



# ASEAN-AFOSP Policy Dialogue



As a key activity to facilitate links between Farmers' Organisations and ASEAN, in 2016 the ASEAN Foundation implemented the Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on improving social dialogue and programme cooperation between EU-ASEAN-FO/CSO on Strengthening Agricultural Cooperatives and Attracting Youth in Agriculture

## Overview

Engaging a variety of regional stakeholders and local farmers' organisations in policy dialogue forms a key aspect of the ASEAN Foundation's role within AFOSP. AFOSP-ASEAN Foundation believes that policy dialogues is the excellent platform to enhance multi-stakeholders' participation in the agribusiness sector. The overall objective of these platform is to encourage cooperatives to cooperatives and farmers to farmers connection cross the borders for joint productions or marketing actions along the regional agricultural value chain.

In November 2016, under this working outcome, the ASEAN Foundation hosted the *"Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on improving social dialogue and programme cooperation between EU-ASEAN-FO/CSO on Strengthening Agricultural Cooperatives and Attracting Youth in Agriculture"* in its office in Jakarta, Indonesia. The event brought together representatives from both ASEAN and EU regional bodies, regional and local Farmers' Organisations, as well as a range of other key stakeholders. The RTD was attended by over forty individuals with an interest in the topic.



## ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED AT THE RTD

ASEAN SECRETARIAT	<b>FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS (FSOs)</b>
EU Mission to ASEAN	
International Fund for Agricultural Development Indonesia	<i>Cambodia (FNN)</i> <i>Indonesia (LVC, SPI, API)</i> <i>Lao PDR (LFN)</i> <i>Philippines (AFA, PAKISAMA)</i> <i>Viet Nam (VNFU)</i>
ACEDAC	
Asian Farmers' Association	<b>AGRI-AGENCIES (CSOs)</b>
La Via Campesina	<i>Belgium (CAS, Agricorn)</i> <i>Indonesia (InDHRRA)</i> <i>Philippines (AsiaDHRRA)</i>
The ASEAN Foundation	

## Aims

Both the EU and ASEAN recognise the importance of the role of agricultural cooperatives in driving sustainable rural development, however, the issue of decreasing youth engagement in farming continues to form a challenge for both regions. Therefore, the RTD focused towards two key, inter-related themes; namely, the strengthening of agricultural cooperatives, and; attracting youth to engage in farming into the future. The RTD also formed a key forum for increasing the engagement between regional bodies and farmers' organisations.

The specific objectives of the RTD were to:

1. Increase awareness and appreciation of the various initiatives among stakeholders from ASEAN and EU within the agricultural cooperative context;
2. Identify key comments and suggestions on potential tripartite programme cooperation between EU, ASEAN, and FOs/CSOs on agricultural cooperatives and youth; and

Generate initial commitment and identify concrete action points to push for tripartite cooperation and institutionalised mechanisms for social dialogue.

## Activities

After initial formalities to open proceedings, members of invited farmers' organisations were given the opportunity to share experiences about their current work, initiatives within the strengthening of agricultural cooperatives, and the engagement of youth within the wider agriculture movement. Within these presentations from the various FOs in attendance, points of interest regarding the importance of partnerships and multi-stakeholder support were often highlighted, as were concerns regarding funding, as well as the image of agriculture as an obstacle to youth engagement.

The meeting was then attended and addressed by the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, H.E. Mr. Phil Hogan, who spoke about the role of regional bodies such as the EU and ASEAN in supporting local level farming. He linked the importance of strong and engaged agriculture cooperatives to overcoming key issues facing agriculture in the modern era – challenges such as climate change, resources, youth engagement and the global market. Linking agriculture to 11 of the Sustainable Development

Goals, Mr. Hogan highlighted the importance of agriculture and local farming, identifying the unique potential of the cooperative's role within more productive and sustainable food systems, when supported by a conducive policy environment. With this, he urged the EU and ASEAN bodies to formulate programme cooperation that will ensure innovative incentives, particularly regarding the livelihoods-based viability of farming, are available to attract young farmers to work in agriculture. Mr. Hogan's speech was followed with a question and answer session, in which participants were able to explore the EU's role in supporting agriculture cooperatives within the European region, as well as the EU's engagement in supporting ASEAN agriculture.

The RTD then continued with representatives from ASEAN and EU invited to share the programmes and mechanisms implemented by their respective institutions aimed to support and develop agriculture in the region – particularly regarding the strengthening of areas related to farmers' organisations. Dr. Pham Quang Minh, from the

Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF) Division of the ASEAN Secretariat, highlighted relevant strategic action programmes related to agricultural cooperatives within the ASEAN Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 2016-2025. This included promoting business linkages between agricultural cooperatives in ASEAN, direct investment and strategic partnerships across the agricultural value chain, and strengthening the capacity of agricultural cooperatives themselves.

Representatives from ASEAN Secretariat spoke about initiatives under the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community (ASCC) blueprint, explaining ASEAN's operating mechanisms based on consensus among the ASEAN Member States. Presentations were followed by more intensive discussions between parties, with ideas such as contextual studies, field visits to other regions, and the promotion of increased engagement, as well as potential mechanisms to facilitate engagement, between local farmers' organisations and regional bodies, all covered within the range of conversation topics.



## Outcomes

To finalise the RTD, the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) presented on a range of opportunities and options for the continuance of ideas and issues raised during the RTD sessions. Amongst such recommendations were:

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Cooperation on Geographical Indications:* Through AFOSP and regional bodies, opportunities to identify potential for adding Geographical Indications to local produce, as well as promoting such produce through Geographical Indications forms a strong and evidenced mechanism to support the sustainable development of agricultural cooperatives.
- *Promoting Social Dialogue Mechanisms:* Opportunities exist for shared learning between the EU and ASEAN, and can be further enhanced by sharing visits to learn about mechanisms used by the EU in social dialogue regarding agricultural cooperatives. Such visits could be beneficial for both farmers' organisation members and ASEAN institutional representatives alike. It is also recommended for further discussions within ASEAN regarding strengthening social dialogue mechanisms, based on models and examples from the European Union.

Overall, the Round Table Discussion formed an extremely valuable learning tool for all engaged parties. It promoted increased understanding and communication between agricultural cooperatives and ASEAN-level bodies, as well as engaging in learning and knowledge sharing with external parties such as the EU, providing the opportunity for participants to explore ideas regarding strengthening the standing of ASEAN Farmers' Organisations and engaging ASEAN youth within the movement.



## Reflection

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It is important for FOs to work at the national level before moving to the regional level based on experiences in the EU. In the EU, national policies essentially influence the regional policies.

Noel Monteyne, AgriCord

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The main role of AFOSP-AF component is to help promote/bridge policy dialogues and interactions between FOs and ASEAN institutions.

Elaine Tan – Executive Director, the ASEAN Foundation

On the CSA's experience in facilitating exchange visits between regions such as Africa and South America, such visits are not limited to inter-government institutions, but can also be done between FOs/Agri Coops and can be part of AFOSP activities.

Mr. Poznanski – CSA, Belgium

FOs in ASEAN must be organised and structured at the national level. The rationale behind this, is that when FOs speak in one voice at national level, they will have a stronger negotiation position with their respective government.

Franck Viault, Head of Development Cooperation  
EU – Jakarta

Quality of food production and nutrition should be addressed not only by SOM-AMAF, but also by other senior officials such RDPE, social welfare, health and other related areas. The food security and nutrition issue could be a good entry point for collaboration.

Mega Irena, Poverty Eradication and Gender Division of ASEC

The broad idea behind the development of the RDPE Action Plan 2016-2020 is the 4 Ps; namely, People-Public-Private-Partnership, which still must be aligned with the aspirations of ASEAN. There are a lot of things to be done in the next five years under RDPE, as well as under the action plans of the other sectoral bodies relevant to rural development. These efforts essentially need to be synergised with each other for better engagement and implementation.

Rodora Turalde-Babaran, Human Development Directorate of ASEC



## ASEAN Farmers' Organisations Support Programme

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