

# Consumer Education and Awareness Campaigns on Food Safety Standards in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam





The report by the Mekong Institute is commissioned by the Consumer Protection in ASEAN (PROTECT) and Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Value Chains in ASEAN (ASEAN AgriTrade) projects, implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, with funding from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



Published by:  
Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices  
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

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Indonesia, 2021

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## Table of Contents

Contents .....	4
List of Tables.....	5
List of Figures .....	5
List of Abbreviations .....	6
Summary of CEACs on food safety and standards in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam .....	9
1. Cambodian CEACs on food safety and standards.....	26
1.1 Recommendations for CEACs on Food Safety and Standards in Cambodia .....	31
2. Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) CEACs on food safety and standards.....	34
2.1 Recommendations for CEACs on food safety and standards in Lao PDR.....	37
3. Myanmar CEACs on food safety and standards .....	40
3.1 Recommendations for CEACs on food safety and standards in Myanmar .....	44
4. Viet Nam CEACs on food safety and standards .....	47
4.2 Recommendations for CEACs on food safety and standards in Viet Nam .....	52
CEACs on food safety and standards Guidelines for Campaigning .....	54
1. Guidelines for campaigning.....	55
1.1 Scope .....	55
1.1.1 References .....	55
1.2 Key steps in campaigning .....	56
1.2.1 Planning.....	56
1.2.1.1 Objectives (identification of problems; education and awareness needs) .....	56
1.2.1.2 Target consumers: children, adults, women .....	57
1.2.1.3 Corresponding approach.....	57
1.2.1.4 Resource requirements.....	57
1.2.1.5 Cooperation and coordination.....	58
1.2.1.6 Location: rural, urban, community markets, supermarkets.....	58
1.2.1.7 Monitoring and evaluation criteria and indicators .....	58



1.2.2 Implementation, monitoring and assessment .....	59
1.2.3 National multi-stakeholder cooperation for CEACs on food safety and standards .....	60
1.3 Regional cooperation for CEACs on food safety and standards.....	60
Bibliography.....	62

## List of Tables

Table 1: Cambodia – CEACs on food safety and standards.....	11
Table 2: Lao PDR - CEACs on food safety and standards .....	15
Table 3: Myanmar - CEACs on food safety and standards.....	17
Table 4 :Viet Nam - CEAC on food safety and standards .....	20
Table 5 : Summary of CEACs in in the CLMV national food control systems .....	23

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Consumer information flyer about wine/methanol poisoning .....	28
Figure 2: Posters printed by CCF, Cambodia, and displayed at public markets.....	29
Figure 3: Journalists join food safety training – Khmer Times, July 31, 2019.....	30
Figure 4: Vientiane Times- Aug 6,2019 - Reporting on Food Safety.....	36
Figure 5: Myanmar FDA Consumer Education Flyer on Dangerous and Banned Food Dyes.....	41
Figure 6: By San Yamin Aung - 7 August 2019 (San Yamin Aung attended Mekong Institute's .....	43
Figure 7: BETV - How does a label guarantee food safety? 27 September, 2019 .....	44
Figure 8: Ho Chi Minh Women's Newspaper - 1 July, 2019 .....	50
Figure 9: Improper use of plastic wrapping can be harmful, 23 October, 2019 .....	50
Figure 10: Youth Union and Roadshow in Viet Nam – 2011 (VFA, 2012) .....	51



## List of Abbreviations

AADCP	ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme
ACCP	ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection
ACEI	ASEAN Consumer Empowerment Index
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMR	antimicrobial resistance
AMS	ASEAN Member States
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AVA	Agrifood and Veterinary Authority
AWDO	Asian Water Development Outlook
BPOM	Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan
BPS	Bureau of Philippine Standards
CA	competent authorities
CADPA	Clean Agriculture Development & Food Processing Association
CCA	Cholangiocarcinoma
CCAD	Consumer Affairs Department
CCF	Competition and Fraud
CEAC	consumer education and awareness campaign
CHEIC	Center for Health Education, Information and Communication
CIRD	Cambodia Institute for Research and Rural Development
CLMV	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam.
CLTS	community-led total sanitation
COMBI	Communication for Behavioural Impact
CPFTO	Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Order,
DA	Department of Agriculture
DepEd	Department of Education
DOCA	Department of Consumer Affairs
DoH	Department of Health - Philippines
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
EU	European Union



FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBD	foodborne diseases
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FDD	The Food and Drug Department
FOSTA Myanmar	Food Science and Technology Association – Myanmar
FSL	Food Safety Law – Viet Nam
FSQCD	Food Safety and Quality Control Division
FSQD	Food Safety & Quality Division
FSS	food sustainability standards
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GDP	gross domestic product
GFSI	Global Food Security Index
GKPD	Gerakan Keamanan Pangan Desa
GoL	The Government of Lao PDR
HCL	Healthier Choice logo
HPC	Health Promotion Council
IEC	information, education and communication (IEC)
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
ILSI Japan CHP	International Life Sciences Institute of Japan Center for Health Promotion
IPB University	Institut Pertanian Bogor
IPC	interpersonal communication
ISO	International Organization of Standardization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KAWP	Krom Aphiwat Phum
KAP	knowledge, attitude and practices
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MARD	Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MCU	Myanmar Consumers Union
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoIC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
MOIT	Ministries of Industry and Trade



MSMEs	micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NAFIQAD	National Agro-Forestry-Fisheries Quality Assurance Department
NCCP	National Committee for Consumer Protection
NCDs	non-communicable diseases
NCHP	The National Center for Health Promotion
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHL	National Health Laboratory
NIN	Viet Nam National Institute of Nutrition
NMCHC	National Maternal and Child Health Center
NNCC	National Nutrition Communication Campaign
OD	Operation District
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
PHD	Provincial Health Department
PNS	Philippine National Standards
PSAs	public service announcements
REI	regional economic integration
SAEDA	Sustainable Agriculture & Environment Development Association
SFA	Singapore Food Agency
SM	sanitation marketing
SWAN	Safe Water, Nutrition and Health Environment
UNGCP	United Nations Guideline for Consumer Protection
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization



## Summary of CEACs on food safety and standards in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam

Below is an analysis of consumer education and awareness campaigns (CEACs) of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (collectively known as CLMV) in the field of food safety and standards, taking stock of best practices and success factors at the regional level.

This section summarises the analysis of CEACs on food safety and standards in CLMV. It includes information about what has worked well in these countries and describes preconditions for implementing a successful CEAC on food safety and standards. The summary is first presented as a table, then elaborated further in subsequent sections.

Relevant capacities available in CLMV for CEACs on food safety and standards, compared with FAO guidelines:

1. Policy level commitments are in place – food laws in Lao PDR and Viet Nam
  - a. In Cambodia and Myanmar, the competent authorities (CAs) are relatively active in terms of CEACs for food safety. They use a variety of channels and publications to provide information to consumers – both adults and children (school students).
2. Lack of communication and campaign principles, or limited application of them
  - a. The FAO recommendation to engage a communication specialist is reflected in Viet Nam's Food Safety Law (FSL) of 2010, and the department for information, education and communication of the Vietnam Food Administration (VFA).
  - b. Measures are either lacking or limited to assess the effectiveness of CEACs on food safety and standards, for purposes of learning and future improvement; only donor/aid agency-funded initiatives include evaluation of CEACs.
3. Common motivators and drivers for CEACs on food safety and standards include outbreaks of food safety incidents and a high occurrence of food safety violations. Information about such incidents derives from cases of hospitalisation for food poisoning and the records of violations identified in food safety inspections. University research is not usually referred to for the further guidance in the implementation of CEACs for food safety and standards. A number of studies on consumer perceptions and awareness about food safety and labelling have been carried out by researchers and development agencies (such as Yezin Agriculture University, the international NGO GRET, and GIZ).



CAs and NGOs should review these studies and carry out more such surveys or studies as consumption patterns evolve. Food consumption surveys can ascertain the size and nature of groups that might be at risk from an inadequate or excessive intake of nutrients. Such surveys also indicate changes in dietary patterns and associated food safety risks (if any). This can guide consumer education and awareness campaigns on food safety. Together with the records of food safety incidents, food consumption surveys can disclose the level of consumers' exposure to certain food hazards. For example, the consumption of raw cyprinid fish causes the prevalence of bile duct cancer in the population of north-eastern Thailand (FAO, 2010).

4. Mass movement organisations increase the potential reach of CEACs. Examples include the Lao Women's Union (LWU), the people's committees in Viet Nam, and Cambodia's village and community-level health workers and volunteers.
5. Limited allocation by CAs of human resources and budgets for sustained CEACs.
6. NGOs and consumer associations are still new and have only limited technical capacities, funding or links to CAs for food safety and consumer protection. In Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, consumer protection is only just beginning to develop.
7. CAs focus more closely on ways of addressing the immediate needs of the food control system, such as implementing laws and regulations, developing standards and the establishing the infrastructure needed to support private-sector compliance with food safety requirements. Information, education and communication (IEC) activities are mainly aimed at food safety officials and the private sector, rather than at consumers and the general public.



## Cambodia

Table 1: Cambodia – CEACs on food safety and standards

Main implementing agency	Partners	Motivation /drivers	Target group	Method /approach	Resources	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Success factors
<b>1. WHO Community-Based Intervention Study (2007)</b>							
World Health Organization	National Centre for Health Promotion	High rate of diarrheal diseases associated with poor WASH facilities and practices, leading to unhygienic food preparation	Village Health Support Groups (VHSGs) <sup>1</sup> volunteers to reach women and children with information on WASH and food safety	Participatory and with technical support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>causes of foodborne illnesses, current practices</li> </ul>	Funding from WHO	WHO report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical support and training for NCHP and VHSG volunteers</li> <li>Collaterals and content were developed in consultation with local actors (volunteers) and further improved.</li> <li>Local actors have greater ownership</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> VHSGs belong to the community health workers introduced in 2003 with Cambodia's Community Participation for Health policy. The policy has since been revised with the community health workers being retained.



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• available facilities and capacity of community level stakeholders</li> <li>• empowerment of VHSGs and volunteers</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VHSGs – community level empowerment and ownership</li> <li>• VHSGs have provided excellent behaviour-changing ideas, e.g. the model family concept (Kim Ozano, 2018)</li> </ul>
Engagement strategy for CEACs on food safety and standards	The National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) is a government agency that plays a role in health education, including food safety. They have access to VHSGs. Empowered VHSGs can carry out sustained consumer education and food safety awareness activities, incorporating them into health, food security, nutrition and WASH projects.						
Preconditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VHSGs are volunteers. They need to obtain knowledge about food safety and standards before they can assist in related CEACs. <i>The WHO project and other community health projects have seen success with their support. (Child survival improvement in Cambodia, USAID-BASICS III, 2010 Project)</i> (Kim Ozano, 2018).</li> <li>• VHSGs should be formally recognised for their role, as this will enhance their status within their community and increase trust in their advice (Kim Ozano, 2018)</li> </ul>						



## 2. NGO Forum Food Safety Campaign 2018

Cambodia Institute for Research and Rural Development (CIRD), NGO Forum	Donors/ development agencies, Ministry of Agriculture, University of Battambang	Concerns over pesticide residues in vegetables and fruit; unsustainable use of agri-chemicals	Provincial NGO-forum partners/ members and general consumers	Food safety march, flyers, talks	Donors/ development agencies; OXFAM Cambodia funding through the Right to Food project	Limited reporting; scope of NGOs is wide and their focus is determined by the availability of funding	Strong network of CIRD and NGO-Forum – farmers and farmer organisations  Strong engagement with public sector – Ministry of Agriculture and University  Strong engagement with community (smallholder farmers)
Engagement strategies for CEACs on food safety and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of current projects of CIRD and NGO Forum</li> <li>Determine content and messaging on food safety and standards education and awareness as part of those or of future activities. Incorporate food safety and standards CEAC into IPM, nutrition, food security projects</li> <li>Strengthen members and officers' capacity to educate the general public about food safety and food standards, especially through design, content, channels and messaging to prompt behaviour change</li> <li>Use food safety awareness as pilot initiative in the design and implementation of a social media campaign on food safety</li> </ul>						
Preconditions	The competent authorities have put in place a governance system for credible and effective standards development and certification programmes.						



### 3. Consumer Protection Competition and Fraud Repression Directorate-General (CCF) CEAC on food safety

Consumer Protection Competition and Fraud Repression Directorate-General (CCF)	Food Safety Bureau, Ministry of Education, market owners	Results of market surveillance, inspection, testing and consumer complaints	School pupils; teachers, general public at markets	Inspection, testing develop collateral – posters and flyers – posted at public places – markets, talks at schools	CCF funding allocation	12-monthly report (not outcome base)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobile laboratory;</li> <li>- Food safety and consumer protection competent authority;</li> <li>- Government funding (ad-hoc)</li> <li>- Training of its officials</li> <li>- Strong engagement with private sector associations/retailers/vendors</li> </ul>
Engagement strategy for CEACs on food safety and standards	Training in risk communication for CCF officials; messaging, content development; engaging/capitalising on village/community health volunteers; strengthen CCF capacity to monitor and evaluate impacts of CEAC on consumer behaviour and strengthen demand for 'certified' safer food.						
Preconditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the CEAC</li> <li>• Strengthened campaign design: target group, messaging, collateral design, location, demography, analysis of complaints/incidents</li> <li>• Credible, effective and responsive consumer complaints and feedback system</li> <li>• A governance system for credible and effective standards development and certification programmes</li> </ul>						



## Lao PDR

Table 2: Lao PDR - CEACs on food safety and standards

Main implementing agency	Partners	Motivation /drivers	Target group	Method /approach	Resources	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Success factors
<b>1. Community-Based Intervention Study of Food Safety Practices - WHO</b>							
World Health Organisation	Women's Union in Lao PDR; Department of Food and Drugs (FDD)	High rate of diarrheal diseases associated with poor WASH facilities and practices and consequently unhygienic food preparation.	Women; children on WASH and food safety	Participatory and technical approach explaining causes of foodborne diseases, current practice, available facilities and the capacities of community level stakeholders;  empowering village health workers	Funding from WHO	WHO report	Working with the Lao Women's Union as a key partner to provide food safety education in rural communities, with training and technical support provided by FDD, has proven to be quite a successful approach.  Engagement expanded to Lao Farmers Network (LFN) and its members



<p>Engagement strategies for CEACs on food safety and standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a starting point, strengthening the capacities of the Lao Women's Union and Lao Youth Union (LYU) for food safety risk communication and for CEAC strategies related to food safety (this can also benefit other areas of health education for women and households).</li> <li>• Strengthening promotion and marketing skills of LFN members, focusing on the health benefits of food that complies with organic and safety standards.</li> <li>• Incorporating food safety awareness information and messages in existing health education campaigns and awareness-raising sessions. The Lao Women's Union website is regularly updated, suggesting relatively good online knowledge management and information dissemination. The food safety education materials can be stored with the Union for future access and use.</li> <li>• LYU radio – talk shows, entertaining radio programmes (Lao Youth Radio FM 90.0 MHz). Usually responds within 24 hours on FB Messenger (more than 300,000 followers).</li> <li>• FDD and the Centre for Information and Education for Health (CIEH) provide technical guidance on content development.</li> <li>• CEACs to target young people and women</li> </ul>
<p>Preconditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding (<i>CEAC projects funded and implemented by the government are very limited</i>).</li> <li>• Certified safe and sustainable food is easily available and affordable</li> <li>• Credible and effective standards development and certification programmes</li> </ul>



## Myanmar

Table 3: Myanmar - CEACs on food safety and standards

Main implementing agency	Partners	Motivation /drivers	Target group	Method /approach	Resources	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Success factors
<b>1. Myanmar Innovative Life Sciences (MILS) – Food Safety Forum</b>							
Private sector initiatives, Myanmar Innovative Life Sciences (MILS)	FDA, DOCA, FOSTA, MCU	To increase demand for ‘certified’ safe food in Myanmar and demand for safe food certification testing among private sector in Myanmar	Private sector and consumer associations/ representatives	Forum – talks, lectures, multi-stakeholder platform	Self-funded	Published forum report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from FDA and DOCA, private sector-led.</li> <li>• Annual forum</li> <li>• Established the multi-stakeholder PRINC platform (producers, regulators, investors, NGOs and consumers), which aims to create a learning environment for producers to produce safer, higher value products. Engage universities to carry out evaluation or provide technical advice on CEAC content and messaging.</li> </ul>



							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage groups representing the wider business community, such as the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producer and Exporter Association (MFVP)</li> </ul>
Engagement strategies for CEACs on food safety and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MILS is a food technology services company. A CEAC on food safety could benefit from its technical support in developing content and messaging. The multi-stakeholder platform provides an opportunity to assign various roles in the CEAC to the relevant stakeholders and determine funding sources.</li> <li>Strengthen the Myanmar Consumers Union (MCU) and improve media relations in Myanmar.</li> <li>Engage with other private sector associations/groups: MFVP, Myanmar Organic Agriculture Group and the media; strengthen their promotion and marketing skills, focusing on the benefits of safe and sustainable food.</li> </ul>						
Preconditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened PRINC (producers, regulators, investors, NGOs and consumers) platform for a systematic and long-term CEAC on food safety and standards</li> <li>Expanded availability of safer, affordable and convenient alternatives; (organic, GAP, HACCP certified products are mostly available in CityMart or Marketplace.</li> <li>Credible and effective standards development and certification programmes</li> <li>Credible, effective and responsive consumer complaints and feedback system</li> </ul>						



## 2. Mandalay FDA Branch and Mandalay City Development Committee

Mandalay Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Branch	Mandalay City Development Committee	Regular inspection of markets and food sold by vendors revealed high incidence of violations in the use of banned and dangerous food dyes – especially food sold to children.	Vendors (to benefit ‘young’ consumers)	Inspection, testing, fines, brochures, flyers, posters	Self-funded	The Mandalay FDA attributed a reduction in violations among food vendors to the campaign.	Testing, inspection and education; Media report/press release.
Engagement strategies for CEACs on food safety and standards	Provide Training in risk communication for FDA, DOCA and CDC officials; messaging, content development Strengthen FDA, DOCA and CDC capacities to monitor and evaluate impacts of the CEAC on consumer behaviour and strengthen the demand for ‘certified’ safer food.						
Pre-conditions	Effective reporting and evaluation of CEAC Credible and responsive consumer complaints system Certified safe and sustainable food easily available; convenient, affordable and credible scheme Credible and effective standards development and certification programmes						



## Viet Nam

Table 4 :Viet Nam - CEAC on food safety and standards

Main implementing agency	Partners	Motivation /drivers	Target group	Method /approach	Resources	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Success factors
<b>1. Viet Nam Food Administration (public-private partnership)</b>							
Viet Nam Food Administration (VFA)	GrabFood platform	COVID-19, increased importance of personal hygiene and increased use of food delivery apps	Consumers	Use food delivery riders to distribute flyers; use app to disseminate food safety and personal hygiene messages	funded by GrabFood	Number of flyers distributed; no assessment of effectiveness	The GrabFood platform has a captive audience  VFA technical advice on messaging and content on food safety
Engagement strategies for CEACs on food safety and standards	Provide training in risk communication for VFA officials; messaging, content development; engaging in and utilising a mass movement organisationStrengthen VFA and city food safety officials' capacity to monitor and evaluate impacts of the CEAC on consumer behaviour and strengthen the demand for 'certified' safer food.						



Preconditions	Monitoring and evaluation of the CEAC Make certified safe food available in fresh/open market Policy on good hygiene practices for wet/open markets Credible and effective standards development and certification programmes Credible and responsive consumer complaints system						
2. Seasonal Food Safety Campaigns							
Ho Chi Minh City Food Safety Authority and Local Government	Media company	Rise in incidence of food poisoning and hospitalisation during the Lunar New Year or Tet	Consumers, especially during the festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Media discussions on radio and television</li><li>Increasing frequency of food hygiene inspections</li></ul>	Local authorities in the city	Monitor reporting of food poisoning cases, hospitalisations and violations	Campaign led by city officials; hotline for reporting incidents; media cooperation
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Monitoring consumer hotline for food safety complaints from general public and assigning more officers to attend to the hotlines</li></ul>			



Engagement strategies for CEACs on food safety and standards	Provide training in risk communication for city officials; messaging, content development; engaging in and using mass movement organisation; strengthen capacity of city food safety officials to monitor and evaluate impacts of CEAC on consumer behaviour and strengthen the demand for certified safer food.
Preconditions	Policy on good hygiene practices for wet/open markets Credible and effective standards development and certification programmes Credible and responsive consumer complaints system



## Summary

Table 5 : Summary of CEACs in in the CLMV national food control systems

Country	Policies /IEC for consu mers	CEAC stakeholders		CEAC motivation	CEAC Structure/mechanism					
		Public sector	Other Stakeholders (NGOs, private)							
					Goals/ aim	Target group/ beneficiaries	Approach	MEL	Resources	Reporting
Cambodia	Yes	Multi-agency,	NGOs	records of food safety incidents/ prevalent food borne illness, inspection/surveillance results	Not specified	Provincial health officials and consumers in provinces	Face to face; community theatre; media; schools; flyers, banners, information materials, posters, public talks	Attendance at talks, campaigns	Govern ment and donor/deve lopment agencies budget and technical assistance	Available for some (donor supported initiatives)



Lao PDR	Yes	Multi-agency; mass movement organisation	Donors/development partners / NGOs	donor studies	SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound)	Provincial /district, village leaders, CIEH officials to reach out to general consumers, mothers	Face to face; flyers, banners, information materials, posters, public talks	Interviews, surveys, observation of behaviour, perception survey, foodborne incidents before and after campaign	donor/development agencies budget and technical assistance	Only for donor supported initiatives
Myanmar	Yes	FDA, DOCA,	NGOs and consumer associations (MCU, FOSTA), private sector (MFVP)	FDA and DOCA inspections, market surveillance; food safety incidents reported, studies	Not specified	Private sector associations; children	Talks, brochures, flyers, media, market fair, forum	Testing, inspection and market surveillance report	Inspection and market surveillance (government budget)  donor/development agencies budget and technical assistance	Only for donor supported initiatives



Viet Nam	Yes	VFA and food safety management authorities at all levels; mass movement organisations	Private sector, state media	records of food safety incidents/ prevalent foodborne illness, hospitalisation , inspection/surveillance results	Not specified	Mass movement organisation/ media, to reach consumers/ general public/ consumers at city and provincial level	flyers, banners, information materials, posters, public talks, media coverage of inspection drive by authorities, radio talks, village loud speakers	Food safety incidents, consumer food choice and sales of certified safe products, consumer complaints, inspection and market surveillance results/ data	Government budget; increased role/contributions of private sector	Available, not complete
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## 1. Cambodian CEACs on food safety and standards

In Cambodia, the main players in consumer education and awareness campaigns on food safety and standards are the public sector and NGOs, namely the Consumer Protection Competition and Fraud Repression Directorate-General (CCF) and the NGO Forum. The NGOs' motivation to organise CEACs on food safety and standards derives from donors and aid agencies. There is only limited private-sector cooperation in Cambodia.

The FAO guidelines on information, education and communication (IEC), and on training for national food control systems were used to assess the effectiveness of CEACs across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV). This section examines the case of Cambodia. Based on the assessment, potential cooperation partners are prioritised and recommendations are made about how to engage them for future CEACs to address food safety and standards.

Cambodia's Inter-Ministerial Prakas (Declaration) No. UATH.BRK 868 addresses multi-agency cooperation for food safety, based on the farm to table approach. This establishes minimum food hygiene requirements and standards, but they remain inadequately enforced, with various factors contributing to non-compliance. Among these are lack of information and guidance to food operators on implementing hygiene requirements, as well as limited consumer awareness and low demand for some safe foods and services. The management of the food control system in Cambodia has to keep up with the growth of agri-food businesses – in formal and informal sectors – and with increasing urbanisation.

With respect to primary production, the national standard for Good Agricultural Practices (CAMGAP) was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF) on 10 March 2010, in its Proclamation No. 099 MAFF. Between 2010 and 2017, MAFF implemented capacity building activities for various different stakeholders. Six provinces and 8,500 farmers benefited from training on the CAMGAP, especially the food safety modules (General Directorate of Agriculture).

Discussions about CAMGAP were aired on national television and the logo was launched in 2017. The same year, a CAMGAP Roadmap was developed with the support of GIZ. According to consumer awareness surveys, one in ten consumers are aware of GAP certification (survey in Siem Reap in 2016) (Khin, 2016).

There is an increasing number of certified organic farms and producers in Cambodia, located in and around the capital Phnom Penh. The agriculture cooperatives organise farmers markets and fairs to enhance consumer awareness about organic agriculture.



Little assessment has been carried out regarding the effectiveness of CEACs on food safety and standards, such as GAP or organic certification. Existing research shows that concerns exist about counterfeit labelling and certification seals, the credibility of sellers and GAP standard compliance among farmers. Consumers in the research locations said they place greater trust in sellers they are familiar with at community level (Khin, 2016). As the decision-makers for food purchases in Cambodian households, women are more discerning about food safety, especially about chemical hazards in vegetables. Cambodians generally view imported vegetables and fruits as unsafe in terms of pesticide residues. (Nguyen et al, 2020).

Cambodia has introduced a programme for rating restaurant hygiene in order to reflect consumers' demand for good hygiene practices among food service operators. An increasing number of agri-food processors are achieving certification for HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control points) and GMP (good manufacturing practices).

One common issue throughout CLMV is the limited awareness on the part of consumers about the need for food that complies with safety and sustainability standards – and which is certified as such. There is also a lack of consumer education activities to enhance people's understanding of this issue and build up demand accordingly.

Cambodian NGOs such as CIRD and the NGO Forum have a large membership base but limited resources to develop and organise effective CEACs on food safety and standards. Their current activities focus on consultation workshops, policy advocacy and capacity building for farmers, farming households and agri-food vendors.

CIRD is active in consumer protection and food safety initiatives, having conducted research on consumer perceptions of organic and GAP-certified food, in collaboration with development agencies and donors.

### Assessment according to FAO guidelines

*The following assessment follows the criteria provided in Section C.1.3 'Communication flows and involvement with consumers' of FAO's Food Control System Assessment Tool: Dimension C – Interactions with stakeholders.*

- 1. The Competent authorities (CAs) have an established internal policy of disseminating information to consumers, including special needs groups, regarding the importance of food safety, including safe food handling practices and critical quality issues.**

While deliberations about Cambodia's food laws continue, there are no clear policies in place regarding IEC for consumers. Campaigns are an important approach to raise consumer awareness. CAs often engage the media to report on their inspection findings or about food safety incidents. Representatives of Cambodian media organisations have attended regional training programmes on communicating food safety risks, organised by Mekong Institute (MI) and funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP).



Food safety stories have since been published in print media and broadcast on radio and television (respectively in the Khmer Times<sup>2</sup>, Lotus Radio and National Television of Kampuchea<sup>3</sup>).

A 2020 report obtained from the Consumer Protection Competition and Fraud Repression Directorate-General (CCF) states that CCF officers have engaged in consumer education and advisory services for various stakeholders, such as university students, vendors, teachers and school pupils. The information shared includes how to select safe food products and services and how to pursue safe food hygiene practices (Virak, 2021).

The director of CCF, Mr Virak, explained that the content and topics for the food safety awareness and education campaigns are determined, among other ways, through the results of market surveillance, inspections, testing and consumer complaints. Provincial CCF offices, surveys and observations also provide guidance on the type and content of food safety education and awareness campaigns.

The report does not indicate CCF's collaboration with NGOs (through which it takes advantage of their outreach capacity) or other agencies for activities related to CEACs on food safety and standards. CEAC activities are reactive, with limited planning or application of communication principles or expertise.



Figure 1: Consumer information flyer about wine/methanol poisoning

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.khmertimeskh.com/628720/journalists-join-food-safety-training/?fbclid=IwAR2F2uIRKIvZTJZ4pIFMKegG11-4K6aFRaf9\\_mm42o7bhoMHEy8Bu0kNgBk](https://www.khmertimeskh.com/628720/journalists-join-food-safety-training/?fbclid=IwAR2F2uIRKIvZTJZ4pIFMKegG11-4K6aFRaf9_mm42o7bhoMHEy8Bu0kNgBk)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRTftSBFBK4> - food safety workshop in Phnom Penh



The 12-month report for 2020 states that CCF held four food safety and hygiene awareness sessions for about 1,960 students, teachers and school vendors. Over 52,000 posters about food safety seals and labelling were produced and displayed in public spaces and markets (CCF, 2020).



Figure 2: Posters printed by CCF, Cambodia, and displayed at public markets

## 2. Decisions and information about official food controls are made available to consumers at all times, with particular attention being paid during food safety crises.

The reporting of food incidents and consumer complaints mechanisms are just starting to develop in Cambodia. CCF runs an online complaints facility, but based on the report of the ASEAN Consumer Empowerment Index 2020, consumers may not be aware of the site as they have only a limited tendency to report hazardous or defective products. Cases of mass food-poisoning are often reported on the media, but little is said about measures to prevent their recurrence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> According to country reports by Cambodian officials who attended MI's regional training programmes on food safety, repeated incidents of methanol poisoning and the prevalence of doctored wines in Cambodia result in a high number of fatalities.



Figure 3: Journalists join food safety training – Khmer Times, July 31, 2019

### 3. CAs apply different methods and means of communicating food safety issues, supported by communication specialists.

CAs and NGOs use various methods and means for CEACs on food safety and standards. However, there is little indication that they employ communication specialists (for example from media agencies) to design content and messages for the campaigns. There is no rationale for the choice of media channels that CAs use to disseminate food safety information. Social media platforms are also popular and there are plans to include foods safety as a topic in school curriculums.

There is a lack of reporting on research, with few reports published, for example, about consumer perceptions and behaviour, nor annual reporting of consumer complaints. Only donor-funded projects, such as WHO's Community-Based Intervention Study in 2007, have used communication principles to ensure their content and messaging are suitable and useful to the target audience. Surveys by CIRD and GRET provide useful inputs for developing effective campaigns on food safety and standards for vegetables and fruits.



**4. CAs have a risk communication plan for crises (on food safety or fraud issues) to deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers.**

Cambodia lacks a food safety risk communication plan. The CCF/CAMCONTROL website does not categorise its announcements according to specific consumer products. CCF officials are, however, constantly engaged in activities related to CEACs, such as talks in schools and markets with limited inter-agency coordination or collaboration with NGOs

**5. CAs provide a mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints.**

Cambodian consumers do not yet have access to a consumer hotline. The CCF website offers an online complaints submission mechanism, but the effectiveness and responsiveness of that system has not been assessed. The tendency for consumers to report or complain about unsafe or hazardous products is low in Cambodia (ACEI report 2020).

## 1.1 Recommendations for CEACs on Food Safety and Standards in Cambodia

The campaign objectives should be to increase consumers' trust in GAP, organic and other food safety marks by increasing the participation of NGOs (or a future consumers' association) and of local market vendors in consumer awareness raising campaigns. The campaigns may be held in conjunction with World Food Safety Day (June 7) with specific themes such as "Food Safety is Everyone's Business". Themes can be further curated to reflect country level needs such as "*Cambodia: Moving Forward with Safer Food for All*"

### Target group

In order to reach consumers more widely, the target group should include vendors, NGOs, community leaders/volunteers, farmers, leaders of farmer cooperatives at community markets. Research suggests that consumers trust NGO-led campaigns more than government-led ones. The content should be designed to appeal to women, who usually make the food purchasing decisions in Cambodian households. Many Cambodian women go to a traditional wet market almost daily as many households still do not have refrigerators. Content should be in Khmer language (EuroCham Cambodia, 2016). Campaigns organized with multi stakeholder participation creates momentum among consumers to shift to safer food consumption choices. Such campaigns require close coordination and resources.



It also presents opportunities to private sector to strengthen trust among consumers in their food products. In Malaysia annual national consumer campaigns involve public sector (Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs), private sector (retailers – Giant and Mydin, food companies – Nestle), consumer associations (Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations) and the media (Berita Harian).

### **Supporting environment**

Government agencies, such as CCF and the General Directorate of Agriculture, should carry out more enforcement and inspection activities to curb fraudulent certification schemes and strengthen consumers' trust in the standards and certification schemes for safer and sustainable food. Government agencies should operate a responsive and transparent system for handling consumer complaints, as well as a feedback mechanism to support the aforementioned activities and further strengthen consumers' trust in the product quality and national food control system. Hotlines and online feedback and complaints mechanisms should be promoted in all public spaces and marketplaces.

Government agencies should ensure that labels and certification are in languages or formats that consumers easily understand. In Cambodia, the Khmer language is preferable to English for food labels and information.

Government agencies and local authorities could provide and promote well-equipped locations for the marketing of clean, organic produce. CCF, the General Directorate of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education should encourage the integration of messages or content related to food safety and standards in their current and future activities related to sustainable/climate resilient agriculture, nutrition, health and WASH.

### **Channels and content**

The channels used for CEACs on food safety and standards in Cambodia should include television, radio and social media. Consumers in Cambodia still trust information shared by word of mouth (Som Chanchhorvy, 2018). Intercept surveys and interviews of consumers at markets, broadcast on television and through social media channels, are another opportunity to raise awareness about the availability and benefits of safe and sustainable food.

The campaign content should address misconceptions about GAP and organic certification.<sup>5</sup> Engage local vendors, people selling produce at farmers markets or supermarket sales personnel to act as spokespeople on food safety certification and its benefits.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the misconception that GAP-certified fruits and vegetables are grown without using agri-chemicals.



Care should be taken not to oversell the benefits of GAP and organic-certified products, and basic food hygiene practices (such as the five keys to safer food) still apply. There is a general tendency to distrust imported products (Som Chanchhorvy, 2018).

## Partnerships

NGOs, farmer cooperatives, private sector associations and government agencies should work in partnership with the media to design and disseminate information more widely to consumers across Cambodia. They should do so on a regular basis, for example marking World Food Safety Day on 7 June, World Food Day on 16 October or during the Khmer New Year in April. Talk shows, social media campaigns, inter-school competitions and public service announcements at marketplaces are some of the approaches used for campaigns in ASEAN Member States. Journalists and media personnel trained by Mekong Institute (MI) may be more capable of designing the relevant food safety message targeting consumers.

There is potential to engage the National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) – whose purpose is to provide communication for behavioural change and which has access to the village health volunteers – to reach more consumers with CEACs on food safety and standards, related certification and a consumer hotline.

The NGOs and village health volunteers might require training on food safety and sustainability standards and certification, and what these represent in terms of food safety and sustainability. Working with opinion leaders as ‘ambassadors’ in media talks about health and the environmental benefits of safe and sustainable food could improve attitudes on the part of their followers.

## Resources

NGOs and consumer associations often face constraints in terms of resources. If the government allocates funding to NGOs and consumer associations for purposes of consumer education and awareness, as is recommended by UNGCP, it will be possible to organise CEACs with a wider reach. Donors and development agencies may consider prioritising partnerships with NGOs and consumer associations, providing funding as well as specific capacity building programmes to strengthen their CEAC skills.

## Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of a CEAC should be carried out as required during the campaign period, in order to ensure it produces a shift in consumption patterns. Such a shift can manifest itself as increased traffic at organic or clean food markets, greater production and domestic sales of products certified as organic or GAP/safe food. Reports and related statistics should be published and shared with stakeholders, as well as among ASEAN Member States at relevant ASEAN forums. The Royal University of Agriculture and other research institutes in



Cambodia are generally well equipped to support assessments of the effectiveness of CEACs on food safety and standards. This will allow government agencies more time and resources to implement food safety regulations and standards.

## 2. Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) CEACs on food safety and standards

Although the Centre for Information and Education for Health is responsible for public health education, including food safety, the main players in CEACs on food safety and standards in Lao PDR are international NGOs, the media and donor agencies. As yet, full use is not made of mass movement organisations such as the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and Lao Youth Union (LYU) with their respective capacities for outreach for CEACs.

WHO and international aid/development agencies have worked with LWU but these activities ended after the completion of a capacity building project. The work of LWU and NGOs focuses on food security, nutrition and WASH, reflecting the fact that Lao PDR has some of the highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition among ASEAN Member States. LYU operates a radio channel and occasionally includes food safety topics in its talk shows and interviews.

Below is an assessment of CEACs on food safety and standards in Lao PDR, based on FAO assessment guidelines for IEC and training in the food control system. Building on this assessment, potential cooperation partners are prioritised and recommendations made on how to engage them for future CEACs in this field.

The first organic farmers' market was organised by PROFIL at That Louang in Vientiane city in 2016. Since then, it has grown (albeit slowly) in terms of the number of farmers participating, the range of products, the frequency of the market days and the sales volume. A dedicated location for the market with adequate facilities (such as WASH, cleaning and packing) might be in the pipeline. The Lao Farmers Network (LFN), which brings together about 4,000 members in 58 farmer organisations from 13 provinces, organises capacity building and technical assistance for its members. LFN works closely with the Department of Agriculture and receives funding and technical support from various donors and development agencies, including the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC), Helvetas, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation. LFN can adapt the approaches of the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producer and Exporter Association (MFVP) by linking farmers to consumers through its farmer organisations in their respective provinces, bringing organic and GAP-certified produce to markets (Asian Farmers Association, n.d.).

In Lao PDR, women are more involved than men in food purchases and the preparation of meals. A significant portion of the population still grow some of their own food (vegetables and fruit).



Consumers receive most of their information about food quality from television or by word of mouth. Surveys of consumers would suggest the use of television and radio as well as awareness raising in schools to promote information about food safety (organic food).

Consumers look to the relevant government agencies more than NGOs to promote compliance with food safety and sustainability standards (Vagneron, 2015).

Local markets have a significant presence near most homes. Women visit these markets more than twice a week for fresh food supplies, which probably reflects limited storage facilities (especially refrigerators) in most Lao homes. Studies suggest that consumers in the country are more familiar with organic certification marks than those for GAP (and probably other food safety marks such as GMP or HACCP).

One study indicated that consumers in Lao PDR do not purchase organic (or GAP) products, mainly because they do not know where to find them and the local markets they go to do not sell these products. The same study indicated that the decision to buy and consume organic produce is motivated rather by health than concerns about environmental wellbeing, and there is a general misunderstanding between the terms 'organic' and 'natural' in the Lao language (pak ka dao, pak ka don) (Vagneron, 2015).

The amount of GMP and HACCP-certified agri-food purchased in Lao PDR is slowly growing, and in 2014 a 'Safe Food Good Health' certificate programme was introduced for the food services sector.

### Assessment according to FAO guidelines

*The following assessment follows the criteria provided in Section C.1.3 'Communication flows and involvement with consumers' of FAO's Food Control System Assessment Tool: Dimension C – Interactions with stakeholders.*

- 1. CAs have an established internal policy of disseminating information to consumers, including special needs groups, regarding the importance of food safety, including safe food handling practices and critical quality issues.**

The Lao Law on Food, 2013, outlines clear roles and responsibilities regarding CEACs on food safety at various levels of administration, especially village health centres, and explains the importance of consumer education in the overall food system (see Law on Food 2013, Articles 70 and 19 respectively). In Lao PDR, the consumer protection agency is one of the three key agencies in the food control system, from farm to table.

The Department of Food and Drugs (FDD) organises food law awareness sessions with full or partial support from WHO and more recently with support from MI (9 March, 2021). Outreach activities related to the Law on Food and consumer rights are still very limited.



At the forum 'Know Your Food Law', held on 9 March, 2021, the private-sector representative from the Young Entrepreneurs Association, who produces organic vegetables, explained that consumers are not aware of the availability or location of organic produce markets. The representative said that the producers are able to anticipate and meet the rising demand for organic vegetables but have limited capacity to promote their products more widely to consumers, at least in capital Vientiane.

Social media is quite popular in Lao PDR and many agri-food businesses use Facebook in particular to reach consumers. CIEH is active on Facebook, but is currently preoccupied with news and announcements related to Covid-19.



Figure 4: Vientiane Times- Aug 6,2019 - Reporting on Food Safety

Lao media representatives attended the regional training programme on Communicating Food Safety Risks, organised by MI as part of its PROSAFE Project. Several stories were published in Lao print media and broadcasted on television<sup>6</sup>.

While Law on Food 2013 covers all aspect of the national food control system, FDD still faces challenges in implementing the law due to:

- limited qualified officers
- limited collaboration and cooperation with other agencies
- limited private sector and media engagement
- limited budget
- limited monitoring and evaluation, incident monitoring and reporting

<sup>6</sup> Media professionals from CLMV gather for Communicating Food Safety, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=523691164998779> and Food Security and Clean Agriculture [11-11-2020] LNTV - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkiABzubv-s>



**2. CAs make use of the different methods and means of communication for food safety issues supported by communication specialists.**

Lao PDR's CIEH has been tasked to implement public engagement activities on health-related matters. Officers of CIEH attended media training for food safety organised by MI but have produced few stories or items of food safety awareness content on their (CIEH) FB page. CIEH has also worked with WHO and CARE International in developing CEAC materials on health and nutrition but not able to continue beyond funding period.

**3. CAs have a risk communication plan for crises (on food safety or fraud issues) to deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers.**

FDD does not have a risk communication plan for food safety crisis situation. The National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology at the moment investigates and reports all forms of diseases in Lao PDR in the case of hospitalisation. There are limited avenues to monitor food safety violations other than records of inspections and surveillance.

**4. CAs provide a mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints.**

In Lao PDR a hotline is available to consumers under the number 1510. In November 2018, at a meeting with Mr Khouanchay Iemsouthi, the DDG of the Internal Trade Department MOIC, officers of MI were informed that food safety complaints are also lodged through this hotline. The hotline committee consists of four line ministries: MOH, MAF, MOIC and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST). These meet every six months to discuss related consumer complaints.

The main challenge facing the operation of the hotline is the mechanism for cooperation between line ministries (Mekong Institute, 2018). Consumers in Lao PDR also have a low tendency to report unsafe or hazardous products (ACEI 2020).

## **2.1 Recommendations for CEACs on food safety and standards in Lao PDR**

Campaign objectives should be to increase access to organic and GAP-certified markets and raise awareness about the benefits of such products. The aim should also be to increase people's trust in GAP, organic and other food safety certification marks by increasing the participation of mass movement organisations, village health centres and NGOs in consumer awareness raising campaigns.



## Target group

The Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union and Lao Farmers Network (LFN) should be targeted, the better to reach consumers in the country. The LWU website and Lao Youth Radio are among the channels that could be used to disseminate information about the markets for organic and safe produce. Village health centre workers and volunteers should be equipped with the necessary information and support to provide accurate information on food safety and standards to people in their communities. Among the members of the LFN, farmer cooperatives and individual farmers have direct contact with consumers at the local markets. Measures to improve their skills for marketing, communicating and promoting the benefits of organic and GAP compliance could help raise consumer awareness, thereby increasing the demand for such produce.

## Supporting environment

Government agencies such as FDD and the Department of Agriculture should increase market surveillance, inspection and enforcement activities to curb fraudulent certification schemes. This strengthens consumers' trust in the standards and certification schemes for safer and sustainable food. The Department of Domestic (Internal) Trade should strengthen the operation of a responsive and transparent mechanism for dealing with consumer complaints and feedback, in order to support the aforementioned activities and further strengthen consumer trust in the product quality, standards and certification scheme.

Hotlines and online feedback and complaints mechanisms should be promoted in all public spaces and marketplaces in collaboration with the village health centres and mass organisations.

Current and future project activities related to sustainable and climate resilient agriculture, nutrition, health and WASH in Lao PDR could include a consumer hotline as well as organic and GAP certification, and other food safety and sustainability marks. This would further sensitise consumers and enable them to recognise these marks. The central government and local authorities should ensure adequate facilities are in place to support hygiene practices among vendors at wet markets and local markets.

## Channels and content

Television, radio and school programmes are useful channels for reaching consumers. Consumers in Lao PDR still trust information shared by word of mouth, and village health centre workers and volunteers could help spread the word on the health benefits of organic food, GAP and other food safety certification and hygiene practices. Talk shows, social media campaigns, inter-school competitions and public service announcements at marketplaces are some of the approaches used in ASEAN Member States for campaigns that could be adapted to context of Lao PDR.



Journalists of Lao Youth Radio and media personnel with training from MI might be better placed to design the relevant food safety message targeting consumers.

Intercept surveys and interviews with consumers at markets broadcast on television and social media channels are another opportunity for scaling up awareness about the availability and benefits of safe and sustainable food.

The content of these campaigns should explain the health benefits of vegetables that comply with organic and GAP standards, especially how they address concerns about high pesticide residues. Other campaign information could seek to allay consumers' confusion between the terms natural and organic.

### **Partnerships**

In collaboration with the media and the Centre for Information and Education for Health (CIEH), LWU, LYU and LFN could design information products and disseminate them more widely among consumers in Lao PDR on a regular basis, for example on World Food Safety Day on 7 June, World Food Day on 16 October, or during the Lao New Year in April and the That Luang festival in November.

The village health volunteers, LFN, LWU and LYU may need additional training on food safety, sustainability standards, certification and what these represent in terms of food safety and sustainability. The role of community level stakeholders is important as word of mouth is still important for sharing information in Lao PDR. Working with opinion leaders as 'ambassadors' in media talks about health and the environmental benefits of safe and sustainable food could improve attitudes on the part of their followers.

To promote private-sector compliance with food safety standards, FDD could be engaged to organise food inspections and rapid testing at marketplaces and to educate consumers about its own role and its testing and inspection activities.

### **Resources**

Socio-economic development activities in Lao PDR are still dependent on donors. However, adequate and long-term CEACs on food safety and standards could bring a self-sustaining momentum in the demand for certified safe and sustainable food in the country. Studies suggest there is a general awareness of the importance to health of food that is certified as safe. Consumers (especially women) need to know where to purchase such food products, and these products should also be readily available. The government should allocate sufficient resources to establishing more markets and infrastructure for safe food, and running activities to promote compliance with food safety requirements among vendors, producers and processors.



## Evaluation

The National University of Laos (NUOL) could provide support in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of CEACs to ensure they bring a shift in consumption behaviour. Reports and relevant metrics should be published and shared with stakeholders and among ASEAN Member States at related ASEAN forums.

### 3. Myanmar CEACs on food safety and standards

Myanmar's food control system has not yet been revised in line with the FAO guidelines, as has been done in Lao PDR and Viet Nam. The Joint External Evaluation of IHR Core Capacities of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (WHO/JEE IHR) report shows there are limitations in the national food control system:

*'Due to lack of human and financial resources, a multi-sectoral food safety risk management strategy is lacking and Myanmar lacks a national food safety standard, but follows the Codex Alimentarius Guidelines.'* (WHO, 2017).

Food variety in Myanmar's local domestic markets has been increasing over time, while doubts have also arisen regarding the quality of the food in terms of chemical/pesticide residues, contaminants and adulteration (Downs, 2018). Consumers in Myanmar generally prefer fruits, vegetables and red meat to highly processed snack foods and beverages. The majority of the Myanmar population still purchase their food from wet markets or community markets.

The predominantly informal nature of the players in the agri-food sector in Myanmar presents a challenge to efforts to address all the food safety concerns with the limited food safety capacities of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other agencies (Downs, 2018). Most consumers in Myanmar eat at home, so they go shopping almost daily at nearby wet markets, community markets, vendors and convenience stores.

The stocktaking of CEACs on food safety and standards shows that the FDA, city development committees, private sector associations (e.g. MFVP) and the Myanmar Consumers Union (MCU) are actively carrying out consumer education and awareness activities, including campaigns. MCU is a young consumer association. With donor support it has been publishing consumer reports quite frequently.

A 2017 study of Myanmar consumers' food purchasing choices indicated that they have limited knowledge about or access to safe food in their markets. It is difficult for them to distinguish safe from unsafe food. The consumers surveyed viewed vegetables as being among the most unsafe foods, followed by processed food and cooking oil, due to chemical and microbiological hazards. Word of mouth is one of the main sources of information about food safety and standards



(usually from vendors or farmers). Other sources are television, radio and newspapers. Banners and posters are also cited as sources (Vagneron I, 2018).

Support from donors and development agencies is still important for scaling up basic infrastructure such as WASH, waste management, storage and roads for the safe distribution of food from farm to table. Various donor and aid agency supported projects are being implemented to promote GAP compliance for vegetables and fruits. Yezin Agriculture University is collaborating with the Agribusiness Research Program of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in assisting farmers in Shan State to grow vegetables in line with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)<sup>7</sup>. (ACIAR, 2020).



Figure 5: Myanmar FDA Consumer Education Flyer on Dangerous and Banned Food Dyes

<sup>7</sup> The project is also engaged with the private sector; with Fresh Studio, responsible for the training and certification, as well as linking farmers with the market; and with local logistics company Future Glory, helping transport the farmers' produce the 600km or more to Yangon. Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) also plays an important role in the project, helping farmers to build skills by running farm-based trials to assess new vegetable varieties, improved crop establishment and expanding the range of crops that can be grown in the region.



### **Assessment according to FAO guidelines**

*The following assessment follows the criteria provided in Section C.1.3 'Communication flows and involvement with consumers' of FAO's Food Control System Assessment Tool: Dimension C – Interactions with stakeholders.*

**CAs have an established internal policy of disseminating information to consumers, including special needs groups, on the importance of food safety, including safe food handling practices and critical quality issues.**

Myanmar's 1997 Food Law is archaic and does not make reference to IEC and training. In the major cities, FDA provides information on best practices for food handling, hygiene and the dangers of banned ingredients in food. They address various consumer groups, including children who are often targeted by the sale of food containing banned colouring (dyes).

FDA and the Department of Consumer Affairs (DOCA) cooperate with the Ministry of Education to organise CEACs on food safety and general consumer protection. DOCA also organises live forums on state television, MRTV. FDA and DOCA have published handbooks and posters for CEACs. Private sector associations contribute actively to CEACs on food safety and standards. MVFP's growing number of community markets are important locations for farmers and vendors to engage consumers directly on the benefits of safe and sustainable food.

**Decisions and information about official food control are made available to consumers at all times and with particular attention during food safety crises.**

Myanmar has not established a formal risk communication plan. The latest decisions and developments in the food control system are often published in the media. Given that the food law has not been revised, it is not clear if media agencies are included in the communication of food safety risks and emergencies in Myanmar.



Figure 6: By San Yamin Aung - 7 August 2019 (San Yamin Aung attended Mekong Institute's regional training programme on Communicating Food Safety)

CAs make use of the different methods and means of communication for food safety issues supported by communication specialists. CAs and NGOs use various methods and means for CEACs on food safety and standards. However, there is no indication that communication or media specialists are engaged to develop the content and messages for the campaigns.

There is no rationale for the choice of media channels used by CAs or NGOs for sharing food safety information. Social media platforms are also popular and there are plans to include food safety in school curriculums.

Reports on consumer complaints are published by the Myanmar Consumer Union. Of the four countries of CLMV, such reports are only available in Myanmar and Viet Nam.

**CAs have a risk communication plan for crises (on food safety or fraud issues) to deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers.**

IHR/JEE report 2018 shows that one area in which Myanmar needs to improve is transparency of communication in the management of food safety emergencies. A risk communication and food safety emergency plan was developed recently (in 2019) by the Livestock, Breeding and Veterinary Department with the support of FAO (Vanderford, 2019). State media is also involved in food safety risk communication – including food safety emergencies.



Figure 7: BETV - How does a label guarantee food safety? 27 September, 2019

### **CAs provide a mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints**

Myanmar recently developed an online complaints mechanism and now needs to raise awareness about it nationwide. At the time this report was prepared, however, there was no hotline in place. According to the recent ASEAN Consumer Empowerment Index (ACEI), consumers in Myanmar also have low tendency to report unsafe and hazardous products.

### **3.1 Recommendations for CEACs on food safety and standards in Myanmar**

Campaign objectives should be to increase access to organic and GAP-certified markets and raise awareness about the benefits of such products for consumers' health and wellbeing. In collaboration with farmers group and cooperatives, consumer associations should be the main actors in CEACs on food safety and standards.

#### **Target group**

Farmer groups and cooperatives (MFVP) and the Myanmar Consumer Union should be targeted as a means of reaching consumers, above all at community and wet markets (especially Safe Food from Safe Farm markets), as well as in convenience stores and supermarkets.



## Supporting environment

City development committees and FDA should increase market surveillance, inspection and enforcement activities to curb fraudulent certification schemes. This will strengthen consumers' trust in the standards and certification schemes for safer and sustainable food. DOCA should strengthen operation of a responsive and transparent consumer complaints handling and feedback mechanism to support the aforementioned activities and further strengthen consumer trust in the product quality, standards and certification scheme. City development committees and local authorities should establish safe food markets with adequate space and hygiene facilities.

Hotlines and online feedback and complaints mechanisms should be promoted at all public spaces and marketplaces, in collaboration with the village health centres and mass organisations. Current and future project activities related to sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, nutrition, health and WASH in Myanmar could include consumer hotlines as well as certification marks for organic and GAP produce, and other aspects of food safety and sustainability.

## Channels and content

Television, radio and school programmes are useful channels to reach out to consumers. Consumers in Myanmar still trust information shared by word of mouth, especially from the vendors and farmers themselves, about the benefits of food that is certified as safe and sustainable. Journalists and media personnel who have received training from MI could be engaged to broadcast the relevant messages over television, newspaper and radio. Intercept surveys and interviews with consumers at markets broadcast on television and social media channels are another opportunity for scaling up awareness about the availability and benefits of safer and more sustainable food. These campaigns should explain the health benefits of safer and more sustainable food and what certification marks mean. The locations of markets for safe agri-food products (e.g. organic, GAP) should be widely advertised using various channels, such as banners, posters, television and radio.

Social media channel is increasingly popular where there is internet penetration in Myanmar. Consumer outreach can be further strengthen using social media channels.

## Partnerships

MCU, MFVP, farmer cooperatives/groups and private sector associations should collaborate with the media to design and disseminate information more widely to consumers. They should do so on a regular basis, for example marking World Food Safety Day on 7 June, World Food Day on 16 October or during major festivals in Myanmar such as Tha din gyut or Tha zaung daing. Food donations drive during the festivals offer opportunity to raise general awareness on the



importance of food safety or to promote food safety standards. MCU should receive training on food safety and sustainability standards, as well as on certification and that represents in terms of food safety and sustainability. Farmers (selling their produce at the markets) and vendors play a significant role as word of mouth is still an important channel for sharing information in Myanmar. Sector associations such as MFVP and FOSTA can provide communication, marketing and promotion skills development for members to communicate the benefits of food safety and standards to their customers.

FDA and DOCA could be engaged to organise food inspections and rapid testing at marketplaces and to educate consumers (especially in rural areas) about their own roles, while explaining how their testing and inspection activities promote private-sector compliance with food safety standards.

## **Resources**

The role of MCU in serving consumers' interest is currently possible due to the funding it receives from various donors and development agencies. Farmer cooperatives and vendor groups could possibly contribute to CEACs on food safety and standards at their respective marketplaces.

Through engagement with the media, information about safe and sustainable certified food and the related health benefits could potentially reach a wider audience.

## **Evaluation**

Universities, such as Yezin Agricultural University, could provide support in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of CEACs to ensure they produce a shift in consumption behaviour and choices. This university has already collaborated with researchers from Japan, examining the 'Effects of Consumer Preferences on Environmentally Friendly Tomatoes in Myanmar', with the findings published in 2019. Reports and relevant metrics should be published and shared with stakeholders and among ASEAN Member States at related ASEAN forums.



## 4. Viet Nam CEACs on food safety and standards

The public sector – the Viet Nam Food Administration (VFA) and city food safety authorities – and the media are the main players in CEACs on food safety and standards in Viet Nam. In formal partnerships with VFA, private sector actors also organise CEACs on food safety, for example the delivery service GrabFood.

Campaigns are rolled out during the festival season when the largest number of food safety incidents are anticipated. Surveys show that, as with most LMICs in ASEAN and throughout Asia, Vietnamese consumers purchase most of their food from wet and fresh markets. Despite the increasing supermarket penetration, more than 50% of the population of Hanoi prefer to buy fresh produce on a daily basis at the wet markets. About 97% of women surveyed in Viet Nam prefer to buy ‘warm’ pork from wet markets (Vietnam Economic Times, 2019). As in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, in Viet Nam, informal producers still make up a significant part of the agri-food sector. Certified VietGAP (Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices) and safe food products are available mostly from supermarkets and farmers’ fairs (Stark-Ewing, 2018).

The expanding middle class in Viet Nam is expected to create increased demand for certified safe food. Supermarkets (where certified foods are more readily available than in the wet markets), are also expected to increase in numbers. Compared to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, consumers in Viet Nam are more discerning about food certified as safe and about the origins of the produce they buy (formal guarantees). Food safety is associated with chemical and microbiological hazards. Vegetables are the mainstay of the Vietnamese diet and consumers place strong emphasis on the safety of vegetables, worrying in particular about the over-use of pesticides (Nguyen et al, 2020).

Vietnamese consumers still depend on television for food safety information, although younger consumers are more connected on the internet. Although government agencies are counted among the main actors in ensuring food is safe, consumer associations and farmer groups are also expected to help achieve this aim.

Consumers in Viet Nam can use the 1800-6838 hotline of the Vietnam Competition and Consumer Authority (VCCA), or the complaints handling facilities of the Viet Nam Consumers Protection Association (VICOPRO/VINASTAQ). In 2019, VCCA resolved 568 consumer complaints submitted by email or post, or from people simply walking in to complain (VCCA, 2019). The annual report published a list of complaints which does not however list food complaints separately. A responsive consumer complaints and feedback system would be an important factor in protecting consumers and the market against fraudulent safe and sustainable food certificates and for the reporting of unhygienic food practices.



VINASTAQ is a non-governmental organisation in Viet Nam, established in 1988 to protect the consumers' right to safer products and services by promoting compliance with relevant standards. VINASTAQ has several sub-ordinate groups and clubs, and its membership consists of provincial level associations.<sup>8</sup>

VINASTAQ published The Consumer magazine and operated a Consumer Complaints Bureau (CCB). The CCB was reported to receive an average of 500 complaints annually on all types of consumer products: from cars to candies. A provincial level complaints bureau also exists. In 2018, the consumer associations of VINASTAS established VICOPRO or Vietnamese Consumers Protection Association and VINASTAS was renamed the Vietnam Association of Science and Technology for Quality Standards (VINASTAQ). VINASTAQ continues to work with STAMEQ or the Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality of Viet Nam, representing consumers' interest in standards and quality.

### **Assessment according to FAO guidelines**

*The following assessment follows the criteria provided in Section C.1.3 'Communication flows and involvement with consumers' of FAO's Food Control System Assessment Tool: Dimension C – Interactions with stakeholders.*

**CAs have an established internal policy of disseminating information to consumers, including special needs groups, on the importance of food safety, including safe food handling practices and critical quality issues.**

Articles 57 and 58 of Viet Nam's Food Safety Law (FSL) of 2010, present clear expectations with respect to information, education and communication, and of the various agencies involved and their roles. The FSL takes advantage of the mass movement organisations such as the Fatherland Front and People's Committees to reach out more widely to Vietnamese consumers. The involvement of the media is also significant.

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<sup>8</sup>In the past VINASTAQ worked with international NGOs to promote Good Agricultural Practices and enhance consumer awareness of safe agriculture (vegetables) in Viet Nam. One of the activities of VINASTAS was comparative testing of products. In 2016, it was investigated by the Ministry of Industry and Trade for publishing test reports of fish sauces in Viet Nam. The report claimed that 70% of the fish sauce tested had Arsenic levels higher than allowed by law. Subsequently, sales of fish sauce collapsed in Viet Nam. Investigations into the testing resulted in VINASTAS issuing an apology and retracting its report and claims (Vietnam Express, 2016).



VFA and the city food safety management authorities (such as in Ho Chi Minh City) use various media channels to disseminate food safety information and raise awareness during the Tet Festival (food safety action month), and alongside the million-signature drive for food safety. Live discussions about food safety are often held during the food safety awareness month. Print and online media also publish food safety stories and are they are vital for sharing important information to consumers during food safety emergencies.

The role of consumer associations (or of social institutions in protecting consumer interests) is not specified in the FSL but is referred to in the Law on Protection of Consumers' Rights 2010. VINASTAQ and VICOPRO organise consultations and meetings between their subordinate organisations and government agencies, but do not get formally involved in the multi-agency initiatives to design and organise consumer education and awareness activities in Viet Nam. In Viet Nam the people's committees are political bodies which, together with the mass movement organisations, form a crucial component of the CEACs for wider consumer outreach. Viet Nam's media representatives also attended the regional training programme on Communicating Food Safety Risks and have published news and features on food safety following the training programme.

**Decisions and information about official food controls are made available to consumers at all times, with particular attention paid during food safety crises.**

The city authorities for food safety (VFA, MARD and MOIT) are among the key agencies in Viet Nam's food safety emergency plan. The VFA website often contains notifications of activities, decisions and other announcements, and the results of provincial food safety inspections are also reported there.



## Đào tạo truyền thông về an toàn thực phẩm khu vực sông Mê Kông

01/07/2019 - 11:16

Thích 0

Chia sẻ



PNO - Từ ngày 29/7 - 2/8/2019, tại Viện Mê Kông (MI) KhonKhaen, Thái Lan đã diễn ra khóa đào tạo truyền thông về an toàn thực phẩm cho các nước thuộc khu vực tiểu sông Mê Kông.



Nữ chỉ huy chiến hạm Anh mất chức vì scandal tình ái

Khóa học này có sự tham gia của 28 phóng viên, nhà báo đến từ nước Việt Nam, Lào, Campuchia, Myanma.

Figure 8: Ho Chi Minh Women's Newspaper - 1 July, 2019  
(Communication training on food safety in the Mekong region)



Figure 9: Improper use of plastic wrapping can be harmful, 23 October, 2019  
(Article written by Đinh Hà Linh – regional training programme on communicating food safety risks)

**CAs make use of the different methods and means of communication for food safety issues supported by communication specialists.**

VFA has a dedicated department for Information, Education and Communication, whose job entails, among other things, developing methods, content and formats for information, education and communication with mass media, and mobilising organisations and social unions to help inform, educate and communicate about food safety. It also takes the lead in formulating plans, implementing, reviewing and evaluating the 'Month of action for food safety, hygiene and safety'.



The usual means of reaching consumers apply: banners, social media, flyers, competitions, television and radio talks, public services announcements through village announcement system. Youth Union Food Safety Department hold roadshows to increase awareness among the general public on food hygiene and various other activities.

**CAs have a risk communication plan for crises (on food safety or fraud issues) to deliver relevant food safety messages to consumers.**

VFA's food safety risk communication including during food safety emergencies is strengthened by the level of outreach it has through the mass movement organisations and people's committee.

**CAs provide a mechanism for consumers' questions and complaints**

VCCA operates a hotline and an online consumer complaints system. ACEI 2020 indicates that consumers in Viet Nam have the highest tendency to file complaints – quite different from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.



Figure 10: Youth Union and Roadshow in Viet Nam – 2011  
(VFA, 2012)



## 4.2 Recommendations for CEACs on food safety and standards in Viet Nam

Campaign objectives should be to increase understanding about VietGap and Organic certification in Viet Nam, its process and the benefits to consumers and environmental wellbeing. In collaboration with farmers groups and cooperatives, consumer associations should be the main actors in the CEACs on food safety and standards.

### Target group

Farmer groups, market vendors and consumer associations (such as VINASTAQ and VICOPRO) need to be involved as additional actors, in order to achieve wider consumer outreach in Viet Nam, especially at provincial, district and village levels. Unions of youth and of women, and the people's committees can also play similar roles. VFA's IEC department will ensure that CEAC materials are designed and disseminated that inform and cultivate safe food choices among consumers in Viet Nam. Women should be the focus of consumer education and awareness campaigns, to reflect their role as decision makers in buying food and preparing meals.

### Supporting environment

To support the aforementioned activities and further strengthen consumer trust in the product quality, standards and certification schemes, VCCA should strengthen the operation of a responsive and transparent mechanism for handling consumer complaints and receiving feedback. Hotlines, online feedback and complaints mechanisms should be promoted in all public spaces and marketplaces, in collaboration with the mass movement organisations and consumer associations.

### Channels and content

Television, radio and social media are useful channels for reaching consumers. Journalists and media personnel trained by MI might be able to share relevant messages on television and radio, or in newspapers. Intercept surveys and interviews with consumers at markets broadcast on television and through social media channels are another opportunity to raise awareness about the availability and benefits of safe and sustainable food.

Campaign content should relate to the health benefits of safer and more sustainable food, as well as what the certification marks mean.

The locations of markets for safe agri-food products (e.g. organic, GAP) should be widely advertised using traditional and social media. Vendors in community markets and farmer groups are additional channels for disseminating information on the benefits of vegetables that comply with safe and sustainable food standards.



### **Partnerships**

VICOPRO, VINASTAQ and the youth and women's unions are key partners in efforts to scale up CEACs on food safety and standards. VFA (IEC Department), VCCA, city food safety management authorities and consumer associations should all work together with the media to design, disseminate and assess CEACs on food safety in Viet Nam.

### **Resources**

For the organisation of effective CEACs on food safety and standards, VFA and VCCA could support consumer associations in collaboration with existing partners (namely private sector actors, donors and development agencies).

### **Evaluation**

Universities in Viet Nam are seldom engaged to carry out needed research on consumer protection and food safety. Researchers from universities have published studies on consumers' perceptions of GAP and certified organic produce in Viet Nam. They should now be asked to provide support for the assessment of CEAC effectiveness. Reports and relevant metrics should be published and shared with stakeholders and with other ASEAN Member States at relevant ASEAN forums.



# CEACs on food safety and standards Guidelines for Campaigning

Regional: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam



## 1. Guidelines for campaigning

Regional and national studies of consumer awareness and the demand for safe and sustainable food depend on education and awareness raising activities. A well designed CEAC on food safety and standards, running for a predetermined period of time, contributes to consumers' increased awareness of the benefits of food safety and standards to human and environmental health.

The reports of the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection (ACCP) show that all 10 ASEAN Member States have enacted national consumer protection laws. However, the newer and low-to middle-income ASEAN Member States, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam, have only just begun to implement these laws. Studies and reports suggest that consumer awareness and education on product safety issues are limited, especially if the safety issues are technical in nature, such as food and environmental hazards. Studies by GIZ and ASEAN have confirmed this.

A detailed study of CEACs on food safety and standards in CLMV is expected to provide a clear understanding of good CEAC practices in this region, while identifying potential partners for scaling up such campaigns. These regional guidelines on campaigning for food safety and standards in CLMV have been developed based on a stocktaking exercise and desk research into effective CEACs. The guidelines should support efforts to design and implement effective campaigns and nudge consumption behaviour towards human and environmental health.

### 1.1 Scope

These guidelines are intended to provide recommendations, with specific examples from ASEAN Member States, for planning, implementing and assessing CEACs on food safety and standards.

#### 1.1.1 References

Reference is made to the ASEAN Guidelines on the Development of Public Awareness Models for Consumer Protection (ASEAN, 2016); the OECD Consumer Education Policy Recommendations (OECD, 2009); and FAO's Food Control System Assessment Tool: Dimension C – Interactions with stakeholders (FAO and WHO, 2019).



## 1.2 Key steps in campaigning

The three sources referred to above all recommend that consumer education and awareness campaigns or programmes should generally follow these steps:

1. Planning
  - a. Objectives – identification of problems; education and awareness needs
  - b. Target consumers: children, adults, women
  - c. Corresponding approach
  - d. Resource requirements
  - e. Cooperation and coordination
  - f. Location: rural, urban, specific radius of a GAP-certified farm
  - g. Monitoring and evaluation criteria and indicators
2. Implementation
  - a. Monitoring
  - b. Data collection, feedback
3. Assessment/evaluation and improvement

### 1.2.1 Planning

CEACs on food safety and standards form part of the information, education, communication and training components of national food control systems. Campaigns consist of a combination of activities aimed at the general public and specific consumer groups to effect desirable behavioural changes in support of food safety or food standards.

For example, a campaign might promote a GAP-certification programme among consumers in order to increase the demand for certified safe vegetables and fruits. This in turn will motivate producers to improve their compliance and in so doing, enhance their livelihoods. To effect a desirable behaviour changes among consumers, programmes need to be planned thoroughly.

#### 1.2.1.1 Objectives (identification of problems; education and awareness needs)

At the planning stage, the campaign organisers need to determine the baseline or assess the existing situation. Examples might look like this:

1. A survey shows that only 10% of those interviewed know about GAP certification in Siem Reap; or
2. Four vegetable commodities are perceived as being unsafe: Napa cabbage, Chinese kale, bok choy and cabbage; or
3. An inspection reveals that candy being sold to children near schools contains food dyes above the permitted level, or it contains banned food dye.



Some universities in ASEAN Member States have already have conducted such studies. Yezin Agricultural University in Myanmar published a study titled, '*Farmers' Perception of Good Agricultural Practices in Rice Production in Myanmar: A Case Study of Myaungmya District, Ayeyarwady Region*'. The study recommends improvements to credit plans for smallholders to increase their compliance with GAP requirements.

By understanding the existing issues in detail, campaign organisers can set clear targets and determine appropriate campaign activities to produce favourable outcomes.

#### 1.2.1.2 Target consumers: children, adults, women

Understanding the key issues will also provide insights into who is affected by the issues and in what ways. In terms of food safety and standards, what are the key issues faced by various stakeholders, for example:

1. General consumers: priced out of certified safe or organic produce, organic and GAP-certified produce is not easily available, limited trust in GAP/organic certification.
2. Women perceive that certain food groups or vegetables are associated with higher food safety risks, for example concerns about pesticides, or the idea that chickens slaughtered at wet markets are fresher.
3. Farmers and farmer groups have limited skills to promote and market organic/GAP-certified produce to consumers.
4. Preferred information channels: peer to peer, mass media, posters, banners, flyers.

#### 1.2.1.3 Corresponding approach

The baseline assessment will also give an understanding of the approach and methods to apply for the campaigns and subsequently the resource needs. For example, if consumers trust face-to-face communication on the benefits of organic or GAP-certified food, it is possible to strengthen the communication skills of local vendors and village volunteers, and provide them with the relevant tools.

#### 1.2.1.4 Resource requirements

By knowing how the key issues affect the stakeholders, campaign organisers will be able to assess the resource requirements and scale the activities up accordingly.



### 1.2.1.5 Cooperation and coordination

Analysis of the current state of consumer education and awareness regarding food safety and standards will provide more information about which stakeholders have the influence and interest in the campaign and its outcome. Potential partnerships can be explored or existing ones can be built upon.

Myanmar Innovative Life Sciences (MILS) established a multi-stakeholder platform at the first Food Safety Forum it organised in September 2019. It included the Myanmar Consumers Union and private sector associations. MFVP and city development committees could strengthen their collaboration to identify more locations for Safe Food from Safe Farms markets.

VFA signed a partnership agreement with GrabFood to distribute food safety and hygiene information to consumers who use its food delivery platform.

The Lao Women's Union and Lao Youth Union have, respectively, more than a million and 300,000 members. Whilst they may not have the resources to organise and implement their own CEACs on food safety, a partnership with LWU and LYU would at least give campaign organisers greater outreach capacity or enable them possibly to incorporate food safety and sustainability messages in their current activities.

### 1.2.1.6 Location: rural, urban, community markets, supermarkets

Determining the site for a campaign or activity will also provide a better indication of the resources needed. Consumers, above all women, prefer buying vegetables from nearby community or wet markets. LWU organises village and provincial-level health talks, WASH events, and women's empowerment projects.

### 1.2.1.7 Monitoring and evaluation criteria and indicators

There are several ways to assess consumer purchasing choices and behaviour. Understanding the consumers' existing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour can potentially explain the challenges facing the shift towards safer and more sustainable food consumption. Popular assessment methods are:

1. KAP surveys, gathering information on knowledge, attitudes and practices, for example about GAP certification or HACCP certified food products. WHO uses KAP to assess public attitudes towards cholera vaccines.

Consumer behaviour and consumption patterns are very much culturally influenced. Over 90% of women surveyed in Hanoi believed that 'warm pork' is the freshest and safe to eat.



Consumers in Singapore and Indonesia also believed that freshly slaughtered pork and poultry are safer and fresher.

2. Intercept surveys of customers in supermarkets, markets or small stores are another way to understand consumers' behaviour with respect to food safety and standards. They are used to gather customers' experiences and understand the considerations behind their purchasing decisions. In 2016, such a survey was used to complete a '*Consumer Awareness and Market Demand Survey for Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) Certified Fruit and Vegetables in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham Towns*' (Khin, 2016).

### 1.2.2 Implementation, monitoring and assessment

Developing a key message, pre-testing and assessment will help with the design of suitable content, and of means of delivery to the target audience. In 2014, a social and behavioural change campaign called the National Nutrition Communication Campaign (NNCC) was organised in Indonesia. This made use of mass media communications (television, radio, social media) as well as interpersonal communication (IPC).

The objective of the NNCC was to reduce stunting among children in Indonesia, while also improving the WASH behaviour of women and children through mass media interventions and IPC. A situation analysis of the issues showed that open defecation and poor sanitation facilities and water supply are key WASH issues for these target communities.

The campaign organisers found that the most suitable way of addressing open defecation was to use messages on mass media platforms like television, radio and social media.

This is due to the intimate nature of defecation and the social discomfort when discussing it face-to-face. Mass media interventions allow the kind of privacy at the point of exposure that would be impossible in an IPC situation. WHO experts supported the implementation of the Community-Based Intervention Study of Food Safety Practices in Rural Community Households of Lao PDR and Cambodia. One such study among rural households in Phonehong District of Lao PDR led to a better understanding of high-risk food safety practices. In particular, it found that the consumption of raw meats and raw fish is common practice among rural people and poses a significant food safety and health problem.

KAP and intercept surveys at markets can be used to monitor the progress and effectiveness of campaigns. Other assessment methods include focus group discussions, evaluating the domestic consumption of organic or GAP-certified produce, and measuring the increased footfall at markets for organic or safe vegetables.



### 1.2.3 National multi-stakeholder cooperation for CEACs on food safety and standards

The stocktaking exercise for the ASEAN CEAC on food safety and standards showed that it is a multi-agency activity. Some of the ASEAN Member States have a central agency with responsibilities in the field of public health, such as the National Centres for Health Promotion (NCHPs) in Cambodia and Brunei, which organise general food safety education and awareness campaigns. Others have a mechanism for inter-agency cooperation for the food control system, which includes CEACs. In this regard:

- CEACs on food safety and standards could be integrated into existing strategies and corresponding resource allocations.
- Media agencies in CLMV and ASEAN as a whole could be more deeply involved in CEACs on food safety and standards. Myanmar Radio and Television and Lao Youth Radio station already hold talks and discussions on food safety. Radio and community public service announcements are used to share news and focus on food safety during the Tet festival in Viet Nam. Mekong Institute's PROSAFE project, funded by NZAP (2018-2023), has incorporated capacity building courses on reporting and promoting food safety for CLMV media personnel. Several stories on food safety and related events have since been published in newspapers or aired on national radio and television.
- Guidelines on CEACs on food safety and standards could be developed (if not already available) to assist the CAs' IEC units and to support implementation of the relevant sections of national food safety laws in CLMV.

### 1.3 Regional cooperation for CEACs on food safety and standards

Agriculture and food are a strategic sector for the economic integration of the ASEAN Member States. The Agri-food trade is one of the key drivers for LMICs to improve their national food control systems and quality infrastructure. The motivation for private sector actors to comply with food safety standards is the promise of opportunities for greater market access. Domestic consumption eventually catches up and becomes a key driver of compliance with food safety and sustainability standards.

The efforts of the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection, the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality and the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Strategy on Food, Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025 all serve the commitment to 'ensure food security, food safety, better nutrition and equitable distribution'.



The programme of key actions includes:

*Accelerate the establishment of food safety standards, and mobilise resources for their effective adoption ASEAN-wide. One priority is to respond quickly and positively to the **increasing consumer demands for better food quality and safety as well as better labelling and information**.* CEACs on food safety at regional level should contribute to raising domestic demand for food certified as being safe and sustainably produced. Success factors for the wider dissemination of regional efforts on CEACs:

- Campaigning guidelines and best practices are available in ASEAN Member States' languages
- Samples of materials or templates such as posters, flyers, press releases and assessment tools should be available to the ASEAN Member States' food control CAs, consumer protection agencies, consumer associations, private sector associations (especially farmer groups) and NGOs.
- Capacity building for CEACs on food safety and standards could be organised alongside ASEAN-level meetings on food safety and consumer protection, or meetings of the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ).

The ASEAN University Network (AUN), established in 1995, could be a platform to bring together universities and research institutions in the ASEAN Member States to collaborate on evidence-based consumer education and awareness campaigns. This could explore studies on the motivation of consumers towards safer and more sustainable food choices. AUN's focus areas in regional cooperation are:

- *strengthening the existing network of cooperation among universities in ASEAN and beyond*
- *promoting collaborative study, research and educational programmes in the priority areas identified by ASEAN*
- *promoting cooperation and solidarity among scholars, academics and researchers in the ASEAN Member States*
- *serving as the policy-oriented body for higher education in the ASEAN region.* (AUN, n.d.)



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## Consumer Education and Awareness Campaigns on Food Safety and Standards Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam