

Concept Paper
Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) High-Level Conference on Food Security
Chiang Mai, Thailand
9-11 May 2011

1. Background

The Helsinki Declaration made at the 6th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 6) requested ASEM members to take on the role of Issue-based Leadership to drive projects and initiatives in a certain policy area with a view to producing tangible benefits for all ASEM members. In doing so, Thailand as one of the most important food-supplying countries of the world and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) as Thailand's core agency for this issue, volunteered to be the leader on food security at ASEM 7 in October 2008 in Beijing.

Food security is a global issue which involves all ASEM members because of its effect in both developed and developing countries. During 2006-2008, world food prices had rapidly increased by 56% and resulted in increased malnutrition and hunger rates. The causes for world's food crisis include population increases, the expansion of emerging economies, the use of food grains to produce bio-chemicals, and the decrease of food yields due to climate change. In addition, the increase in input prices such as fertilizer and chemical substances and speculation in the future market also aggravated the situation.

Food security has become a serious challenge for our communities. The Declaration of the Conference on "High-Level Meeting on Food Security for All", held by Spain, the UN and the FAO, stressed that cooperation could be enhanced by focusing on the contribution of all countries to integrate policies for supporting food accessibility through shared solutions and establishing Food Security in all dimensions.

ASEM is a framework with strong potential to push for cooperation in an efficient manner because it comprises diverse members which include food producers, exporters and importers, with different levels of development. As announcing at ASEM 8 in Belgium in October 2010, Thailand, an Issue-based Leader on Food Security under the ASEM forum, will hold a conference for ASEM countries to share opinions and recommend guidelines for enhanced cooperation on Food Security aimed at ensuring food security.

2. Objectives of the Conference

- To provide a platform for ASEM members to learn and understand the current situation/status of food security and the initiatives and progress made in the regions and each member
- To exchange opinions and share experiences/best practices in response to food security among ASEM members as well as suggestion on ASEM future cooperation
- To discuss and recommend working mechanism for ASEM future cooperation
- To find activities to support ASEM future cooperation/collaboration toward food security

3. Activities

- Guest Speakers – Invitations will be extended to experts on food security from Asia and Europe to have an opportunity to present the situation on food security in their respective regions as well as their initiatives and perspectives on achieving food security.

- Member Speakers – Representatives from ASEM members will be asked to present their country papers regarding the food security situation and share experiences on their respective unique country's strengths and ability to contribute to the ASEM's Food Security dialogue in order to establish activities for ASEM future cooperation, for instance, in the areas of (1) improvement of poor farmers' livelihood (2) sustainable agricultural and food production (3) responsible agricultural investment (RAI) (4) agricultural innovation (5) technology transfer (6) food security arrangements in case of emergency/shortage caused by climate change effects and (7) sharing food security

information. Recommendation on working mechanism or responsible body for ASEM future cooperation is also needed.

- Field Trip – In order to widen the perspective of participants on how to achieve food security through alternative methods focusing on adjustment of lifestyle based on each country's know-how, experiences and culture, a one-day-trip will be organized to visit food security related projects in areas close to Chiang-Mai, such as visit projects initiated by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej: Huai Hongkhrai Royal Development Center in Doi-Saket District.

4. Expected Participants

The Conference will be attended by approximately 150 participants (high-level) from government and non-government relevant to agriculture and trade in ASEM members and other regional and international organizations such as FAO.

5. Expected Outputs

- Summary of Discussions
- Activities/Mechanism to support ASEM future cooperation/collaboration

6. Date and Venue

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) High-Level Conference on Food Security will be held from 9 to 11 May 2011 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The venue of the Conference is:

Shangri-La hotel Chiang Mai
89/8 Changklan Road, Muang Chiang Mai
Thailand 50100
Phone: +66 53 253 888
Fax : +66 53 253 800
Email: sirichan.kongnonthachai@shangri-la.com

7. Relevant Agencies

- The Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Bangkok, Thailand, Tel/Fax: (+662) 940-7033
- The Department of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok, Thailand, Tel: (+662) 643- 5000 ext. 13124, 13190 Fax: (+662) 643-5146

8. Expenses

Participants are expected to bear the costs of international airfares and accommodation in Thailand. The Thai government will cover (1) the organization, administrative, and field trip costs of the Conference and (2) the participation cost (economy air tickets and accommodation) of guest speakers and each presenter from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam, Philippines and Indonesia.

9. Co-sponsors

Thailand welcomes the co-sponsorship of this activity by interested ASEM members and requests ASEM contact points to inform of their interest in co-sponsoring the Conference at their earliest convenience.
