



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Investing in food safety for global benefits

3

A concrete case in the Association  
of Southeast Asian Nations  
(ASEAN) countries







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of Southeast Asian Nations  
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**FOOD SAFETY**

TECHNICAL TOOLKIT FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

3

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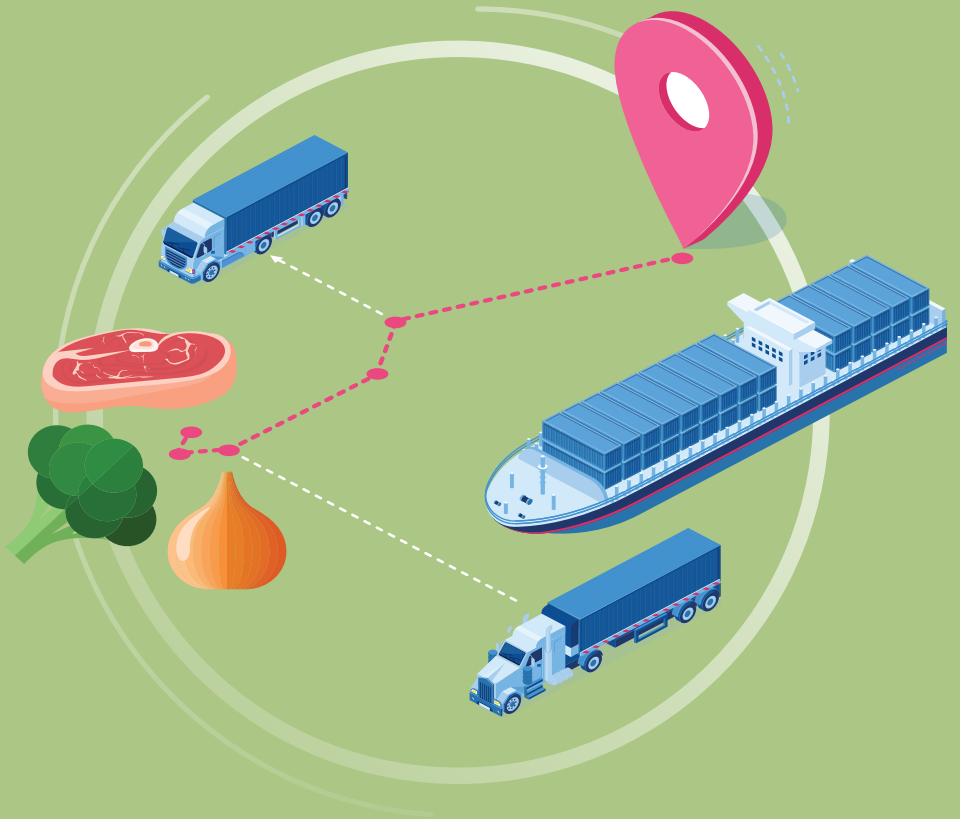
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## Abstract

The Asia-Pacific region is growing at an impressive pace: it is home to the highest population numbers and densities, and is a hub for technological advancements. Asia and the Pacific have the potential to lead the future of food and agriculture. However, the levels of country capacities vary widely: an example of this is illustrated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The grouping is unique, and it has technical clusters specifically dedicated to address common issues and challenges. ASEAN shares with Codex Alimentarius an interest in harmonizing, standardizing and making uniform the elements of food safety control systems. To strengthen ASEAN countries' capacities to participate in Codex Alimentarius, FAO and ASEAN established a project, funded by the government of Japan, which brought enormous results in the area of food safety. Those results have contributed to improving consumers' health and to facilitating food trade, and have strengthened the trade between ASEAN and Japan. The impacts of collaboration are now at the service of all. This document summarizes the collaboration to improve the participation of ASEAN countries in Codex Alimentarius.

## Keywords

ASEAN, Codex Alimentarius, food safety, food standards, capacity development.



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# Abbreviations and acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
FAO	The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAP	good agricultural practice
GDP	gross domestic product
GMP	good manufacturing practice
HACCP	hazard analysis and critical control points
MRL	maximum residues limits
SPS	The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures





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# Introduction

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## 1.1 The ascending region of Asia and the Pacific

During most of the past 40 years, strong and consistent economic growth in Asia and the Pacific was associated with significant drops in hunger and poverty (FAO, 2020a). The region's journey to prosperity surpassed expectations by any measure—be it economic growth, structural transformation, poverty reduction, or improved health and education. There was a nearly 15-fold increase in per capita gross domestic product (GDP), while global per capita GDP tripled over the same period (Nakao, 2020). The unemployment rate in Asia-Pacific remains the world's lowest at 4.1 percent. That rate is expected to hold steady, while the global rate is predicted to decrease by 0.1 percent (ILO, 2020). The region is also characterized by its people's embrace of technology: In 2018, there was an average of 2.1 devices and connections per person in the region. However, the forecast is that this will increase to 3.1 devices and connections per person by 2023 (Statista, 2020).

According to the latest United Nations estimates, the current population in Asia is 4 648 138 332, equivalent to 59.76 percent of the world population. Population density in Asia is 150 per square kilometre, and 50.9 percent of the population is urban (Worldometers, 2020). The region is home to the world's most populous countries (India, China), but also some countries with the smallest populations on the planet, such as the Small Island Developing States in the Pacific. This diversity is accompanied by changing demographic trends, including overall lower fertility and mortality rates, rapid urbanization, and sizeable migration flows within and outside the region (UNFPA, 2020). Asia's position in the global food market tilts heavily towards demand due to its huge population and limited agricultural resources – the region has only one-fifth of the world's agricultural land (Rabobank, 2016).

Within the region, capacity levels vary very widely and the food cultures are highly diverse, leading to various food safety issues. There are a rich variety of food products that are either consumed directly or used in traditional cuisines. Street food figures prominently in consumer preferences. With the growth of trade in food, the demand for high-value livestock and fisheries is also increasing. The region presents a wide diversity of consumption patterns.

The region has huge potential to lead in food and agriculture. Its diversity has supported some of its remarkable achievements, for example, hunger in Asia has fallen from 24.1 percent in 1990-1992 to 13.5 percent in 2011-2013. There is thus the potential of leading the sector of food and agriculture by responding positively to massive efforts.

## 1.2 The uniqueness of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN was founded by five member states in 1967 to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development, and promote peace and stability. Today, ASEAN consists of ten member states: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The association regularly engages with other countries in Asia and the Pacific and beyond, and it maintains a global network of alliances and dialogue partners. ASEAN has developed political instruments, including the ASEAN Political-Security Community, which promotes countries in the region living in peace with one another and the world according to principles of democracy, rule of law and good governance, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (ASEAN, 2016a). ASEAN can also count on the work of numerous technical clusters created for the purpose of tackling specific problems using the skills available in the region.



In 2015, the grouping achieved a major milestone by establishing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) with the goal of creating a single market for member states through economic integration initiatives. The AEC Blueprint in 2025 (ASEAN, 2015) is a road map to forge a dynamic and cohesive economic community where innovation flourishes through enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation. The Blueprint also calls for creating a more resilient, inclusive, and people-centred community, integrated with the global economy. One of the Blueprint's pillars is eliminating tariffs and facilitating trade. To support the free flow of goods, the document calls for aims to continually reduce or eliminate border and behind-the-border regulatory barriers that impede trade, so as to achieve competitive, efficient, and seamless movement of goods within the region. Alongside the economic road map, the ASEAN socio-cultural community was also founded. It envisions a people-centred and socially responsible community striving to achieve solidarity and unity among member countries and people. It seeks to forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society that is inclusive and harmonious, and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced (ASEAN, 2016b).

Building country capacities in food safety has great economic value for ASEAN. Effective and harmonized food safety capacities support increased trade of food and agricultural products. That, in turn, promotes economic development and further integration of the regional and global economies, which are key components of poverty reduction strategies. Regional and international agrifood markets have become an important source of income and food for producers and consumers in ASEAN countries (Greenville and Kawasaki, 2018). ASEAN's economic and socio-cultural community Blueprints, therefore, recognize the priority of improving food safety and harmonizing food safety standards to ensure that the needs of member countries are addressed.

### 1.3 Harmonized food safety is a priority for ASEAN

ASEAN countries expressed the need to improve food safety to ensure that their food exports can access markets worldwide. Past collaborations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) brought substantial improvements to their food control systems. For improving food safety, cooperation between ASEAN countries and Codex Alimentarius is highly important. Member countries should provide scientific data to Codex in order to reflect national and regional situations in Codex standards. They should also participate to the standards-setting process, as the requirements of Codex standards need to be fully understood.

To meet these goals, it is important for ASEAN member countries to enhance their technical capacity so they can meaningfully contribute to international/regional food standards development and implementation. Therefore, they need to focus on generating evidence on food safety hazards and their level of risk for consumers. To ensure that domestic and regional situations are reflected in Codex standards, ASEAN member countries should provide scientific data to the Codex for Codex standards setting. There is a great need to not only understand the requirements of the Codex standards but also participate effectively in the Codex standards-setting process. The collection of scientific data and its accurate interpretation are also required for submission to the various Codex Committees to support and strengthen the positions held by countries. Mechanisms for data generation and analysis, therefore, need strengthening. Sharing mechanisms between more developed and less developed group members also needs to be developed or reinforced.



## 1.4 Japan and food safety

Food safety is a particularly delicate issue in Japan, which imports 60 percent of its food supply. Japan is also a strong supporter of the Codex Alimentarius, which plays an important role in ensuring the safety, quality and fairness of international food trade. The country actively participates in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which sets international standards, guidelines and codes of practice. The Codex's broad scope makes it an essential part of achieving food security and zero hunger. The areas it covers includes contaminants, nutrition, food hygiene, additives, antimicrobial resistance, and pesticide and veterinary drug residues.

Public concern about food safety often places Codex at the centre of global debates. Japan is actively committed to achieving the Codex mission by having technical experts involved in Codex work, as well as by providing ASEAN countries with opportunities to implement Codex standards more efficiently, including through regional and national workshops. Japan's contribution to the work of Codex and FAO goes beyond financial commitments. Also valuable is the country's high level of technical expertise in the areas of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Over the years, Japan has been funding workshops and training courses to strengthen ASEAN countries' capacities for creating and implementing Codex standards.









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## Collaborate for maximum impact – food safety improvement in ASEAN countries

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The meeting point between ASEAN countries' interest in having a harmonized food safety regime and Japan's active commitment to food safety came through Codex Alimentarius and FAO. They were able to liaise with one another under a structured system where both parties could work together to create better food safety. Particularly, collaboration among ASEAN countries and Japan occurred through a multiyear project that increased the opportunity for ASEAN countries to participate in Codex Alimentarius.

The overall goal of the project was to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade within the project countries and other countries including Japan. The desired outcomes included the enhancement of ASEAN's capacities to contribute to Codex standard setting, and harmonizing national and regional level implementation of Codex standards for public health and facilitation of trade within and outside ASEAN. The primary beneficiaries of this project were government food safety officers in the recipient countries. Indirect beneficiaries of the project included food producers, exporters, traders, retailers and consumers involved in the food chain.

Through the activities conducted under this project, ASEAN countries have strengthened their capacities to contribute to the Codex standard-setting process as well as to implement adopted Codex standards. ASEAN countries have also gained significant knowledge on food safety issues such as risk analysis and risk categorization.

Particularly, the project has touched upon various key aspects of food safety assurance within countries. These aspects include food inspection systems, Codex Alimentarius' risk analysis frameworks, development of science-based positions, establishing maximum residues limits (MRLs), and information sharing systems. Details regarding the various collaborations under the FAO project are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1. Collaborative activities undertaken in the ASEAN countries under FAO's coordination**

Timeline	Project title	Project code	Areas covered under the project
2007	Enhancing food safety by strengthening food inspection systems in ASEAN countries	GCP/RAS/222/JPN	Aspects of food inspection and certifications, particularly: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. food inspection and certification in general;</li> <li>2. food import/export inspection and certification;</li> <li>3. good agricultural practice (GAP), good manufacturing practice (GMP), hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP);</li> <li>4. SPS measures; and</li> <li>5. sampling and analysis necessary for food inspection.</li> </ol>
2011	Support to the FAO programme on capacity-building in food safety in selected ASEAN countries	GCP/RAS/223/JPN	Aspects of food inspection and certifications, particularly: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. food inspection and certification in general;</li> <li>2. food import/export inspection and certification;</li> <li>3. GAP, GMP, HACCP;</li> <li>4. SPS measures; and</li> <li>5. sampling and analysis necessary for food inspection.</li> </ol>

Timeline	Project title	Project code	Areas covered under the project
2011	Support for capacity building for international food safety standard development and implementation in ASEAN countries	GCP/RAS/280/JPN	International food safety standards, particularly: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Codex standards and the SPS agreement;</li> <li>2. food recalls and traceability for national food control systems;</li> <li>3. sampling tools;</li> <li>4. Codex risk analysis framework and data quality;</li> <li>5. microbiological criteria; and</li> <li>6. Codex standards, documentation and activities.</li> </ol>
2016	Support to capacity building and implementation of international food safety standards in ASEAN countries	GCP/RAS/295/JPN	Participation to Codex activities, particularly through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. data for risk analysis and assessments;</li> <li>2. development of scientific-based positions;</li> <li>3. understanding of standard-setting procedures;</li> <li>4. impact of Codex standards in international trade;</li> <li>5. establishment of Codex maximum residues limits</li> <li>6. monitoring protocols to ensure food safety; and</li> <li>7. information-sharing systems.</li> </ol>
2021			

Timeline	Project title	Project code	Areas covered under the project
<p>2021</p> <p>2026</p>	<p>Enhancing capacity in Codex for effective participation and contribution of selected countries in Asia</p>	<p>GCP/RAS/278/JPN</p>	<p>This project will continue to implement the activities on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. enhancing the effective participation in selected ASEAN countries, Timor-Leste, new applicant for ASEAN membership, as well as some countries in South Asia and South West Pacific;</li> <li>2. technical support on data generation for establishment of food safety standards;</li> <li>3. a risk-based framework based on solid risk analysis and assessment; and</li> <li>4. risk assessment methodology set by Codex.</li> </ol>

## 2.1 Food inspection systems were assessed in four ASEAN countries

Four case studies were prepared and published to assess food inspection systems in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Indonesia conducted a situational analysis of inspection and certification systems for good manufacturing practice (GMP) for processed foods. Malaysia analysed the good farm practice scheme (SALM), an inspection and certification scheme developed specially for fruit, vegetables and other crops. It is also a national voluntary scheme to encourage farms to adopt good production practices that meet the requirements of food safety and productivity. Those production practices must be carried out in an environment- and worker-friendly way, which also ensures safe and sustainable agriculture. In Thailand, the project covered best practices, in terms of GAP, especially among

small farmers throughout the supply chain for domestic and export markets for fruit and vegetables. The project also covered group inspections and certification systems for small farmers to enable them to achieve their objectives. In Viet Nam, a case study was conducted on the inspection systems used in the food service sector, including street food outlets, restaurants and canteens. All these country case studies identified the success factors and lessons learned that could improve management practices that could be adopted by other ASEAN countries setting up similar systems. For example, the case studies on GAP indicated that, with proper documentation and appropriate training, it would be possible to adopt such innovative measures as group inspection and certification even in the less-developed countries.

## **2.2 A guidance document for food inspection and certification systems was developed**

Several guidance documents on aspects of food inspection and certification systems in ASEAN countries have been developed. “Guidelines for risk categorization of food and food establishments applicable to ASEAN countries,” was prepared and published on the recommendation of the seventh ASEAN expert group on food safety held in Singapore from 13 to 15 October 2009. It contained content from workshops and trainings held throughout the project, and linked to FAO and WHO documents and tools for food inspections (FAO and WHO, 2020). The paper provided a framework for categorizing establishments based on risk so regulatory agencies could prioritize inspections of food businesses according to their level of risk to the population.

The document recommends the use of a simple decision tree model to categorize businesses dealing with both primary and secondary foods, including high-risk, medium-risk, and low-risk food businesses. The risk category of a particular food business will determine the frequency of food inspection, with food businesses categorized as high-risk businesses inspected more frequently. It takes into consideration lessons learned from the case studies, workshops and training courses, and was prepared with close linkages to existing FAO and WHO publications and tools for food inspection.

## **2.3 Capacities were strengthened on food inspection systems**

Five regional workshops were held in different countries to discuss recommendations for strengthening food inspection and capacity-building priorities in food inspection systems. Four regional training courses in food inspection techniques were organized for middle-level food inspectors working in government food control institutions in ministries involved in food safety management. Three national training courses in food inspection techniques were also held for food inspectors working in government food control institutions in ASEAN's least developed countries (LDC): Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.

Four regional courses and in-country courses in ASEAN LDC countries taught 80 senior food safety officials to be trainers in aspects of food inspection. Around 300 food inspectors were trained in ASEAN LDCs in specific food inspection techniques and procedures. Three national training courses in food inspection techniques were also held for food inspectors working in government food control institutions in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. A total of 116 participants and 22 observers attended.

## **2.4 Capacities were strengthened on the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), food recalls and traceability, sampling tools, risk analysis and Codex Alimentarius standards**

A hundred and sixty-five participants from all ten ASEAN countries attended the regional workshops, regional training courses and national training courses aimed at developing capacities on 1) the implications of SPS agreement and its relationship with Codex standard setting; 2) the concept of food recall and traceability, and recent advancements in some national food control systems; 3) Mycotoxins sampling tools; 4) Codex risk analysis frameworks, including data collection capacities; 5) establishing and applying microbiological criteria; and 6) the impact of Codex standards, documents tools and training on development of positions. Workshops and trainings are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Workshops and trainings undertaken for capacity building and implementation of international food safety standards in ASEAN countries**

	Place	Date
<b>Regional workshops</b>		
Principle and further activities for Codex implementation	Bangkok, Thailand	17-19 September 2012
Food recall and traceability – Application in national food safety control	Chiang Mai, Thailand	15-17 February 2013
Design and evaluation of mycotoxin sampling protocols	Manila, the Philippines	11-12 September 2014
<b>Regional training courses</b>		
Strengthening capacity in data collection and generation for food safety risk analysis	Tokyo, Japan	10-13 June 2013
Establishment and application of microbiological criteria	Hanoi, Viet Nam	16 November 2013
Enhancing effective participation in codex activities in ASEAN countries	Tokyo, Japan	8-11 September 2015.
<b>National training courses</b>		
Strengthening food standard setting and participation in Codex activities in Cambodia	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	19-21 February 2014

## 2.5 National Codex Alimentarius activities were documented in one publication

In 2012, a document was developed on the status of national Codex activities in ASEAN countries. The publication would form the baseline to enable further improvements over the period of the project. It was based on the inputs received from the country focal points nominated under the project in response to a questionnaire that was sent to the ASEAN countries. The responses received were compiled and validated by country representatives attending the regional workshop on “Principles and further activities for Codex implementation,” held in Bangkok 17-19 September 2012. The aspects covered in the publication were:

- food control system framework vis à vis food standards and Codex;
- institutional infrastructure for work on food standards/ Codex activities;
- national standards and standards setting in the area of food:
  - list of national standards;
  - process of standards setting;
- level of Codex implementation:
  - National Codex Committee;
  - National Codex website;
  - Codex country manual;
- data collection and analysis systems:
  - system for data collection for national and international standard setting;
  - providing data for international standardization-area/committees;
  - capacity for data analysis in the country;
- other details relevant to food standards and Codex; and
- prioritized needs of capacity building for effective implementation of Codex standards.



## 2.6 Statistics were obtained on insects as a source of food in the region

A survey was designed to collect data on insects as food in the region. It was based on a case study, which could be used for future surveys to develop Codex standards. In particular, the case study aimed at establishing a methodology that could be repeated in the ASEAN context. First, a study was conducted to identify the key contents of the questionnaire. Entitled “House cricket farming and chain of distribution to consumers: Preliminary identification of the quality and safety and critical points of hazard of the produces, the research was conducted by the Institute of Nutrition at Mahidol University in Thailand from February to July 2014. Three regions of Thailand were examined, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 cricket farmers. The resulting key issues were used to formulate a first survey-questionnaire. This tool was then employed to collect data on 70 other cricket farmers and 10 cricket collectors. Statistics were eventually developed that provided a description of the results, which covered nine topics:

- basic characteristics of the cricket farmers including family size and male-female ratio;
- farming inputs including financial investments and farming spaces;
- farming practices;
- harvesting and yield;
- distribution of produce and return ratio;
- constraints and needs of cricket farming;
- cricket collectors/distributors;
- risks to safe production synthesized from research findings; and
- analysis of production and trade.

## **2.7 Internal communications were maintained through the circulation of a newsletter**

A newsletter and website containing information on the project's activities were published and garnered nearly 400 subscribers. The project website (<http://foodsafetyasiapacific.net/>) was launched in October 2012 and redesigned in 2013 to make it more user-friendly. The website improved the effectiveness of the information-sharing mechanisms and it contributed to an increase in newsletter subscribers. The project website was later transferred to the FAO corporate website and is now hosted at: <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/one-health/food-safety/en/>.

While collaborating to enhance their participation in Codex Alimentarius, ASEAN countries improved their capacities on everything that stands behind the standard-setting process. The project was terminated earlier than the initially established date so that a new project could start. The new project followed some specific recommendations that were formulated in the first one.

## **2.8 Capacities to develop Codex Alimentarius standards were strengthened**

Regional workshops were planned to strengthen national and regional capacities of ASEAN to effectively develop Codes standards and contribute to the Codex standards setting process. To develop Codex standards, it was necessary to strengthen work force and institutional capacities through practical training courses and collecting necessary data. The goals of the project were mostly pursued through the workshops and trainings listed in the table below.

**Table 3. Training courses undertaken to strengthen capacities to develop and implement Codex standards**

	Place	Date
<b>National training course</b>		
First national training course about strengthening food safety standard setting and effective participation in Codex activities in Lao People's Democratic Republic (FAO, 2016a)	Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic	27-29 June 2016
Second national training course about strengthening food safety standard setting and effective participation in Codex activities (FAO, 2016b)	Yangon, Myanmar	20-21 December 2016
Third national training workshops about strengthening food safety standard setting and effective participation in Codex activities (FAO, 2017a)	The Philippines	30 August-1 September 2017
Fourth national training workshops on strengthening food safety standard setting and effective participation in Codex Activities (FAO, 2017b)	Viet Nam	21-23 November 2017
Fifth national training workshops about strengthening food safety standard setting and effective participation in Codex activities	Lao People's Democratic Republic	20-22 March 2018
A national training on strengthening capacity on data generation for pesticide residue to establish maximum residues limits in Lao People's Democratic Republic (FAO, 2018a)	Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic	16-20 December 2019
Sixth national training workshop about enhancing effective participation in Codex activities in Cambodia through a Codex simulation (FAO, 2020d)	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	18-20 February 2020

	Place	Date
<b>Regional training workshops</b>		
Regional training workshop about enhancing effective participation in Codex activities in ASEAN countries	Bangkok, Thailand	9-11 January 2017
Regional training workshop about enhancing effective participation in Codex Activities to develop science-based national positions and to contribute scientific data to the Codex standard-setting activities (FAO, 2018b)	Tokyo, Japan	5-7 December 2018
Regional training workshop to build capacities on risk categorization for ranking risk of ASEAN food hazards for developing the risk-based monitoring protocol for food safety	Bangkok, Thailand	23-25 April 2019
Regional Workshop on strengthening capacities for the application to the FAO and WHO Codex Trust Fund (FAO, 2019)	Bangkok, Thailand	21-23 October 2019
Regional workshop to develop of a set of national food safety indicators	Bangkok, Thailand	19-21 November 2019
<b>Other meetings</b>		
Regional consultation on food safety indicators for Asia and the Pacific	Singapore	6-8 December 2017
Meeting to accelerate prevention and control of neglected foodborne parasitic zoonoses in selected Asian countries (FAO, 2018c)	Luang Prabang, Lao People's Democratic Republic	16-18 October 2018

## 2.9 Reference documents and milestone publications were developed on food safety

Within the project, results and lessons learned from the various activities were documented and published for use as references for ASEAN countries to contribute to Codex Alimentarius and move towards harmonized food safety systems. Below is a list of the documents.

- A guidance to implement the hands-on training in each ASEAN country for enhancing effective participation in Codex activities.
- Manual of the role, responsibilities and working procedures for functioning of the Codex Contact Point of Myanmar (based on the FAO and WHO Codex procedural manual containing specific sections on terminologies).
- Status of national Codex activities in ASEAN countries.
- Infographics of food safety related to the COVID-19.
- A set of infographics on foodborne parasites entitled “Be safe from fish liver flukes” (FAO, 2020b) and “Be safe from pork tapeworms” (FAO, 2020c).
- A guide to develop national programmes to monitor pesticide residues.







## Conclusions

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### **3.1 Investing in food safety means improving global health**

The FAO project provided the opportunity for a joint collaboration where key aspects of food safety were addressed from the perspective of an international body, the Codex Alimentarius. This eventually resulted in strengthened and unified capacities in food safety among ASEAN countries, resulting in improved global health at the national, regional and global levels. Improved food safety within a country decreases its number of food safety incidents.

Foodborne diseases are an important contributor to health burdens, and they have large costs. Reducing this phenomenon through well-governed agrifood systems can truly make a difference. Increasing capacities and opportunities to apply all relevant food safety measures throughout the food chain is a strategic intervention where minimum yet essential prevention avoids the large costs of dealing with the impacts of foodborne diseases.

Circulation of food does not only occur at the national level. Nowadays, food is increasingly commercialized at the international level, and the limited capacities of one country may affect the advanced capacities of another. The example of ASEAN countries collaborating with Japan sets a clear, positive example that it is possible to work together to achieve food safety improvements. Improved and synchronized capacities positively affect food safety governance in the countries and, therefore, food safety and public health.

### 3.2 Trusted food trade finds its basis in safe food

Harmonizing food safety measures with Codex Alimentarius standards ensures a high level of food safety while also minimizing food trade restrictions. Using international Codex standards as the basis for domestic food safety measures avoids the costs that arise when exporters have to comply with various sets of food safety measures for different importing countries. Science and risk-based approaches help ensure that food safety measures effectively address health concerns, and that limited resources available for inspections and controls are used efficiently and effectively (FAO and WHO, 2019).

Hence, Codex Alimentarius standards provide the opportunity for easier and more trusted food trades, and collaboration on the area is critical to ensure that all Codex Alimentarius members have adequate resources and reach the full engagement of suitably knowledgeable and engaged representatives. The case of ASEAN countries is well representative of the fact that, from the starting point of having various levels of capacities, through shared objectives towards a consonant food safety it is possible to increase food trades reliability. Furthermore, the direct collaboration among countries to improve engagement in Codex Alimentarius standards has an obvious influence in food trade partnerships among collaborating countries.





### 3.3 Achieving the maximum impacts

The investments in collaborations to enhance Codex participation of the ASEAN countries led to food safety improvements that are certainly a huge milestone for the region, but they also set a significant reference at the global level. First, the positive effects of food safety interventions on public health limit the number of food safety incidents also at the international level, as foods are circulating around the globe more than ever. Second, international trades are largely facilitated by improved capacities in actively participating to Codex Alimentarius, and easier trades have a direct link on increased revenues.

Lastly, positive collaborations set the reference for other countries to undertake similar paths: the example of ASEAN countries and the government of Japan, for example, demonstrates that it is very feasible to improve in the area of food safety, and that there are existing systems in place that can be used to pursue such kind of collaborations. Different collaborative models can be put into place, and they all have the potential to be used as a model to look for from other countries.

Improving capacities in food safety is possible through collaborations and participation in international bodies: the collaborative efforts undertaken by the ASEAN countries and the government of Japan can be replicated in different context, and FAO will continuously provide its support to countries towards their goal of modernizing their food safety systems to ensure the availability of safe and nutritious food, and this will be pursued with country and region based approaches.





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# Investing in food safety for global benefits

A concrete case in the Association of  
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