

Eighteenth Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry

Manila, 28 August 1996

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The Eighteenth Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) was held in Manila on 26–27 August 1996. The Meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) held in Manila on 22–24 August 1996.
2. The Meeting was attended by H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources of Brunei Darussalam; H.E. Prof. Ibrahim Hassan, Minister of Food Affairs of Indonesia; H.E. Datuk Amar Dr. Sulaiman Haji Daud, Minister of Agriculture of Malaysia; H.E. Siti Zainab binti Abu Bakar, Deputy Minister of Primary Industries of Malaysia; H.E. Salvador H. Escudero III, Secretary of Agriculture of Philippines; H.E. Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for National Development of Singapore; H.E. Suwit Khunkitti, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand; H.E. Dr. Nguyen Quang Ha, Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam; and H.E. Dato' Ajit Singh, Secretary-General of ASEAN; and their respective delegations.
3. The Ministers reiterated their call for focus on new initiatives to achieve global competitiveness in agriculture and forestry while maintaining the sustainability of resources. They reviewed the steps taken to strengthen the competitiveness of ASEAN's agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors and requested the Senior Officials to continuously develop initiatives to meet new challenges, including proposals to strengthen SOM-AMAF and AMAF's working procedures.
4. The Ministers endorsed the cooperation among Member Countries to develop the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors especially in the area of technology services, marketing and the harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary standards. They emphasized the need to take advantage of complementarities among Member Countries through technology development and transfer, market information sharing, and joint promotion of ASEAN products in world markets. They reiterated the pivotal role of the private sector in ASEAN cooperation to achieve global competitiveness.
5. The Ministers noted the concerted efforts and the good progress on the inclusion of unprocessed agricultural products into the CEPT Scheme for AFTA. A total of 1,387 tariff lines have been included in the Inclusion List, while 377 and 287 tariff lines are still in the Temporary Exclusion List and the Sensitive List, respectively. The number of tariff lines in the Inclusion List represents about 68% of the total

tariff lines of the unprocessed agricultural products that are in the CEPT Scheme and these tariff lines or items are already in the 1996 package for tariff reduction.

6. The Ministers noted the rapid progress in the development of harmonized sanitary and phytosanitary measures and standards for agricultural, livestock and fisheries products in the ASEAN region. They called for continued efforts to maintain the present momentum as transparency of sanitary and phytosanitary standards would promote intra-ASEAN trade as well as the marketing of ASEAN's products in the world market. The standards for 10 new animal vaccines and standards for Good Manufacturing Practice for animal vaccines were adopted. Ministers also noted the on-going projects to minimize pesticide use in order to prevent environmental degradation and hazards to human health. They endorsed the setting up of a Pesticide Database Information System which would provide the basis for sound pesticide regulatory policies in ASEAN Member Countries. Ministers also endorsed the establishment of maximum residue levels (MRLs) for vegetables to prevent the contamination of vegetables with harmful chemicals and ensure food safety.

7. The Ministers noted the shortfall in corn and soybean production in view of the greater demand for these commodities by the livestock and aquaculture sectors. They expressed strong support for cooperation among member countries to improve and increase corn and soybean production. They encouraged the private sector to invest in the production of these commodities and noted that some investments have already been made to cultivate corn on a large scale. The possibility of expanding the ASEAN Food Security Scheme to also cover corn and soybean would likewise be explored.

8. The Ministers noted that the Mekong Basin is an important area of focus for ASEAN as it has tremendous development opportunities. The Basin is rich in agriculture and fishery resources and would provide new and exciting challenges in the future.

9. The Ministers directed the Senior Officials of AMAF to meet in October 1996 to prioritize projects in agriculture and natural resources for submission to the relevant Ministerial Meetings before the Informal ASEAN Summit in December 1996 in Jakarta.

10. The Ministers reiterated their desire to pursue a joint approach and collective stand on international trade issues affecting access of ASEAN agricultural, fishery and forestry products to work markets. The Chairman of AMAF would transmit the following four letters to address certain trade restrictive policies of the European Union:

- i. to the President of the European Commission (EC) through the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) on the new EU-GSP for Agricultural Products which puts ASEAN's agricultural and fishery products at a disadvantage;
- ii. to the President of the European Parliament urging the retention of E407a as the number for Processed Eucheuma Seaweed (carageenan) in the list of European food additives;

SOURCE: ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.