

ASEAN Young Agripreneur Story Series

THAN SHWE, A FUTURE-MINDED AGRIPRENEUR FROM MYANMAR

The agriculture sector is the backbone of Myanmar economy which contributes 37.8% of GDP and employs 70% of labor force¹ (FAO). Agricultural productivity is affected by many factors, one of them is the participation from the young generation.



Than Shwe; Co- founder of Rakhawanna Yuwa Association and program officer of NEED Myanmar realizes that aging farmers is one of the crucial issues in agricultural. Therefore, he is committed to be agriculture development worker to give contribution back to society by empowering youth to be next agripreneur.

"I believe, youth capacity building plays an important role in future sustainability in agriculture" he said.

Hence, Shwe and his organization; NEED conduct a training program such as MY LEAD Program (Motivated Youth Leader for Economic and Agriculture Development) and YFP (Young Farmer Program) to empower youth to be actively involved in agriculture sector and to initiate organic farming. Every



Figure 1 Harvesting at school farm

year, they train 30-35 young people with age range between 18-25 years old from all over the country to join a 6-month an intensive program in Hmaw Bi, Yangon Region, Myanmar. Shwe and team also do advocacy and community outreach program in different rural areas.

In light of his future plan and passion in promoting ethical products and strengthening resilience for food security in the community, Shwe explained that

"Together with NEED, I am promoting and practising permaculture to small scale farmers. The permaculture farming system may help the farmers to increase income generation." Shwe also explained his future plan and passion in promoting ethical products and strengthening resilience for food security in the community.



Figure 2 Farm Activities with Students



Figure 3 Teaching Permaculture at EVF school

He also sent a message that he dedicated to ASEAN youth, which is: *"The future of mother earth lays on youth; we are the agent of change to exemplify modern – friendly and sustainable farming"*.

ASEAN integration and single market in one side will seamlessly connect the ASEAN Community. However, agricultural development level in each ASEAN countries are different. But most of ASEAN Countries are depending their livelihood on agriculture sector, and the majority is small scale poor farmers. This shall encourage young farmers cross border to help each other and building equal developing path for every country with fair share. Improving the life of poor farmers will strengthen the ASEAN connection as **"One Vision, One Identity, One Community"**.



Figure 4 Teaching Permaculture @ EVF school

We have many potentials to develop our agriculture sectors based on environmentally, economically and socially sustainable practice approaches. With strong networking and collaboration, I hope ASEAN agriculture sector will be advanced in near future.



Figure 5 Practical Soil conservation Class (Making home garden bed)

¹ <http://www.fao.org/myanmar/fao-in-myanmar/myanmar/en/>