



Standards in the Southeast Asian Food Trade

Increased economic integration in ASEAN is expected to facilitate cross-border trade both within and beyond the region, with great importance attributed to compliance with standards for food production and processing. The project aims to support the ASEAN Expert Working Group on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) in the implementation of the ASEAN GAP standard with respect to fruits and vegetables. In the longer term, quality standards in the ASEAN Member States need to be aligned with internationally recognized standards, such as Global GAP or the organic certification label of the European Union.

Background

The worldwide demand for high-quality foods, particularly fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, is growing every day. Among the reasons for this are the greater purchasing power of the middle classes in emerging economies as well as increasing demand from international supermarket chains.

The agriculture and food industry is one of the most important economic sectors in Southeast Asia, accounting for up to 48 per cent of the gross domestic product in the individual states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In these countries, foods are only rarely certified in accordance with current standards for good agricultural practice, such as organic and Global GAP standards. On the one hand, this is because authorities, businesses and farmers are not sufficiently informed about the certification process. On the other, business institutions in the ASEAN Member States often fail to provide adequate support services. This situation does not only limit options for the export of produce to lucrative markets outside the region, such as Japan, the EU and the USA, but is also poses a challenge for regional integration.

Objective

International and ASEAN-wide standards for Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) and specific quality features for food (e.g. organic farming methods) are verifiably applied in ASEAN Member States, particularly in the production of fresh and processed fruit and vegetables.

Client

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Lead agency

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Current term

January 2015 until December 2017

Approach

Engaging both public and private stakeholders, the project focuses on:

- Creating an enabling environment for the further development of standards in the food sector
- Training inspectors, auditors and state supervisory bodies
- Supporting farmers, producer groups and companies

Firstly, small and medium-sized enterprises will obtain certification in the context of development partnerships. Voluntary food standards, such as ASEAN and organic standards, will be introduced on a pilot basis. The experience gained and recommendations drawn up in this process will be used to further develop the regional ASEAN GAP and organic standards.

Secondly, institutions in the ASEAN Member States will be assisted in improving the efficiency of monitoring systems for food standards. Special emphasis will be placed on training private and state supervisory bodies in how to conduct risk-based inspections. These inspections will allow supervisory bodies to detect and evaluate risks in relation to the growing, processing and quality of fruit and vegetables and help to prevent production losses. In order to ensure that this knowledge is retained and remains available to certification bodies and authorities in the long term, a learning platform on compliance with food standards will be established in cooperation with the project partners.

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