

Agriculture

Multiple challenges – such as continuously increasing food demand due to steady population growth, worsening climate change, the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and intensifying geopolitical tensions – have impacted global food security issues. The world is increasingly concerned about food security and is focusing on strengthening the resilience and sustainability of agriculture and the food system. Given the importance of the food and agriculture sector, as one of ERIA's research departments, the Agriculture Unit addresses emerging topics in the food and agriculture sector. ERIA's food and agriculture research activities have been conducted on an ad hoc basis since its establishment in 2008. However, since the establishment of the Agriculture Unit in 2016, emerging issues

such as the food value chain, the cold chain, the digitalisation of agriculture, sustainable agriculture, and food security have been continuously addressed through research works as well as capacity building activities such as knowledge-sharing workshops. The main priority of the Agriculture Unit is to contribute to developing policies for the ASEAN food and agriculture sector. Although the contribution of the agricultural sector to overall economic growth is not necessarily large, its importance to the socio-economic situation of each country remains unchanged, especially in the ASEAN region – the food and agriculture sector is a major source of employment and income for a large proportion of the population, and ensuring food security and food safety is of critical importance for all human beings.



In FY2022, the Agriculture Unit concentrated on formulating and starting a research project on 'Building and Enhancing Sustainable Agriculture and Food System in ASEAN Countries'. Through the project, ERIA has supported ASEAN in implementing the 'ASEAN Regional Guidelines for Sustainable Agriculture in ASEAN', endorsed at the 44th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF). This project has three tiers: (i) studies on sustainable agriculture and food systems, including a preliminary scoping study and in-depth country case study; (ii) support to ASEAN in the implementation of the guidelines; and (iii) knowledge-sharing workshops. The Agriculture Unit started the preliminary scoping study, which aims to identify key priority areas to be focused on for building and enhancing a sustainable food system in the context of ASEAN and according to each country's national priorities. This study engaged all 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS). An interview and/or questionnaire survey with ASEAN government officials and stakeholders of the food system (including farmers, cooperatives, processors, distributors, and consumers) about their awareness and perception of sustainable food systems was conducted to identify priority areas and assess the readiness for realising a sustainable food system. In addition, gaps in terms of priority areas in the sustainable food system – amongst AMS as well as between the target area of ASEAN guidelines and reality – were identified through this study. The findings and policy recommendations from this scoping study will be shared with ASEAN governments as well as academics and the private sector, and used for the development of an action plan for the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines for Sustainable Agriculture, as the next tier of this project that will be conducted in FY2023.

During the G20 Indonesia Presidency, the Agriculture Unit actively supported the Agriculture Deputies' Meetings, Agriculture Ministers' Meetings, and several side events related to agriculture issues. In addition, it contributed to a T20 policy brief for Task Force 4 on Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture titled 'Digital Transformation of Agri-Food System: Policy Pathways for Greater Socio-Economic Inclusion, Sustainability, and International Cooperation'. The policy brief was presented at the Digitalization in Agriculture: A G20 Policy Framework for an Equitable and Environmentally Sustainable Transition at The Side Event T20 Indonesia 2022. ERIA President Prof. Nishimura delivered a speech on 'Inclusive Digitalisation of Agriculture' at the G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting on 28 September 2022 in Bali, Indonesia. This speech contributed to the Chair's Summary released by the G20 Indonesia Presidency Agriculture Ministers' Meeting. The Agriculture Unit supported a Joint Webinar organised by the Agriculture Working Group and the Development Working Group on the G20 Agenda by delivering a presentation on 'Enhancing Digital Agriculture and Rural Finance for Food Security'.

The Agriculture Unit also contributed to CADP 3.0 (Chapter 16 on Food and Agriculture), which focused on food security, agricultural digitisation, as well as sustainable food systems. In line with this, the Agriculture Unit delivered a presentation titled 'Transforming Agriculture and Food System to More Sustainable and Resilient with Innovation' at the CADP 3.0 Symposium in Phnom Penh, Cambodia held on 9 November 2022. Moreover, ERIA presented 'Digital Pathways for Improving the Productivity, the Profitability, and Sustainability of Agri-Food Systems' at the



Borneo International Conference on Agrotechnology (BICAT) conference, organised by Universiti Teknologi Brunei and held in Brunei Darussalam on 2 July 2022.

The Agriculture Unit will continue practical research and related activities to support the region's policy development in the food and agriculture sector. In the coming years, the unit will focus on research support and related activities for building and enhancing a sustainable agriculture and food system in the region. In line with this, the Agriculture Unit in cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat is developing an action plan for

the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines for Sustainable Agriculture. This project activity aims to identify practical and manageable action points for achieving the five key principles of the sustainable agriculture guidelines, and to develop a draft action plan for the implementation of the guidelines to be submitted to Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)-AMAF and AMAF for endorsement. Moreover, the Agriculture Unit is committed to supporting the Government of Indonesia in developing the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Strengthening Food Security under Indonesia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2023.

