

EARWG attends the Consensus-Colloquium on Securing Food in ASEAN; Food Security in the World

Singapore. Students of the Lee Kuan Yew (LKY) School of Public Policy (National University of Singapore) initiated a consensus-colloquium on *Securing Food in ASEAN; Food Security in the World* on April 15-17, 2010. The colloquium brought together various stakeholders, from high level ministers of the ASEAN to ASEAN member-government representatives, private sector, LKY students and a few representatives from civil society. The organizers hoped that participants at least would “learn to agree to reject starvation, and on a vision of the world without hunger.”

Aurora A. Regalado represented the East Asia Rice Working Group (EARWG)/Management and Organizational Development for empowerment (MODE) at the colloquium. Two other CSOs were also represented, namely the Rural Development Working Group (RDWG) by Atty. Elpidio Peria and the Rice Watch and Action Network by Hazel Tanchuling.

The conference started with stock taking of food security initiatives in ASEAN in relation to the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework (AIFS). The AIFS was conceptualized because of concerns on the adverse impact of the food-fuel-finance crises and climate change to food security in the region. The AIFS Framework - SPA-FS was developed and adopted by the 14th Summit in March 2009. The Goal was to ensure long-term food security and to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region. The main components/strategic thrusts are Food Security and emergency/Shortage Relief, Sustainable Food Trade Development, Integrated Food Security Information System and Agricultural Innovation (see attached ASEAN AIFS).

These strategic thrusts were further elaborated on in subsequent plenary and breakout sessions.

What's new?

On the food security emergency/shortage, ASEAN has agreed to transform the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve (EAERR) Project into a permanent scheme. This will become the **ASEAN Plus 3 Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR)** and it will be finalized by 2010. It has earmarked 787,000 tons of rice for emergencies. Japan and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have agreed to support the transitional period. According to Mr. Kats Matsunami, Advisor to Director General, Practice Leader of the ADB, the next to be taken include establishing APTERR (business model and operational guidelines; in depth discussions about role of markets in food security; developing further intelligence on market fundamentals and further research on policy options of regionalization.

During the break out session, it was pointed that the success of the EAERR Project was due largely to the support of Japan (e.g. provision of rice stocks) and the question was whether ASEAN members will actually fund for the operationalization of APTERR when

it become a permanent scheme. The participants of this breakout session agreed that ASEAN cannot afford to take their food security lightly and depend on outside help. The group adopted the EARWG's position that ASEAN members through their national food and agriculture policies should be able to take care or provide for the needs of their populations.

The ASEAN presenter also informed the participants about the **ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change (AFCC)**, which is an attempt to cobble together ASEAN initiatives on Climate Change and Food Security. There is also a proposed **ASEAN AdHoc Steering Committee on Climate Change and Food Security**, which is an attempt to bring together three ASEAN Bodies, namely, SOM (Senior Officials Meeting) on Energy, the SOM-AMAF (Senior Officials Meeting-ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Food) and the newly-created ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change, which is the lead entity on ASEAN on the broader issue of climate change.

Discussions on Agricultural Innovation were focused on strategic priorities on how to promote food sustainable food production, encourage greater investments in food and agro-based industry and identify and address other emerging issues.

Dr. Kunihiro Tokida of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) said that their agency aims to provide food security to people by strengthening rural communities. He shared the JICA-Cambodia collaboration. Some of the lessons learned from their Cambodian experience include the need to target the vulnerable people; ensuring transparency and justice to avoid conflicts and the active participation of farmers and the support of local authorities. On the other hand, Dr. Rex Navarro of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) highlighted the role of research and development (R&D) institutions in driving agricultural innovations. He said that their initiatives were focused at enhancing biodiversity, producing more crops at lower costs, climate change adaptation in drylands among others. He likewise stressed the need for a "second green revolution" to ensure global food security.

In the breakout group discussion on investments in agro-industry, the issue of foreign or overseas land-scale land acquisitions for food security was discussed. The EARWG/RDWG shared the various lopsided agreements entered into by governments and farmers vis-a-vis foreign governments and investors. The participants proposed to the LKY School to look at best practices in contractual arrangements to ensure that fairness and equity are assured in these contracts. The RDWG also proposed that standards to be developed should be guided by the rights-based perspective.