

**The 2nd Meeting of the ASEAN Ad-hoc Task Force of Food, Agriculture
and Forestry (FAF) towards 2020**

18 July 2014, Bangkok

**CONCEPT PROPOSAL
Strengthening ASEAN Technical Cooperation Mechanism in Agriculture**

I. RATIONALE

1. Realizing an ASEAN Community by 2015, Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF) sectors play an important role and contribution towards regional development and integration guided by the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community. Considering their multi-functionality importance, FAF sectors cross cut the three Community Pillars, namely the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC).

2. An ASEAN Community is not the end goal in itself. As an important milestone, it also represents the start of a new phase in ASEAN's continuing process towards deeper regional integration and community building beyond 2015. Recognizing the target date to realize the ASEAN Community is fast approaching, a post-2015 vision, including consideration of what should form the next stages of ASEAN's integration efforts across the three pillars, as well strategic ideas on how ASEAN can maintain its relevance in the evolving regional architecture are pragmatic challenges. It should be emphasized that while political commitments and policy directions are crucial in determining the post-2015 ASEAN, functional supporting regional cooperation mechanisms complementing the current ASEAN processes and arrangements will be equally important to realize such commitments and policies.

3. To implement a post-2015 vision, goals and objectives of ASEAN Cooperation in FAF in the context of expanding agri-food market and trade while maintaining sustainable livelihoods and inclusive development, an appropriate pathway for ASEAN integration is the key challenge. The issues of institutional capacity and working mechanisms for the post-2015 would need to be strengthened to address constraints and find ways to enhance cooperation within and among related sectors. To fulfil the ASEAN vision and policy targets in building an ASEAN Community 2015 and beyond, ASEAN requires to enhance capacity in formulating and implementing technical measures at national and regional levels. The current institutional arrangements and capacity of ASEAN, particularly the ASEAN Secretariat has limitation. In addition, technical capacity exists in respective ASEAN Member States needs to be fully mobilized through a regional viable platform and mechanism. Thus it is critical and evitable that ASEAN technical cooperation mechanism in agriculture required to be strengthened in response to ASEAN policies and directives. Such technical cooperation mechanisms will mobilize capacity and expertise existed in respective ASEAN Member States and ASEAN as a whole in supporting the

implementation of various ASEAN policy measures to ensure greater synergies, complementarities and impacts.

II. OBJECTIVE

4. The overall objective of this initiative is to strengthen ASEAN technical cooperation in agriculture to implement regional projects/activities that address regional issues and challenges in response to ASEAN policy in enhancing the international competitiveness of ASEAN's food and agricultural products/commodities, promoting sustainable agriculture, as well as further strengthen the region's food security arrangement. This will facilitate ASEAN in achieving the region of safe, green, and inclusive cross-border value chain of agri-food products. (support small producers/farmers, effective and functional).

III. KEY COMPONENTS & EXPECTED RESULTS

5. Strengthening an ASEAN technical cooperation mechanism in agriculture will need to take into account existing arrangements/mechanisms and capacity of the ASEAN Member States and ASEAN as a whole. Considering the current capacity gaps, it is inevitable that the approach taken should be a gradual process through a phased-approach to ensure its relevance and sustainability. Initially, two main components of this proposal are proposed, namely *i) facilitating enhanced ASEAN technical capacity mechanism through project support; and ii) conducting studies on appropriate arrangements and options for mid to long-term development and institutionalization of such arrangement, including their viable roadmaps for consideration by ASEAN.*

6. The main expected results are *i) technical cooperation mechanism on selected areas (to be determined by ASEAN) demonstrated; ii) confidence for further enhancement of technical cooperation mechanisms in ASEAN enhanced; iii) viable arrangements and options for mid to long-term development and institutionalization of such arrangement clarified.*

7. The proposed ASEAN technical cooperation mechanism is envisaged to be ASEAN Member States (AMS)-driven and owned cooperation structure that is dynamic, efficient, effective, responsive and cost-effective, with flexibility to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of regional projects/activities. At later stage, ASEAN could then determine ways and means to institutionalize such mechanism as part of the ASEAN Community's structure.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

8. Strengthening ASEAN Technical Cooperation Mechanism in Agriculture requires first and foremost the realization of the need for supporting technical cooperation mechanism in support of implementing political commitments and policy directives. With consideration by the Senior Officials Meeting for ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-AMAF), the proposal could be taken forwards with support from the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with interested partners.

Required Action

The Meeting may wish to consider and support the development concept on “Strengthening ASEAN Technical Cooperation Mechanism in Agriculture” as part of the recommendations on initiative in support of the implementation of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF) Vision towards 2020.
