

FOOD SECURITY IMPLEMENTATION IN ASEAN: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOOD TRADE AND FOOD MARKET WITHIN THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY



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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 15 March 2018

Revised: 18 April 2018

Accepted: 8 May 2018

Published: 24 May 2018

Keywords

Food security
Steep rises in food prices
Food trade and food market
AEC.

Historically, food issues had caused perils to humans in almost every part of the world. Depletion of food supply had led to the decline of many civilizations back then including the Mayans. As such, food crisis could be detrimental towards human security as global food crises including the one that occurred between the years of 2007 until 2008 had threatened the peace and stability of food security. Externalities have exacerbated recent conditions of food security which have led to increment of food prices within ASEAN Member States (AMS) particularly in food and agricultural products. The steep rise in food prices was due to increasing agricultural production cost (which was linked to the price hikes in fuel oil and fertilizers), decline in yields and production which was a consequence of climate patterns, and higher cost of keeping perishable goods. As a consequence, the AMS have acted responsively to lose the tight of the impacts of steep rise in food prices by imposing restrictions on export, price controls, subsidies in price, and import facilitation. In 2015, due to the efforts undertaken by the AMS in establishing a unified community with food security as of its priorities, the realization of sustainable development via food trade becomes relevant. In this connection, this article will discuss the measures toward sustainable development via food trade within ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2050.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature regarding on the theoretical conception of the food security implementation within the context of the AEC in moving towards sustainable food trade and food market by 2050. The theoretical conception revolves around the AEC agreed documents that will be discussed hereinafter.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an association consisting of Southeast Asian countries which was formed on 8th of August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand. The organisation came into being after the adoption of ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Later, between 1984 and 1999, Brunei, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Cambodia joined together to become the ten ASEAN Member States (AMS).¹

The ASEAN Declaration 1967 has set out general economic dimensions for the Southeast Asian region including acceleration of economic growth by way of joint efforts between AMSs, collaborations in terms of trade development, study of commodity trade and the provision of support in terms of research, training particularly in technical, educational, and administrative affairs.²

Currently, AMSs have unanimously agreed to form an integrated community in various economic fields through the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015.³

Thus, pragmatic approaches are being formed by AEC through the establishment of ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan Action on Food Security (SPA-FS) – FS 2015 – 2020 which promotes mutual understanding between members of AEC, guided by strategic plans in addressing the issue of food security i.e. to establish and promote a sustainable development via food trade and food market at national and regional level.⁴

The AEC recently has agreed to move forward towards competitive and integrated community by 2025 driven by strategic plans which promote sustainable development via food trade and food market that will be discussed below.⁵

2. DEFINITIONS OF FOOD SECURITY

Food security within AIFS Framework can be defined as where all people constantly obtain enough physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary requirements as well as preferences of food for an energetic and healthy lifeline.⁶ The definitions of food security comprises of various main dimensions which are food availability, food accessibility, utilization, and stability.⁷

The first aspect of food security is food availability whereby it refers to available adequate quantities of food of proper quality, supplied via local productions and/or imports (including food aid).⁸

Second, food accessibility can be defined as when individuals access to sufficient resources for obtaining proper nutritious food diet. Third, food utilization which is also includes sufficient diet, clean water, sanitation and health care to attain nutritional state of well-being where all physiological necessities are met.⁹

Fourth, the stability aspect of food security is where populations, household, or individual must have access to sufficient food anytime for secure of food. Moreover, sudden shocks such as economic or climate change would not risk losing access to food or cyclical events for example seasonal food insecurity. In the AIFS Framework, stability is defined as a combination of both availability and access dimensions of food security.¹⁰

3. THE IMPORTANCE TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VIA FOOD TRADE AND FOOD MARKET WITHIN ASEAN REGION

The world food crisis needs to be understood beforehand in order to understand the importance of achieving sustainable development in the food trade and food market within ASEAN region.

The world food crisis that took place between 2007 until 2008 was due to steep rise in world food prices. The highest steep rise in food prices was recorded between the years of 2007 until 2008 and followed by another food price increases between the years of 2010 until 2011 (Bakri and Zarina, 2014).

The World Bank has reported the average increase of global food commodities prices as of March 2008 130 per cent above its level for wheat, 87 per cent for soy, 74 per cent for rice and 31 per cent for maize.¹² The steep rise in food prices has something to do with imbalanced supply and demand i.e. shortage of supply.¹³

In the ASEAN community, there are also numbers of externalities that have affected negatively towards the stability of food security particularly in food markets and agricultural products. This has led to a steep rise in food prices within the ASEAN region especially between 2007 and 2008.¹⁴

The factors that affect the condition particularly the increase of agricultural production cost-led are increased prices of fuel and fertilizers, decline in yield production as climate change took its bite, and higher cost of keeping perishable goods.¹⁵

In responding to the high global food prices between, the States within the ASEAN region in general has acted responsively in terms of policy to alleviate the impacts of food prices via restrictions of export, price controls, subsidies in price, and import facilitation.¹⁶

The main commodity within the ASEAN region is closely-related to agricultural sector such as rice. As rice becomes the common staple food within the region and the main commodity for ASEAN community in trading is rice as well, Thailand and Vietnam relatively benefit from higher prices of rice exportation during the global food crisis (Tran, 2014).

Moving forward, the ASEAN community specifically the AEC has committed itself to ensuring long-term food security within the ASEAN region in 2015 by promoting sustainable development in food trade within that region by providing measures to control the reactions to restrictions of exportation policies on foods. Drawing upon the objective of ensuring stable food prices, in parallel with the implementation of a regional market access regime via the single market, trade liberalisation and fair competition will be discussed hereinafter.¹⁸

All in all, sustainable development and food security are interrelated to one another. The main aim of sustainable development is to meet the necessities of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Hence, food security is a significant part of basic human needs for the present population as well as for future generations to not live in hunger (Robert *et al.*, 2005).

Similarly, the aspiration to achieve a more stable and secure food by promoting sustainable development in food trade and food market is also in line with the world's aspirations envisaged by the United Nations to halt hunger, attain food security and enhance nutrition through Goal Number 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²⁰

4. FOOD SECURITY WITHIN ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC) THE ROLE OF AEC RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

On 7th of October 2003, ASEAN Member States (AMS) which comprises of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam have agreed to establish an integrated community by 2020 known as ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).²¹

The AEC also has mutually agreed to adopt the AEC Blueprint by 2015 in which every AMS shall abide by and execute the AEC 2015.²² The AEC Blueprint 2015 is a binding document to every AEC members (Asc, 2008).

The establishment of the AEC Blueprint 2015 aims to form; (i) a single market and production base region; (ii) a highly competitive economic region; (iii) an equitable economic development within the region; and (iv) fully-integrated into the global economy.²⁴

In relation to food security, food commodities have become one of the top priorities in the AEC Blueprint 2015. Food has been envisaged as one of the main components for AEC single market and production base; which is under food, agriculture and forestry.²⁵ Hence, food security has become one of the main agendas for the AEC. Therefore, governments of AEC are aware of food security and brought the issue as one of the major issues of national security (Barry *et al.*, 2014).

Apparently, the AEC Blueprint 2015 has become a turning point for the betterment of ASEAN region. To date, the AEC 2015 has market of US\$2.6 trillion with over 622 million people. Throughout the establishment of AEC 2015, ASEAN region also has been reported as the seventh largest in the world and the third largest economy in Asia in 2014.²⁷

Since economic cooperation is an on-going process and evolving domestically as well as regionally, the AEC Blueprint 2025 has been emerged.²⁸ Nevertheless, AEC Blueprint 2025 is still important in bridging the gap and loopholes within AEC Blueprint 2015.²⁹

In AEC Blueprint 2025, there are several reinforcing gist which constructs the previous AEC Blueprint 2015 namely; (i) to form a highly unified and united economy; (ii) a competitive, inventive and progressive ASEAN in economy; (iii) improved cooperation and network; (iv) strong, comprehensive, People-Oriented, and People-Centred ASEAN; (v) and a global ASEAN.³⁰

The AEC Blueprint 2025 also goes beyond the AEC 2015 by promoting stable food security through sustainable development in food trade and food market via ASEAN cooperation on food, agriculture and forestry (FAF) i.e. by enhancing trade facilitation eliminates barriers to trade to encourage competitiveness and economic integration.³¹

The AEC Blueprint 2025 also additionally highlights the role of private sectors i.e. business entities to participate in particular issues and convene partnership events on food issues in order to deliver inputs and evolving trends.³²

5. THE CONCEPT OF MARKET ACCESS, TRADE LIBERALISATION AND FAIR COMPETITION IN AEC BLUEPRINT 2015 AND AEC BLUEPRINT 2025

Both AEC Blueprints 2015 and 2025 promote the concept of market access, trade liberalisation and fair competition within ASEAN region.

The term market access refers to the openness of a market of a state to imported goods and services (Dictionary, 2017). In other words, it signifies the capability of a company or state to sell goods across borders.³⁴

Component A of the AEC Blueprint 2015, pertaining to single market and production base objectives is where the concept of market access is manifested. The purpose of the single market and production base within the AEC Blueprint 2015 is to ensure facilitation of production development networks are achievable within the region and thereafter becoming part of the world supply chain especially in food, agriculture and forestry sectors. Moreover, the single market window also specifically involves the running of free flow of goods i.e. foods and agriculture within the region. The market access dimension of the AEC Blueprint 2015 should promote the openness for exports and imports of goods or commodities, placing food, agriculture and forestry as main commodities whose markets should come into play within the commercial system.³⁵

On the other hand, the concept of market access in the AEC Blueprint 2025 is further augmented by its objective that is to achieve a highly unified and united economy under Component A in terms of free movement of goods i.e. foods, within ASEAN region. This is to ensure proper development of trade, production networks in ASEAN and a more integrated market.³⁶ The AEC Blueprint 2025 also further specifies on reduction or elimination border and behind-the-border barriers that could hamper trade.³⁷

Trade liberalisation is another concept being envisaged in both AEC Blueprint 2015 and AEC Blueprint 2050. Trade liberalisation herein can be defined as elimination or reduction of limitations or barriers on free exchange of goods between states. The examples of trade liberalisation include the elimination or reduction of tariff barriers, such as duties and surcharges, and non-tariff obstacles, such as licensing rules, quotas and other prerequisites (Investopedia, 2017).

The concept of trade liberalisation has been put into context within the AEC Blueprint 2015 in Component A on the free flow of goods which includes elimination of tariffs, elimination of Non-Tariffs Barriers, Rules of Origin, trade facilitation, customs integration, as well as standards and technical barriers to trade.³⁹

The AEC Blueprint 2025 further emphasizes on; (i) the amendment in ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) pertaining to further bringing down the tariff barriers in ASEAN region in promoting free flow of foods; (ii) Streamline and reinforce Rules of Origin; (iii) Hasten and in-depth execution of Trade Facilitation Measures.⁴⁰

Competition policy is another aspect highlighted in both AEC Blueprint 2015 and AEC Blueprint 2025. Recently, there is no Regional Cooperation Arrangements on competition policy, laws and enforcement at the ASEAN level, to deal with cross-border transactions within ASEAN region. Moving towards sustainable food

trade, AEC Blueprint 2015 promotes for the establishment of cooperative, sole and specific Competition Policy within ASEAN region stipulated under Component B.1.⁴¹

The AEC Blueprint 2025 further deepens regional cooperation in the AEC Blueprint 2011 by fostering the development of a regional strategy on competition with harmonisation of competition policy and law in ASEAN at par with the international best practices.⁴² Apart from that, under Component B.1. 26; AEC Blueprint further promotes the establishment of competition laws or policies within domestic spheres.⁴³

The concept of market access, trade liberalisation and competition in the AEC Blueprints 2015 and 2025 are also upholding the aspirations within ASEAN Vision and Strategic Plan for Cooperation in Food and Forestry 2016-2025 which aims; (i) to recognize and remove Non-Tariff Barriers that do not have economic or scientific rationale and execution trade facilitation measures; (ii) to improve regional and international cooperation to make sure all ASEAN food markets are integrated and food trading system is strengthened and utilized to provide stable food supplies; Pham (2015). (iii) and also promotes support to small producers, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and promotes SMEs competitiveness.⁴⁵

6. ASEAN INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY (AIFS) FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGIC PLAN ACTION ON FOOD SECURITY (SPA-FS) – FS 2015 – 2020 RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY VIA FOOD TRADE AND FOOD MARKET

The ASEAN Summit of 2009 has adopted the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS) 2020.

The Goal in AIFS Framework and SPA-FS is to establish a conducive environment, where AEC could collaborate, operate and unify in many aspects relating to production of food, trade and processing within ASEAN region.⁴⁸

On top of that, AIFS Framework and SPA-FS could also become an avenue for interchange of information, transfer of new technology, sharing of knowledge amongst various stakeholders i.e. authorities, traders, scientist, research institutes and farmers.⁴⁹

7. SUSTAINABLE FOOD TRADE AND FOOD MARKET DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE ASEAN INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY (AIFS) FRAMEWORK

There are five components within AIFS Framework which has the objective of promoting sustainable food trade and food market development amongst the AEC as enumerated under Component 2 of the AIFS Framework.⁵⁰

8. STRATEGIC PLAN ACTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOOD TRADE AND FOOD MARKET (“SPA-FS”) – FS 2015 – 2020

Strategic Thrust 2 of the SPA-FS further specifies and supports Component 2 within AIFS Framework which lays down core outputs that need to be achieved by utilizing the task(s) as stated. The gist of Strategic Thrust 2 is mainly in promoting food trade and food market within AEC.⁵¹

Table-1.0 depicts the two Output(s) under Strategic Thrust 2.

Table-1.0. Strategic Thrust 2

Output(s)	Explanation(s)
Output 2.1	Involved distribution of regional food trade more reasonable and diverse food at stable prices. ⁵²
Output 2.2	Improved ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB) which significant as a policy advisory unit for Senior Officials Meeting – ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture (SOM-AMAF). ⁵³

*Source: SPA-FS 2015-2020

In order to achieve the Output(s) enumerated under Component 2 of the AIFS Framework, strategic plan needs to be carried out as prescribed within Strategic Thrust 2, further tabulated under Annex 1 of SPA-FS 2015-2020 (Riza, 2011).

9. THE GIST OF OUTPUT

Table 2.0 briefly explains Output 2.1 which pertains to the proposing of draft amendment(s) in Article 24 (Special Treatment to Rice and Sugar) of ATIGA adopted by ASEAN in 2007.⁵⁵

Table-2.0. Output 2.1

Task(s)		Timeline, Realization(s)
2.1.1	Convene two (2) meetings on Rice (or Food) Trade Forum.	<u>Timeline (years):</u> (2015-2018). <u>Realization:</u> Draft amendment(s) to Article 24 of ATIGA; to include reform measures to be discussed within the meetings; which further supported by participants of Forum (Present at the Forum); and ASEAN Rice Situation and Outlook 2015/2016.
2.1.2	Convene technical meetings of the AFSRB as a preparation for ASEAN Rice (or Food) Trade Forum.	<u>Timeline (years):</u> (2015-2018). <u>Realization:</u> Discussed and refined alternative proposals by promoting conducive integration of rice within the region
2.1.3	Collect data and form analysis to further support AFSRB technical meetings i.e. rice market, impact assessment of contract on small-scale farmers, and related studies.	<u>Timeline (years):</u> (2015-2018). <u>Realization:</u> - Study on items in the agenda of two annual rice policy conference - Example: analysis on the proposed policy cooperation measures in the first Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting to promote rice trade. - Involve presentation on both technical working group and policy.
2.1.4	The recommendation based on Forums will be sent to AFSRB for further discussion.	<u>Timeline (years):</u> (2015-2020). <u>Realization:</u> Draft amendment to Article 24 of ATIGA to be submitted to SOM-AMAF Leaders for further direction).
2.1.5	Establish seafood forum to address specifically on technical barriers to seafood trade.	<u>Timeline (years):</u> (2015-2020).

*Source: SPA-FS 2015-2020

The principal bodies to perform the tasks in Table 2.0 are among others the AMS, the AFSRB, the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC), the ASEAN Development Bank (ADB), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States (FAO).⁵⁶

Table 2.0 explains about the tasks that need to be executed by participants in order to ensure regional food trade distribution in a more reasonable and diverse food at stable prices involving rice and sugar.⁵⁷

10. AMENDMENT OF ARTICLE 24 OF ATIGA THROUGH THE RICE (OR FOOD TRADE) FORUM

The usual claim within the ASEAN community is that rice and sugar are highly sensitive products (*My Accounting Course, 2017*). The provision that needs to be amended henceforth is Article 24 of ATIGA which provides that the Protocol to Provide Special Consideration for Rice and Sugar signed on 23 August 2007 shall form an integral part of the ATIGA giving rice and sugar special treatment amidst liberalisation commitments undertaken by all AMSs. The amendment of Article 24 of ATIGA can promote stable prices of food through reform measures stipulated in the Rice (or Food) Trade Forum as stated in the AIFS Framework (*Anon, 2015*).

Task 2.1.1 described the Rice (or Food) Trade Forum agenda involving issues such as the use of food/rice trade restrictions and operations of State's trade facilitation measures, food value chain strengthening, food diet diversity, greater private player participation, and greater dialogue with partners particularly among global key players in the rice market (*Andi, 2015*).

There are two meetings enlisted for the Rice (or Food Trade) Forum. The first meeting is where participants will undertake the reform measures to integrate rice in single market. The reforms may include four (4) measures; (i) net-importing states to lower down self-sufficiency targets for export deliveries from net-exporting countries (*Erik, 2014*).

The production of rice in the ASEAN region is interrelated with the concept of self-efficiency. Self-sufficiency refers to a situation where a state is independent in producing its own goods and does not import goods or services (*Michael and Melanie, n.d*). Malaysia in 2015, has announced its ambition to achieve self-sufficiency level in paddy by 2020.⁶⁰ Similarly with Indonesia which target to achieve self-sufficiency in rice by 2018.⁶¹ The Philippines is also making a move towards self-sufficiency around 90 per cent to 95 per cent in 2014.⁶³

However, relying too much on domestic self-sufficiency could also cause the escalation of food prices at the national level due to less competitiveness, poorer nutrition and reduced farm diversification.⁶⁴

Strategies towards secure and efficient production and enhanced distribution of rice at the national level must be in equilibrium with the reduction of market barriers.⁶⁴

The second reform measure in the first meeting is; (ii) the granting of Article 24 waiver for rice under ATIGA supplemented by a set of criteria and disciplines to be met.⁶⁵ The second reform measure is further expanded with the fourth reform measure involving certain standards or disciplines that need to be followed by the national food government-controlled companies, specified under SPS-FS in promoting participation from private sector in rice trade together with standards that need to be followed by national food government controlled companies.⁶⁶

The third reform measure involves domestic measures which have in parallel effect of lowering rice exports and/or standards and disciplines that need to be met on execution of export restrictions for instance, by contributing to ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR)'s virtual stockpile in the first place.⁶⁷

The second meeting in the Rice (or Food Trade) Forum involves measures (i) to attract private investors; (ii) to create standardized certification procedures and product standard in food trade and commodities; (iii) to ease cross-border food trade commodities; (iv) to enhance value chain systems and fostering contract farming and; (v) to hasten food diet diversity amongst ASEAN community.⁶⁸

11. MARKET ACCESS, TRADE LIBERALISATION AND FAIR COMPETITION WITHIN ATIGA

ATIGA does promote market access within the ASEAN region by promoting a streamlined single market and production base via free flow of goods prescribed in the ASEAN Charter and ASEAN Economic Blueprint.⁶⁹

ATIGA is also to foster the concept of trade liberalisation within AEC stipulated under Chapter 2 regarding on tariff liberalisation by trying realising the following: (i) the Elimination of Tariff Rate Quotas with regards to trade liberalisation is stipulated within the ambit of Article 20; (ii) the reduction or removal of import duties under Article 19; (iii) the Elimination of other Non-tariff Barriers under Article 42 of ATIGA; (iv) the Elimination of Tariff Quotas under Article 20.⁷⁰

Competition is another aspect or concept being highlighted in ATIGA i.e. under Article 75 (d) requiring the avoidance of unnecessary obstacles to trade and enhance competition.⁷¹ However, the extent to regulate competition within the food market is not clearly expanded within the said Agreement.

12. THE GIST OF OUTPUT

Table 3.0 depicts the task that needs to be carried out or realized at the advisory stage i.e. to improve ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB) which is significant as a policy advisory unit for the Senior Officials Meeting – ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture (SOM-AMAF).

Table-3.0. Task at the Advisory Stage

Task	(Timeline, Realization, Lead Bodies)
2.2.1 Organize capacity building events i.e. trainings for AFSRB Members and Secretariat staff.	<u>Timeline:</u> (2015-2020) <u>Realization:</u> Organize capacity building events i.e. trainings for AFSRB Members and Secretariat staff. <u>Lead Bodies:</u> AMS, AFSRB, ASEC, ADB

*Source: SPA-FS 2015-2020

13. THE ROLE OF ASEAN MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY (AMAF) AS EXECUTION AND COORDINATION MECHANISM

The ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) is established in order to address the issues relevant to food security including the rising food prices. AMAF will receive supports from ASEAN Secretariat in executing SPA-FS and further in collaboration with other relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and ASEAN external partners.⁷²

The Strategic Plan (SP) will also be exercised by ASEAN Subsidiary Bodies under AMAF to coordinate local institutions via networking arrangements.⁷³

Apart from that, SOM-AMAF will further support AMAF by contributing policy guidance to subsidiary bodies and ASEAN Secretariat, together with SOM-AMAF and AMAF will strengthen and coordinate with subsidiary bodies.⁷⁴

The cooperation and coordination from various agencies may help to implement the SP and will be further supported by the reinforced ASEAN Structure and Mechanism consisting of AMAF structure and regional coordination mechanism.⁷⁵

Recently, on 6th of October 2016; during the 38th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (38th AMAF), the ASEAN Ministers unanimously agreed to strengthen collaboration towards AEC 2025 especially with regards to food security, food safety and product quality, forestry, fisheries, and towards cooperation with dialogue partners and international organisation i.e. Australia, China, Germany, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and Russia. The dialogue will address food security issues, food safety, products quality and trade facilitation of agriculture, fisheries and forestry products.⁷⁶

14. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Each and every member i.e. participants of a society which comprises of the government, commercial entities and individuals need to cooperate, participate and integrate actively towards development (Hasani, 2000).

The willingness to cooperate with solid spirit of earnest sincerity, transparency and honesty between the participants would be reflected and manifested towards producing win-win solutions. However, cooperative approaches would be successful only if the participants deliver their actions towards similar aspirations and objectives.⁷⁸

Sincere and effective cooperation could be manifested and reflected via dialogues, negotiations, forums, conferences and etc. Hence, issues could be refined and settled effectively for the subsequent benefits to all.⁷⁹

The role of states specifically the role of government is significantly important to find a point of similarity which contains mutually accepted values towards effective cooperation for every member i.e. stakeholders at the national level.⁸⁰

At the national level, a government may also enact a sole, single, stand-alone, specific and well-structured measures (laws or policies) relating to food security especially towards sustainable food trade and food market in order to ensure fair competition in relation to highly sensitive products such as rice and sugar and thereafter may ensure reasonable pricing within the market. The establishment of a set of rules towards viable agricultural governance practised at the domestic level is also vital to attain deliverable self-sufficiency of food at the national level.

A government in ASEAN may also establish sole and specific independent authority, body or commissioner which comprises of expertise in various fields, in order to provide complete set and well-structured mechanisms starting from planning, execution and monitoring in order to move forward towards sustainable food security governance at the national level. Monitoring mechanism for instance can act as tool for check and balance pertaining to food security governance and it is essential in order to make sure viability of certain plans and executions and provide proper implementation of activities towards sustainable development of food in Malaysia that may encompass various sectors such health, agriculture, and trade. The role of independent body is essential to avoid conflict of interest in implementing or executing certain measures in near future.

Malaysia which is one of AMS is known as potentially global *Halal* hub and its standard has been recognised throughout the globe (HDC, 2017). The spirit of the establishment of *Halal* Development Corporation (HDC) could become an example in near future for the betterment of food security at the national level. The HDC acts as a one stop agency for *Halal* industry development in Malaysia i.e. to facilitate partnership with governmental agencies, such as Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Malaysian Investment Development Authority and the Malaysia External Trade Development (MATRADE).⁸²

Apart from that, the government together with related stakeholders may also take steps by strengthening the existing institutions; administering food trade and food market at the national level.

At the regional level, the AMS has a collective role to play in upholding and executing the AEC Blueprint 2015 and the AEC Blueprint 2025 and fulfilling the spirit of ASEAN Economic community towards achieving sustainability via food trade and food market.

The first measure that may be taken by AEC is to establish well-structured regional policies, or laws on fair competition within ASEAN market.

AEC through AMAF may also strengthen the cooperation mechanism and networks involving stakeholders for sharing resources, providing check and balance to trade liberalisation and market access commitments and ensuring fair competition within AEC market.

The AEC through AMAF and its network arrangements may assist in harmonising the complexity of the ASEAN approaches in addressing the issues of food security within ASEAN.

15. CONCLUSION

ASEAN regional measures on food security towards AEC by 2025 are complex, diverse and pragmatic. Thus, the role of state comes into the picture to unite all of the stakeholders in order to harmonise and streamline the complexity of the existing measures within ASEAN region in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Moreover, support from international community in terms of food trade and food market may also contribute towards sustainability of food within ASEAN region.

Sustainable Development Goals 2030 would not be achievable if participants do not reflect it within national and regional frameworks. Thus, it is significantly important for the AEC to adopt, implement, uphold and strengthen national and regional strategic measures driven by AEC Blueprint 2015 and AEC Blueprint 2025 as well as the existing domestic security via food trade and food market.

As a conclusion, the AEC shall become a milestone, but not a finishing line for the betterment of future generations to live in a secure and sustainable society.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Contributors/Acknowledgement: Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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