

Aligning GAPs in the Philippines and Vietnam

With the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) due to commence on 31 December 2015, ASEAN governments are supporting the implementation of ASEAN Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). ASEAN GAP is an important step along the way to establishing ASEAN as a single market and production base. The ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program is supporting the development of GAP.

Adopted in 2006 as the regional standard for food and agricultural, including the fruit and vegetables sector, ASEAN GAP covers food safety, environmental management, workers' safety and rights, and produce quality. Although voluntary, the Philippines and Vietnam had aligned their national GAPs with ASEAN GAP by 2011 and 2013 respectively understanding its potential benefits.

Officials in both countries note how at the regional level farmers can aim to expand their market share of sales, with GAP certification, in the intra-ASEAN market of 600 million people. Officials also see GAP as an important way to increase extra-ASEAN trade in the global market, with the single standard acting as a quality assurance and simplifying trade negotiations.

At the local level, two issues are prime motivators driving GAP alignment. The first, and perhaps the most important of all, is to increase food safety. In the past the pressure to increase food production to meet demand was sometime done at the expense of producing healthy food. Rather, there was an over reliance on fertilizers and pesticides to help increase output. This resulted in fruits and vegetables with high levels of chemical residue on them. ASEAN GAP ensures the safe use of all chemicals so minimizing any risk to consumers, whilst also protecting farm workers from the dangers of a misuse or the excessive use of chemicals.

Closely linked, in both the Philippines and Vietnam, officials and farmers are now more alert to the problems of environmental degradation as a consequence of bad farming practices.

Benefits of ASEAN GAP

1. Promotes increased intra-ASEAN trade without barriers
2. Eliminates internal trade barriers in a region with 600 million people
3. Sets a single standard for all ASEAN states to abide
4. Responds to consumer demand and promotes consumer awareness about food safety
5. Places food safety as a priority for farmers and all food supply chain stakeholders
6. Reduces health hazards to farm workers and consumers especially from chemical misuse
7. Minimizes microbial food hazards
8. Sets high standards for food traceability
9. Aims to address environmental degradation
10. Supports regional food security
11. Opens up market possibilities for farmers
12. Increases general awareness about the need for food safety

Farmers are especially keen to learn how to farm productively whilst protecting their most valuable asset – the land they want to ensure it is workable and profitable for future generations, along with accompanying healthy bird and insect populations and uncontaminated water supplies.

Good Practices that Promote GAP

1. Government officials trained about GAP and have outreach to farmers
2. National and local government policies and regulations supportive of GAP, especially concerning infrastructure development and the need for certain produce to be GAP certified
3. Certification supported by government funding to mitigate certain farmer costs
4. Public awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits of GAP certified produce
5. Private sector understand, involved and actively supportive of GAP
6. Non-governmental or business organizations can play a role in linking farmers to markets

To support the benefits of ASEAN GAP, certification systems have been established in the Philippines and Vietnam, where government officials work with farmers to increase their awareness about GAP and provide trainings to farmers to help them become GAP compliant.

Challenges for increasing GAP certified production lay ahead, the most difficult to overcome being crop prices which can only support a marginally higher return if any, as well as difficulties in getting produce to the market. However, hopes are high that following GAP standards, even without certification, will continue to increase as in both countries demand for information and training on the subject from farmers is high.

Furthermore, as demand for safe food increases from the market side, practices and techniques for crop production will adapt at the farm level.



This document is the result of a small study conducted by the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme Phase II (AADCP II) between February and March 2015. This document is a summary of a longer document with the same title. Both documents can be downloaded from our website <http://www.aadcp2.org>. For further info on this study, please email contact@aadcp2.org