



Symposium on Energy Saving and Biofuel Utilization  
International Convention Center, Prince of Songkla University  
(Hat Yai, Songkla, Thailand, – September 2010)

Report of the Symposium

1. The Symposium on Energy Saving and Biofuel Utilization was organized by the IMT-GT Secretariat, Prince of Songkla University in Thailand and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) on 1-2 September 2010 in Hat Yai, Thailand. The symposium was attended by around 120 participants from government, research institutes, international organizations, academia and business.
2. The overall objective of this forum was to expose IMT-GT stakeholders on the importance of biodiesel as a clean fuel and looking at the potentials of the IMT-GT subregion in growing palm oil and producing the biofuels.
3. The symposium recognized that ASEAN had been playing a locomotive role to lead the world out of global financial crisis and ASEAN should continue to take the leadership to solve problems and challenges, such as reduction of carbon emissions from fossil fuel energy for the sustainable future economic growth.
4. IMT-GT countries have great potentials of biofuel production due to favorable climate and land availability and wish these potentials could be further developed. Development of Biofuel in the IMT-GT subregion was found having multiple benefits. It can advance economic development while minimizing carbon emissions from growth, improve the living standards of farmers, and increase our regional energy self sufficiency.
5. Besides economic dimension, discussions were also extended to environmental dimension as well. There were also concerns expressed that more balanced consideration of policy makers on social impacts, such as poverty reduction, were necessary in the future

decision-makings. Caution has been raised that we should not replace one dependence, that is dependence on fossil fuels, with another dependence, that is, on biofuels. Importance of energy diversification was thus stressed.

6. The symposium identified various barriers to develop biofuels in the IMT-GT subregion, including, but not limited to, cost, quality control, competition with food production, net carbon emissions in a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and possible negative impact on environment/biodiversity. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) summarized four factors for the success of biofuel utilization: 1) political willingness to alter current development path and promote biofuels, 2) policy to identify institutional options and best practices, access policy in all application fields, 3) sustainable finance, and 4) human resource development (capacity building). IRENA also expressed its potential support to the IMT-GT countries. The symposium voiced that we should not repeat mistakes and development of biofuels should be conducted under the precondition that the environment will not be scarified.
7. Biofuel utilization countries, represented by Japan, showed its strong demand for biofuels and its willingness to tackle global warming and energy security problems with its knowledge, technology and experience. Japan also showed its willingness to cooperate with biofuel producing countries to stabilize the supply of biofuel, as well as its expectations to ERIA's leading role in research activities in this field.
8. Academia agreed that for the establishment of a stable regional biofuel market, common technical standards for biofuel are necessary. They agreed further cooperation is vital to improve the sustainability of biofuels development and biodiesel standards. The symposium shared the consensus that sustainability is a priority in developing biofuels. The symposium identified further research issues such as infrastructure development for

biofuels, trade systems, standards and market protectionism.

9. The symposium noted the ERIA's ongoing research on Comprehensive Asia Development Plan (CADP) with particular focus on the proposed three tier development concepts. It is expected that the development of palm oil in the IMT-GT countries could be a good case study for the Tier 3 strategy. The activities in the field of energy efficiency conducted by a relevant ERIA WG were also welcomed with its leading role towards sustainable development of the region, which also suggested the importance of standards and guidelines for production and trade of biofuel. In this regard, the developments of "Guideline to Assess Sustainability of Biomass Utilisation in East Asia" and "Biodiesel Fuel Trade Handbook" by ERIA WGs were also considered as significant progresses to ensure the healthier and more stable market of biofuel. These activities were thus recommended to be continued and further developed with contributions and cooperation by experts in the region.
  
10. In response to the discussions and suggestions during the symposium, and with recognition of importance of strong and stable markets of biofuel, ERIA offered to undertake a feasibility study about the establishment of Asian biofuel markets. Based on the EAS-ERIA biofuel standards and ERIA guideline on sustainable development of biomass energy, ERIA will be able to provide instruments to contribute to rationalize the decision-making on biofuel development and to enhance its sustainability. The offer was welcomed and well supported by the symposium as a whole.