forms a strategic body to facilitate the engagement of Farmers' Organisations within relevant ASEAN agricultural programmes and activities.

Overview

The ASEAN Foundation – in its strategic role to establish and foster strong links between rural Farmers' Organisations and ASEAN-level institutions – engaged in a number of key workshops and meetings throughout 2016-2017. These meetings were the *ASEAN Centre for the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives (ACEDAC)* meeting, the *ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Agricultural Cooperatives (ASWGAC)* meeting (as part of the Senior Official Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry, or SOM-AMAF), and also the *Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE)*.

ACEDAC and ASWGAC

ACEDAC, an ASEAN body established to implement programmes focused towards promoting the development of agricultural cooperatives across the region, forms an integral forum for linking representatives of ASEAN member state governments with agricultural cooperative representatives from all ASEAN nations. This integrated forum stands as a key opportunity for representatives to exchange information and

experiences between member states, engage participants in education and training, formulate research and development programmes, and engage in other project activities related to agricultural cooperatives. ASWGAC, the ASEAN working group focused towards agricultural cooperatives, incorporates similar members to the ACEDAC panel, with the addition of a numerous external but related stakeholders.

While ACEDAC focuses to objectives of a more technical nature, the ASWGAC is the driving body behind policy discussion and formulation for agricultural cooperatives in ASEAN. It develops recommendations and steers priorities for the direction of agricultural initiatives in

ASEAN, based on inputs from the ACEDAC and other technical bodies. The ASWGAC is guided by, and derives its focus from the key strategies of the ASEAN region, such as the *ASEAN 202: Forging ahead vision, and the Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food,*

Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025 (SP-FAF). To support the SP-FAF, the ASWGAC has also developed its own strategic plan, the *ASWGAC Strategic Plan of Action 2016 – 2020*, that focuses primarily towards two of the key SP-FAF strategic thrust areas.

2016 SOMRDPE

The ASEAN Foundation also engaged the Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE) in Phnom Penh, during October 2016. This allowed the ASEAN Foundation to facilitate engagement between Cambodian Farmers' Organisations and the European Union, as well as present to high-ranking ASEAN member state officials regarding the AFOSP efforts and plans. Through this presentation, a number of interests and possible working engagements were highlighted, with possibilities to engage the ASEAN Foundation to support the SOMRDPE in developing initiatives that may contribute to the SOMRDPE 2016-2020 work plan.

The RDPE framework itself has the primary goal of sustainable rural development and poverty eradication in ASEAN, and is therefore intrinsically linked to programmes such as the AFOSP. Its key objectives are:

- Improved vulnerable groups' and poor households' access to and/or control of productive natural resources, financial and support services, and to social protection as a foundation to building capable, resilient, and self-sustaining households and communities;
- Enabled poor and vulnerable groups to participate in the socio-economic opportunities including through financial innovation and strengthening social enterprise; and
- Strengthened convergence of rural development and poverty eradication initiatives at the local, national and regional levels through improve coordination

mechanism, policy coherence and effective localisation of RDPE programmes and actions.

The RDPE itself has five specific working components, all of which were topics for discussion and planning during the SOMRDPE. These components are:

1. Rural Economic Growth
2. Social Protection and Safety Nets
3. Development of Infrastructure and Human Resources in Rural and Peri-Urban Areas
4. Public-Private-People Partnership (4Ps) for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication
5. Resilience of the Poor and Vulnerable Groups to Economic and Environmental Risks
6. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Rural Development and Poverty Reduction in the Region

The meeting discussed and planned for a range of regional activities across its six working components, many of which are directly or indirectly related to the AFOSP's own working areas. In particular, the ASEAN Foundation was appointed as potential partner on a number of key activities.

Within *Component 4, regarding Public-Private-People Partnership (4Ps) for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication*, the ASEAN Foundation was noted as holding the capacity to support the promotion of social entrepreneurship through documentation of workable business models.

2016 ACEDAC and ASWGAC Meetings

During late May, 2016, the 23rd ACEDAC meeting and 18th ASWGAC meeting were held consecutively in Surabaya, Indonesia. The ASEAN Foundation attended in an effort to engage the participants on the implementation of AFSOP, presenting findings to ACEDAC from the ALRAC activities, and to introduce AFSOP to ASWGAC forum participants, as well as explore opportunities for collaboration. The engagement also represented an opportunity for the ASEAN Foundation to learn more about the dynamics and mechanisms of such

meetings. The ACEDAC meeting is attended by representatives from all ASEAN member states and a variety of agricultural cooperative groups. The 2016 meeting recommended that ACEDAC continue its technical focus, for sharing knowledge, experience and learning between institutional representatives and agricultural cooperatives.

The ASEAN Foundation was invited to present on AFOSP to the ASWGAC meeting, as well as explore and highlight possible areas for collaboration. This was further enhanced by the request

from the ASEAN Secretariat that the ASEAN Foundation should highlight opportunities for engaging in the implementation of the ASWGAC's Strategic Plan of Action. The key areas that the ASEAN Foundation identified, in-line with its AFOSP-ASEAN Foundation activities, were under the *Strategic Thrust 5* programme action – *Promote and strengthen cooperatives and farmers' organisations so as to better integrate small producers in the value chains and to provide collective platforms to deal with production and market risks.*

This includes activities:

- Promote the awareness of ASEAN agricultural cooperatives and farmers' organisations on ASEAN process and dynamics
- Promote policy forums between ASEAN farmers' organisations and ASWGAC.
- Facilitate thematic learning exchanges for ASEAN farmers' organisations





As a result of the ASEAN Foundation's engagement and presentation to the 18th ASWGAC meeting, it was noted by the meeting that:

- **There is a need to find common areas between AFOSP and ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry, particularly on the programme areas where there is potential engagement with FOs;**
- **The AFOSP supports advocacy activities for Farmers' Organisations; and**
- **The ASEAN Foundation/ AFOSP should support ASEAN in developing Roadmap for Agricultural Cooperative Development toward 2025.**

Regarding the last point, the ASEAN Foundation committed AFOSP to supporting the development of the roadmap, and that the AFOSP will develop a concept note for the roadmap's development in consultation with ACEDAC Secretariat and ASEAN Secretariat.

2017 ACEDAC and ASWGAC Meetings

Vientiane, Lao PDR hosted the 2017 ACEDAC and ASWGAC meetings, which took place successively during mid-May. During the ACEDAC meeting, the role of women in agricultural cooperatives was highlighted, particularly through examples from the Philippines and Thailand. The meeting proposed to strengthen engagement of women across the region through learnings taken from these examples. During the

ACEDAC meeting, the ASEAN Foundation presented on the AFOSP development of the ASEAN Learning Route on Agricultural Cooperatives (ALRAC) programme. During this presentation, it focused on a range of activities within the programme, including the ASEAN Learning Series, the ASEAN Roadmap on Agricultural Cooperatives development, side events such as the Trade and Marketing of ASEAN Agricultural Cooperatives workshop, and the development of promotion and awareness-raising materials. The ASEAN Foundation also presented its plans for the

ASEAN Learning Series and Policy Engagement on Agricultural Cooperatives (ALSPEAC), to be held during the following July, with a focus towards facilitating peer-to-peer learning about farmer empowerment and engagement in the global value chain.

During the ASWGAC meeting that followed the ACEDAC, attention was brought to the decision made at the 2016 meeting to develop an ASEAN Roadmap for Agricultural Cooperative Development – guided by the ASEAN Secretariat with support from AFOSP and the ASEAN Foundation.

The meeting was presented with the concept note, which in-turn saw the Roadmap recommended for consideration as one of ASWGAC's key deliverables for 2018. The ASEAN Foundation presented to the ASWGAC meeting on the proposed agricultural cooperatives scoping study, to be undertaken as part of the AFOSP working activities. The scoping study, which is aimed to provide an insight into

the policy environment across ASEAN for agricultural cooperatives, was noted as likely to contribute to the development of ASEAN Roadmap in Agricultural Cooperatives Development. The meeting supported the scoping study, and called for close engagement with all stakeholders, including tasking the ASWGAC with a central coordinating role in the work.



Strategic Plan of Action ASWGAC

STRATEGIC THRUST 2

Enhance trade facilitation, economic integration and market access by:

- Establishing business linkages among the potential agricultural cooperatives and farmers' organisation;
- Promoting direct investment and strategic partnership with ASEAN Agricultural cooperatives and farmers' organisation, producers, consumer and traders; and
- Strengthening the Food Marketing System of Agricultural Cooperatives for Enhancing Food Security in ASEAN.

STRATEGIC THRUST 5

Assist resource constrained small producers and SMEs to improve productivity, technology and product quality, to meet global market standards and increase competitiveness in line with the ASEAN Policy Blueprint on SME Development through:

- Assisting small scale producers in the FAF sector to become viable and competitive enterprises by provision of better technology, inputs, finance and extension services, access to higher value markets, and by facilitating integration into modern value chains;
- Promoting and strengthening cooperatives and farmers' organizations so as to better integrate small producers in the value chains and to provide collective platforms to deal with production and market risks;
- Empowering personnel and leaders of agricultural cooperatives; and
- Establishing of strategic alliances among agricultural cooperatives in ASEAN.



ASEAN Farmers' Organisations Support Programme

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