

# ASEAN Vision 2020: The Implementation of Cooperation on Food Security

*Asih Purwanti*

National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the implementation of the ASEAN Vision 2020 on food security. The ASEAN Vision 2020 stated that ASEAN wishes to strengthen their cooperation to enhance food security and international competitiveness of food, agricultural and forest products, make ASEAN a leading producer of these products, and promote the forestry sector as a model in forest management, conservation, and sustainable development. ASEAN had built a well-established framework of cooperation on food security. The establishment of the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) is praised as an ASEAN achievement in enhancing cooperation in food security. Although, compared to the objectives of regional economic cooperation and military security mechanism, the goal in strengthening the cooperation on food security remains less significant within the ASEAN's discussions. The question is then, by conducting numerous frameworks of collaboration, did ASEAN excel in achieving the objectives in ASEAN Vision 2020 in the sphere of food security? This paper argues that ASEAN has successfully delivered some positive achievements in regional cooperation in food security areas. However, to some extent, some ASEAN state members are still struggling with problems related to food security, particularly regarding food accessibility. The ASEAN growing market brings challenges for food supply and pressure for the Association to ensure environmental sustainability in the region. Regarding its goals of ASEAN Vision 2020, the Association has focused on how to achieve its deeper economic integration. In the area of food security, ASEAN has managed to set up a foundation for further regional cooperation under a framework of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and ASEAN Vision 2040.

Keywords: ASEAN, ASEAN Vision 2020, food security, regional cooperation

## A. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all countries in the world. Every aspect of human life has been impacted. Food has been the most critical aspect of society that has been compromised by the pandemic. The pandemic brought a series of uncertainties that affect many aspects of our daily lives in 2020. It is compelling to analyze what happened with food security in the world during pandemics since most governments implement strict policies for people and goods movement. The year 2020 was also a decisive year for ASEAN due to the commitment of the Association to strive for stronger cooperation through the ASEAN Vision 2020.

In 1997, the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) signed a crucial direction to have deeper integration called the ASEAN Vision 2020. The goals under the '2020 Vision' can be argued as a steppingstone for ASEAN to have deeper cooperation among the members. This study examines the ASEAN Vision 2020, particularly on the partnership on food security among the ASEAN member states. Regarding food

security, the ASEAN Vision 2020 states that "We envision our rich human and natural resources contributing to our development and shared prosperity. Enhance food security and international competitiveness of food, agricultural and forest products, to make ASEAN a leading producer of these products, and promote the forestry sector as a model in forest management, conservation and sustainable development" (ASEAN Secretariat, 1997).

Why food security? The world experienced a food price crisis from 2007 to 2012. Although Asia proved to be successfully managed the food price crisis, until 2019, still more than 820 million people in the world are hungry (FAO, 2019). Recently in Southern Asia region including the Southeast Asia region gained appreciation from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) because this region showed great progress in overcoming hunger during the last five years. However, the prevalence of undernourishment is still high (ADB, 2018). Referring to the 2013 Asian Development Bank report, although the region shows significant economic growth, Asia remains the home of three-fifths of the world's undernourished people, comprising more than 900 million who subsist on less than \$1.25 per day. The region also remains vulnerable to a range of natural disasters and economic crises (ADB, 2013).

Moreover, Southeast Asia is blessed with abundant natural resources, large populations, and a diversity of ethnicities, religions, and languages. One thing that they have something in common related to food is rice. Rice is the main staple food in the region as well as in other parts of Asia. Some states within the region are the largest rice exporters, but other states are still the largest rice importers with large rice consumers. Therefore, food security or rice security is a critical issue and problem to be discussed in the multilateral cooperation (Freedman, 2013). This is the reason why ASEAN has a significant position in the region as a channel to enhance cooperation among the member-states to address food security challenges.

Among ten member states in ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam), only Singapore and Brunei Darussalam can be included as countries with the condition of 'food secure'. The second category is consisting of Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam, in which except for Vietnam, agriculture has contributed a declining share in GDP, employment, and international trade. The situation related to the countries under the second category is interesting because the food habits there have changed dramatically in recent decades. The third category covers Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar whose economies are in transition, therefore, need special attention for their food security situation (Bello, 2005). Regarding the degree of food security, most ASEAN member states are considered moderately secured, but still have ongoing problems in undernourishment, especially among children. The fact that ASEAN member states represent various conditions on their per capita income, reliance on agriculture in the economy, and agricultural performance contributes to the different levels of food security. This situation is the underlying reasoning for deeper cooperation at the regional level (USAID, 2013).

Since its establishment, ASEAN has gained a meaningful status in Southeast Asia for its role in the peaceful environment in the region. In 1997, then member-states of ASEAN agreed to achieve visions called the ASEAN 2020. Related to food security, one provision in the ASEAN Vision 2020 stated that ASEAN will strengthen their cooperation to enhance food

security and international competitiveness of food, agricultural and forest products, to make ASEAN a leading producer of these products, and promote the forestry sector as a model in forest management, conservation and sustainable development. ASEAN already had a well-established framework of cooperation on food security, namely the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) under the supervision of the Senior Officials Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF). The establishment of the Agency was recognized as one of ASEAN's achievements in enhancing cooperation in food security. Although, compared to the objectives of regional economic cooperation and military security mechanism, the objective in strengthening the cooperation on food security remains less significant within the ASEAN's discussions.

In relation to ASEAN Vision 2020 and food security cooperation, does ASEAN achieve the goals of ASEAN2020 in achieving food security? This paper analyses the efforts of ASEAN to achieve the goals of ASEAN2020. ASEAN had achieved some significant achievements in food security cooperation on a regional level. However, some ASEAN state members also continue to have challenges with food safety, primarily in terms of food accessibility. The ASEAN growing market brings about a challenge for food supply and pressure for the association to ensure environmental sustainability in the region.

There have not been many studies or research done on the topic of ASEAN and food security yet. This study seeks to fill that gap and add to the literature on ASEAN and food security. This study firstly put literature review on the previous studies and research on food security and ASEAN, then discusses the conceptualization of food security and regional cooperation as the basis of the analysis, followed by a review on ASEAN's cooperation pathways as a regional organization with its unique characterization along with the set the ASEAN 2020. Under the umbrella of the ASEAN Vision 2020, the discussion will continue to answer this study's question on how ASEAN attempts to achieve the goal of ASEAN Vision 2020 in the cooperation of food security.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study on food security can be traced back in 1798 when Thomas Malthus in his philosophical perspective foreseen the relations between demographic growth and the peril of hunger (Malthus, 1798). Amartya Sen in his book *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1981) raised a question on the importance of food supply that determine the relations between the ownership of food. To him, starvation or hunger shows that some people is not having the ownership of food while other do not have to go hungry because they have the ownership for the food and therefore starvation is close related to poverty (Sen, 1981). There was then a growing scholarly conversation on food security, but it still did not become a mainstream issue in international politics.

Peter C. Timmer and David Dawe did a valuable studies and research on food security particularly the effect of rice price in the region of Asia (Dawe, 2010; Dawe & Peter Timmer, 2012; Timmer, 1989, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2010; Timmer & Dawe, 2007). Timmer and Dawe discuss the significance of food security in Asia due to a large growth in the consumption of food in the region. According to their analysis, the governments in the region have been making impressive efforts to deal with food security, however, a regional approach is crucial to achieve food security.

The number of publications relating to ASEAN and food security is still very limited. A relatively small number of scholars with expertise in ASEAN address food security issues. The following are some publications on ASEAN and food security. Barry Desker, Mely Caballero Anthony and Paul Teng wrote a policy brief about some issues related to ASEAN Food Security. Desker et.al. suggest that food security is one priority in the agenda of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Desker et.al provide a thorough background on ASEAN's set-up to achieve the goals of AEC and present normative recommendations on the ASEAN strategies related to food security (Desker, Caballero-Anthony, & Teng, 2014). R. Briones points out the importance of one of ASEAN efforts to face any risks of food price crisis particularly in rice price by establishing the ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3) Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR). Although, Briones sees this strategy is a positive move from ASEAN, however he argues that this strategy still is not showing a real result (Briones, 2011). Chandra and Lontoh highlight that ASEAN remains face some challenges in securing food security and opening trade among the states members (Chandra & Lontoh, 2010).

Amelia L. Bello suggests that regional integration and cooperation in ASEAN can promote the intra-ASEAN trade in agriculture only if the member states can agree on specific food commodities. Because this can overcome the issues of comparative economic advantage among them (Bello, 2005). Marzedda-Mlynarska offers the analysis on the changing paradigm of governance on food security in ASEAN. She argues that ASEAN deal with the intertwine between the role of the national governments of the member states and the regional cooperation under ASEAN in ensuring the food security in the region (Marzedda-Mlynarska, 2017). Lin & Masahiro review on literature on how ASEAN as regional corporation works to face some challenges related food security among the member states (Lin & Masahiro, 2012). Kuntjoro and Jamil suggest that food security in ASEAN as one case of human security. They emphasis the impacts of food insecurity may lead to political and economic instability in Southeast Asia region that need ASEAN should pay attention to the challenges (Kuntjoro & Jamil, 2008). In those references, information is provided on food security in ASEAN, but more research needs to be done in order to better understand food security within ASEAN.

### **Food Security: Conceptualization**

Food security is the basic priority for every government in the world to avoid hunger among its populations. All nation-states do not matter they are developed or developing countries with the authoritarian or democratic political system under peace situations or ongoing conflicts, they will have to deal with the concern of how to secure food for their people. However, the developing countries particularly those who are having ongoing conflicts have more problems in their efforts to achieve ideal food security. This situation creates a gap between developed countries with developing countries. Even though we rarely saw a chronic hunger in the world today, millions of people still go hungry or malnourished. Food security is still a challenge for all societies in the world.

The definition introduced in the 1974 FAO World Food Conference in Rome, Italy. At that time food security was termed as the "availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices". From this term it can be seen to have emphasize on the availability of food supply. Challenges include transitory food insecurity (cyclical/

seasonal such as rice gaps during "lean season") and temporary food insecurity (unpredictable shocks, natural or man-made disasters) (Kuntjoro & Jamil, 2008).

The definition of 'food security' was solidified from the World Food Summit in 1996. WHO in 1996 World Summit defined three aspects or pillars of food security; food availability, access to food and food utilization. The availability of food defines is related to the availability of sufficient quantities of food consistently. Access to food is related to sufficient economic and physical resources, to achieve adequate food intake. Food utilization is based on knowledge of the adequacy of nutrition, clean water, and sanitation. Whereas FAO added a fourth aspect, which is the stability of the above three dimensions. Food security is about the existence of food security, accessibility to food, food utilization and the sustainability of food availability. Where it is a definition of food that has been mentioned according to WHO and FAO in 1996. If these four things or factors cannot be fulfilled, there will be food insecurity that occurs in the community. Where people will experience food shortages and will have an impact on the level of community welfare, which is closely related to individual security for food availability to survive (FAO, 2006). Then the widely the accepted definition of food security is:

*'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The four pillars of food security are availability, stability of supply, access and utilization' (FAO, 2006).*

As a concept, food security has been evolving (Kuntjoro & Jamil, 2008). Gill et al. also argued that the problem of food security should be approached by looking at the problem of food availability, food access and food utilization. Food availability implies to supply of food coming from domestic production, import and food aid. Food access denotes to adequate resources of people to obtain food, the affordability of seasonal food supply and natural disaster to food security, and the issue of gender discrimination. Food utilization tells to a wider aspect of health conditions of the people and the culture and livelihood of societies (Gill et al., 2003). Gross et al. propose for more comprehensive approach in conceptualizing food security with adding the nutritional security. For Gross et.al. therefore it is essential to covers food security as Food (Gross, Schoeneberger, Pfeifer, & Preuss, 2008).

The concept of food security is closely related with development concept. As Amartya Sen notes, the starvation, hunger and famine are a result of the lack economic capabilities in the individual and society level (Sen, 1981). Therefore, one way to talk about the problem on food security needs to be included into the development agenda. The United Nations when decided to set the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000, vocalized eight goals of development to be achieved in the year of 2015. MDGs put the goal for eradicate of poverty and hunger in the first and the most important goals. Realizing that even though the world experiencing an economic growth but millions of people in the world are in even cannot have a decent three meals a day. From the moment of MDGs were into effect, most nation-states particularly in the developing world were taking part in discourses of development that decorated with any efforts to fulfil the goals.

Despite all the pro-contra with the ambitious projects (Fehling, Nelson, & Venkatapuram, 2013), the year of 2015 had passed and the UN Secretariat released a report mentioned 'unprecedented efforts have resulted in profound achievements'. Regarding the achievement for the first goal, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, the Report claimed

that (1) extreme poverty has declined significantly over the last two decades. In 1990, nearly half of the population in the developing world lived on less than \$1.25 a day; that proportion dropped to 14 per cent in 2015, (2) globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015, (3) the number of people in the working middle class—living on more than \$4 a day—has almost tripled between 1991 and 2015. This group now makes up half the workforce in the developing regions, up from just 18 per cent in 1991, (4) the proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions has fallen by almost half since 1990, from 23.3 per cent in 1990–1992 to 12.9 per cent in 2014–2016 (UN Secretariat, 2015).

The MDGs report seemed impressive but the UN admitted that the works for eradicating hunger and poverty has not finished yet. The UN called for its members to set for another development agenda. In 2015, the UN General Assembly agreed to form the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which consists of seventeen objectives to be realized in 2030. SDGs was initiated in the Rio+20 Summit in 2012 as a parallel concept to the MDGs. The proponents for SDGs mainly agree that SDGs is more comprehensive than MDGs and SDGs also concern on the sustainable development (Loewe, 2012; Spangenberg, 2017). Under the SDGs, poverty and food security are now in a separate position of goals. Eradicate poverty and food security have place as the first goal and the second goal, respectively. For its second goal, SDGs set the objective to end hunger, achieved food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

Food security remains as critical issue in the world and this issue need to be addressed as the agenda of cooperation among nation-states in the world. Food security is a public good that need to be handled under degree of a global governance (Page, 2013), food security in some countries like Somalia is part of the country's domestic conflict (Simmons, 2013). The goal on how to end hunger existed in both UN's MDGs and SDGs. This UN Resolution shows how the matters of food security is a global responsibility and need a cooperation to tackle it. The level of cooperation on global issue like food security can be explored at global, regional, or bilateral level. The MDGs and SDGs are examples on how global cooperation has been established to overcome the issue. Regional cooperation organization like ASEAN has a significant role in delivering efforts to maintain food security in their region.

In ASEAN, most of its member-states' policymakers focus on to achieve self-sufficiency policy on rice. In 1979 the ASEAN member states signed the Agreement on ASEAN Food Security Reserve. This agreement has been the initial strategy from ASEAN to address issues related to food security. ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) have committed to a food security framework that supports a multidisciplinary approach to production, agriculture-industry, markets and trade, information systems, emergency relief, and emerging issues such as biofuels and climate change. However, some member states still continue food security policies more in line with a goal of self-sufficiency (USAID, 2013). This situation is not new in ASEAN organizational structure. Like most of critics on ASEAN for only served as a forum than a function as regional cooperation organizations, as Acharya notes, "ASEAN remains and shall remain an essentially contested institution" (Acharya, 2009; Acharya & Johnston, 2007).



## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **ASEAN as a Regional Cooperation**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 and since then this regional cooperation keep making strategies and plans to build a stronger cooperation among its members. ASEAN is now consisting of ten member-states: namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam in the Southeast Asia Region. One interesting aspect of ASEAN is its development of regional cooperation. As the then success story of regionalism development of the European Union (EU) was in the 1990s, regional institutions such as ASEAN are now regarded as significant actors in international politics. One aspect of regionalism is the shape of cooperation among the members. In the study of international relations, the emergence of regional cooperation has been considered as giving birth to a new breed of actors that influence the dynamic of world politics.

Despite some criticism on its characteristic of cooperation (Acharya, 2009; L. Jones, 2010; Kraft, 2000; Ramcharan, 2000; Stubbs, 2019), ASEAN shows a positive record in consolidating its commitment to move for deeper integration. ASEAN is well known as a 'forum' of cooperation than an institutionalized cooperation and integration (David Martin Jones & Smith, 2007), however with a steady ASEAN is in a right track in keeping their commitments. In 1997, the ASEAN Leaders, on the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN in Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 1997, they committed to set a goal under a slogan of the "ASEAN Vision 2020".

Under the ASEAN Vision 2020, the association's member states agreed on a shared vision of ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward-looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and a community of caring societies. The creation of ASEAN Vision 2020 is partly because of the development of the European Union (EU) decision to move into deeper integration into a community. The EU in 1992 agreed to create the European Community. Although the idea of having deeper cooperation was not new among the ASEAN member states, the establishment of the European Community seems too good to be ignored (Jetschke & Murray, 2012; Plummer, 2006; Poli, 2014). During its 9th Summit in Bali, Indonesia, 7 October 2003, the ASEAN members states' leaders agreed that an ASEAN Community shall be established. This agreement was called as Declaration of ASEAN Concord II.

The next development to go a more solid cooperation was occurred during the 12th ASEAN Summit on 11 January 2007 in Cebu, Philippines, the ASEAN member states' leaders showed their strong will to speed up the establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015. Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015. The commitment was termed as the Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community. Following those commitments, the ASEAN Community began to be established. Under the above Declarations, ASEAN Community will be formed with three pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 was agreed along with Blueprint for each pillar together with the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework and IAI Work Plan Phase II (2009-2015). A significant development in ASEAN was coined when the association agreed to set up the so-called the "ASEAN Charter". The Charter was signed in Singapore, November



2007 and the came into effect on 15 December 2008. The association claims that the ASEAN Charter “serves as a firm foundation in achieving the ASEAN Community by providing legal status and institutional framework for ASEAN. It also codifies ASEAN norms, rules and values; sets clear targets for ASEAN; and presents accountability and compliance” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2007).

Mely Caballero-Anthony breaks the Charter into of three important provisions: (1) Legal Personality of ASEAN, (2) Establish Greater Institutional Accountability and Compliance Systems, and (3) ASEAN as a Serious Regional Player in the Future of the Asia-Pacific Region. The most important article, according to Caballero-Anthony is the first one, the legal personality of ASEAN. This is because under this charter “would establish the association as a “juridical personality and a legal entity’ (Caballero-Anthony, 2008). For some people see the Charter as a positive move of the association (Caballero-Anthony, 2008; Koh, Manalo, & Woon, 2009; Too, 2008), while other feel sceptic that the Charter will face many obstacles in its establishment (Acharya, 2008; Arendshorst, 2009; Freistein, 2013; David M. Jones, 2008; Leviter, 2010).

### **ASEAN Vision 2020 and the Cooperation Framework on Food security**

Timmer argues that the problem with food security has been an old same story. For the case of ASEAN, he mentions that an expanded ASEAN rice buffer stock has been under “active” consideration for years, with little discernible progress (Timmer, 2010). However, ASEAN keeps some efforts to manage the challenges regarding food security in the area. Like what they did in their commitment under ASEAN Vision 2020. The creation of ASEAN Vision 2020 mainly remain focus on economic and social growth. This is in accordance with previous commitments from the Association (Guerrero, 2012).

What is the ASEAN Vision 2020? The ASEAN Vision 2020 was divided into four parts (ASEAN Secretariat, 1997): 1) A Concert of Southeast Asian Nations: “We envision the ASEAN region to be, in 2020, in full reality, a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, as envisaged in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 1971. ASEAN shall have, by the year 2020, established a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia where each nation is at peace with itself and where the causes for conflict have been eliminated, through abiding respect for justice”. 2) A Partnership in Dynamic Development: “We resolve to chart a new direction towards the year 2020 called, ASEAN 2020: Partnership in Dynamic Development which will forge closer economic integration within ASEAN.” 3) A Community of Caring Societies: “We envision the entire Southeast Asia to be, by 2020, an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity.” 4) An Outward-Looking ASEAN: “We see an outward-looking ASEAN playing a pivotal role in the international fora, and advancing ASEAN's common interests. We envision ASEAN having an intensified relationship with its Dialogue Partners and other regional organizations based on equal partnership and mutual respect.”

The point for food security in the ASEAN Vision was under the Partnership in Dynamic Development, that mentions: “we resolve to ... enhance food security and international competitiveness of food, agricultural and forest products, to make ASEAN a leading producer of these products, and promote the forestry sector as a model in forest management, conservation and sustainable development” (ASEAN Secretariat, 1997). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations lists the ASEAN as one of 21 Regional Economic Organizations (REO). These REOs aim to promote economic integration

as well as enhance food security, and agricultural and socioeconomic development. Twelve of these REOs, in collaboration with FAO, have prepared Regional Programs for Food Security (RPFS). The RPFS has three major components: trade facilitation, harmonization of national agricultural policies, and support to national Special Programs for Food Security (SPFS) (Bello, 2005).

At the 21st ASEAN Summit held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 2012, ASEAN leaders declared that “food security remains a major challenge for ASEAN and the world as a whole, at a time of high commodity prices and economic uncertainty” (Desker, Caballero Anthony, & Teng, 2013). Food Security is also an important issue related to the cooperation agenda among ASEAN member countries, especially under the framework of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. Under this framework, it can be seen that there are three important aspects which states whose its food security is a priority agenda in AEC (Desker et al., 2014).

Some issues need to be considered under the cooperation among the ASEAN member countries are; (1) the obstacles in the agricultural and food production trade, (2) the need for regulatory frameworks and standardization mechanisms, (3) the lack of harmonization of cooperation frameworks at member countries with regional cooperation, and (4) a public-private partnerships and key indicators to measure food security (Desker et al., 2014).

During the 1980s-1990s, ASEAN establish five economic committees working on specific issues were as follows: (i) Committee on Trade and Tourism; (ii) Committee on Industry, Minerals and Energy; (iii) Committee on Food, Agriculture and Forestry; (iv) Committee of Finance and Banking; and (v) Committee on Transportation and Communication. These committees became the responsibility of the Senior Economic Officials’ Meeting, which was the technical working group of the ASEAN Economic Ministers’ Meeting (Menon & Lee, 2019). Food and agricultural cooperation activities at the regional level are overseen by the Senior Officials Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry.

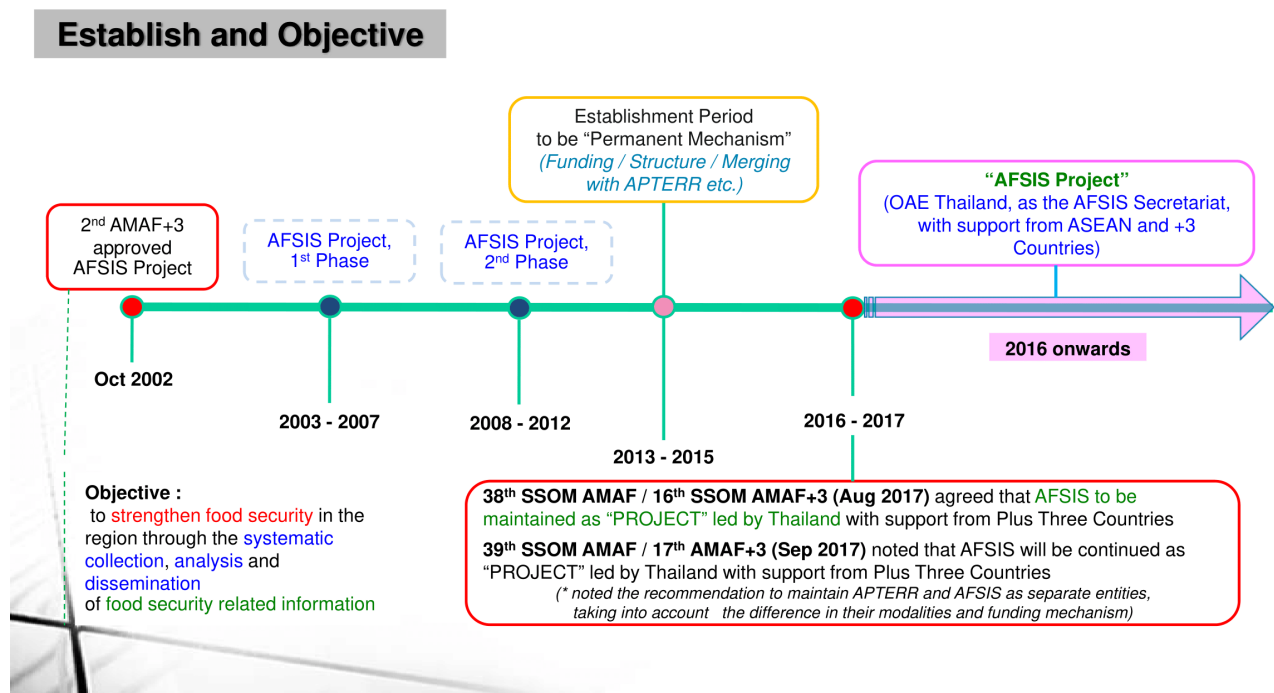
About the regional policies, the ASEAN has established several strategic plans to overcome the problems related to food security issues in the Southeast Asia region. ASEAN as a regional organization has established an agency that specifically addresses and also oversees the conditions of food security in the Southeast Asia region called the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS). Food security assessments in ASEAN is monitored under the Asean Food Security Information System (AFSIS) (AFSIS, 2015b). AFSIS was established in January 2003 and as a result of coordination between ASEAN and major countries in East Asia; China, South Korea and Japan. AFSIS was initiated to sustain a long-term food security in the ASEAN region through strengthening food security-related policies, information plays a vital role in term of supporting the food security policies particularly the agricultural statistics (AFSIS, 2015a). AFSIS defines food security as: “a condition in which “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (AFSIS, 2015b).

For ASEAN, the dimensions of food security are availability, accessibility, utilization (i.e., converting access to food into nutritional well-being), and stability (Briones, 2011). From its establishment, AFSIS was expected to bring outcomes as follows (AFSIS Secretariat): (1)

Member States will be capable of providing accurate, reliable and timely information required for the construction of regional food security information at the same standard. (2) AFSIS will be able to provide complete information needed for planning and implementation of food security policy in the region. (3) The development of early warning information and commodity outlook will facilitate the management of food security policies and programs. These activities will help to assess food security situations in the region and identify the areas where food insecurity is likely to occur as well as the degree of seriousness. (4) The responsible agencies to be better aware of the problem in food security, so that affected people will receive better responses and support to release their difficulties.

AFSIS provides a annual report covering the evaluation of the general conditions of food security in the Southeast Asia region and also provides recommendations for any food problems that may occur. The report is referred as AFSIS Early Warning Information Report (AFSIS EWI Report). AFSIS also works on strategic plans to overcome the problem of food security in the ASEAN region every five years. The strategic plan is called the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region or AIFS and SPA-FS. There are four major components under AIFS Framework: 1) Food security arrangements and emergency short-term relief, 2) sustainable food trade development, 3) integrated food security system, and 4) agricultural innovation.

AIFS Framework and the SPA-FS then ASEAN initiated the establishment of ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3) Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) (Picture 1). First strategic plan was conducted in the period 2009 to 2013 and 2014 was the evaluation period. The next strategic plan has been started from 2015 to 2020, see picture 1 (AFSIS, 2015b; Briones, 2011).

**Figure 1.** Establishment of ASEAN Plus Three Food Security Information System

Source: <http://www.aptsfis.org/aboutUs>

The strategic plan of AIFS and SPA-FS was made to support the establishment of ASEAN regional policies of food security. The plan mainly consisted of having coordination on food security cooperation among ASEAN member states and strengthening initiatives and cooperative efforts to manage problems related to food security in ASEAN. The AIFS and SPA-FS strategic plans for the period 2009 to 2013, focused on the impact the global food crisis that occurred in 2007 to 2008 (AFSIS, 2009).

The food prices crisis in 2007 to 2008 had also affected the domestic social and economic situation among ASEAN member countries. The increase in global food prices was caused by several factors related to the food of supply or production. One factor was a sharp increase in production costs caused by rising prices of oil and fertilizer. Another factor was also the decline in agricultural production caused by climate change and irregular weather, and the high costs of food production also contribute for the rising global food prices at that time (AFSIS, 2009).

AFSIS had a mandate to oversee the conditions of food security existed in the ASEAN member states and making annual reports related to the food security condition. AFSIS acts as an agency who has a special task to facilitate the making of strategic planning on food security in ASEAN. AFSIS will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ASEAN food security strategies. AFSIS will collect data and information on the conditions of food security from all ASEAN member states. Therefore AFSIS reports on the conditions of food security in ASEAN have been an important references for anyone who want to look at the existing conditions of food security in ASEAN both in the countries and regional level. Based on the AFSIS' reports it can be drawn one important issue related the food security in ASEAN that is

there is still problems in terms of the distribution and supply of staple foods, i.e., rice, wheat, soybeans and others (FAO, 2006).

In 2013, AFSIS began discussions to establish a transformation from a 'Project' to become a 'Permanent Mechanism'. If AFSIS become a permanent mechanism, AFSIS will have self-sustained mechanism consisting of the Structure, Products and Services, Financial Modality and Regulations and Procedures. the 15th AMAF Plus Three Meeting, Makati City, Philippines on 11 September 2015 agreed on a commencement of the AFSIS as the permanent mechanism from 2016 onwards (AFSIS, 2015a). AFSIS Secretariat updated the development of the initiative, that after the assessment of establishing AFSIS as a permanent mechanism, some related issues could not be finalized. Therefore, at the 38th SSOM AMAF Meeting and the 16th SSOM AMAF+3 Meeting, held on 14-16 August 2017 in Singapore, finally agreed that AFSIS to be maintained as "Project led by Thailand with support from Plus Three Countries". The 17th AMAF+3 Meeting, held on 25-29 September 2017 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, noted that AFSIS will be continued as "Project led by Thailand with support from Plus Three Countries" since then (AFSIS Secretariat). One critic for the establishment of AFSIS and APTERR is highlighting the practice.

In 2014, following the 22nd ASEAN Summit when ASEAN had its ASEAN Community Councils to enhance the post-2015 vision. The works were including to evaluate what ASEAN next step to achieve the regional cooperation. Therefore, the Special Senior Official Meeting of the Thirty-Fourth ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (Special SOM-34th AMAF) was held in Pakse, Lao PDR. In meeting, they agreed on the need to develop a vision, objectives and goals of the ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry sectors towards 2020, based on the review of the current framework and Strategic Plan of Action (SPA). Prior the Meeting, ASEAN Secretariat held the 1st Meeting of ASEAN Ad Hoc Task Force on Developing New Vision on Food, Agriculture and Forestry towards 2020 to kick start the review study. The Meeting finalized the time frame for developing the New Vision and outline of the review report. The review study is expected to be completed in mid-2015 and reported to the 37th Meeting of AMAF in 2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014).

At the 2003 ASEAN Summit in Bali, ASEAN leaders have agreed to establish an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2020. In 2007, the ASEAN Charter was signed in which the member states of ASEAN agreed to create one community with three pillars: economic community, political and security community, and social political community. The sphere of food security cooperation was under the blueprint of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). In the article for Food, Agriculture and Forestry, the 2025 AEC Blueprint mentions (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015a) : 1) ASEAN cooperation on food, agriculture, and forestry (FAF) plays a crucial role in the context of rising population, strong income growth and an expanding middle class, 2) Going beyond 2015, the vision for the FAF sector will be "Competitive, inclusive, resilient and sustainable FAF sector integrated with the global economy, based on a single market and production base, contributing to food and nutrition security, and prosperity in the ASEAN Community," with the goals of ensuring food security, food safety and better nutrition, gaining from access to global market as well as increasing resilience to climate change, 3) The following interventions will be considered to promote deeper integration of the FAF sector in the region and the world through, among others: (i) enhancing trade facilitation and economic integration; (ii) strengthening cooperation and capacity for sustainable production; (iii) enhancing agricultural productivity;

(iv) increasing investment in agricultural science and technology; and (v) ensuring the involvement of agricultural producers in globalization process.

From the above goals, some strategic measures were set up include the following: (i) increase crop, livestock, and fishery/aquaculture production, (ii) enhance trade facilitation, and remove barriers to trade to foster competitiveness and economic integration; (iii) enable sustainable production and equitable distribution; (iv) increase resilience to climate change, natural disasters and other shocks; (v) improve productivity, technology and product quality to ensure product safety, quality and compliance with global market standards; (vi) promote sustainable forest management; (vii) further enhance cooperation in production and promotion of halal food and products; and (viii) develop and promote ASEAN as an organic food production base, including striving to achieve international standards.

The 2020 AEC and the 2025 AEC Blueprint are the continuity of ASEAN 2020. Most of the provisions shows similar objectives. On the framework of food security cooperation, ASEAN is still representing its role as a forum for the member to enhance more integration on food security. The Senior Officials Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry and AFSIS continue the tasks following the provisions of the ASEAN Vision 2020, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and ASEAN Vision 2040. This timeline of the integration pathways of ASEAN showed that ASEAN committed to have a framework of cooperation in food security. However, in practice there are some challenges related to the organizational structure and the gap between the regional level policy and the national policies of the member states.

The establishment of AFSIS and APTERR is one evidence that ASEAN economic integration is an open regionalism, because both initiatives came after discussion with other actors in the region, namely Japan, South Korea and China. The eagerness of ASEAN policymakers to have more cooperation under the ASEAN+3 also showed the unique characteristic of ASEAN regional cooperation compared to the process of the European Union integration (Guerrero, 2012) The original initiative of establishment of AFSIS as a channel for emergency on food security gave this agency a weak foundation to act more into the member states national policy on food security. The underlying challenges for the regional level cooperation on food security is on the difference paradigm between the agency and the member states. The 2013, USAID Report mention the challenge that "ASEAN's greatest food security challenges are in access, distribution, and affordability, rather than availability. But protectionist self-sufficiency policies in many member states promote domestic food production, even if costly and inefficient and erect barriers to food imports. In some states such policies raise food prices for consumers and leave importing and storage management decisions to public agencies. In addition, food security policy planning is not as integrated or comprehensive in all member states as the AIFS/SPA-FS would suggest, thus jeopardizing achievement of true food security" (USAID, 2013).

To face the challenges, APTERR could have several policy instruments to manage food security risks within the context of effective regional cooperation. APTERR needs to address some issues such as, (1) technical issues regarding the volumes and timing of storage and release of emergency stocks; (2) financial sustainability; and (3) institutional issues, such as appropriate organization structure and linkages with other agencies and organizations, whether public or private, and at the national and international levels (Briones, 2011). In

addition, according to Briones, APTERR is “strong on the principles of cooperation, but short on specifics”. Trethewie suggests that the experience of the Association regarding the emergency rice reserves have had limited success due to several key constraints, in particular, difficulties in coordinating between member states’ own self sufficiency programs and the division of costs between member states whose in different levels of economic development (Trethewie, 2013a, 2013b). The implementation of the ‘non-interference’ is still strongly applied in all sectors of cooperation in ASEAN.

The pending establishment of AFSIS become a permanent mechanism in 2016 also shows how the association is still putting the agenda on food security less crucial than other issues such as economic and security integration. The several “Visions” of ASEAN sometime be seen in a sceptic manner as ASEAN will always come back to its original commitment, as a regional forum of discussion to uphold peace in the Southeast region. The ASEAN Secretariat also admitted that more efforts need to be delivered to achieve the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to build a single market and production base in food, agriculture and forestry. Moreover, to transform food, agriculture, and forestry productions into modern, competitive and sustainable industries. Another effort that needs to be done by ASEAN to go to a deeper integration is to eliminate non-tariff measures (NTMs) that impede intra-ASEAN trade and undermine international competitiveness (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015c).

To answer the question of whether ASEAN had achieved the goals of the ASEAN Vision 2020 on food security? One achievement is the ongoing work of AFSIS and APTERR that is relevant to the goals of ASEAN Vision 2020. AFSIS and APTERR serve as a spot for ASEAN member states to collaborate to manage food security in the region. Another evidence can be seen in the Report of the ASEAN Regional Assessment of MDG Achievement and Post-2015 Development Priorities provides some evidence of the ASEAN had achieved parts of the objectives of the ASEAN 2020. This report was jointly made by the UNDP and ASEAN. It was initiated by the Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE) in its Framework Action Plan (FAP) 2011-2015 and completed under the SOMRDPE Chairmanship of the Philippines (2014-2015). According to this Report, ASEAN showed a good effort in the poverty reduction. Poverty is argued caused by hunger: lack of food, or lack of the right food, is stunting physical and mental development in children, lowering the earning capacity of adults, and exposing pregnant women, infants and children in particular to serious health risks. Even though ASEAN showed progress that hunger was less than twenty-five years ago, the incidence of malnutrition is still an ongoing issue. Only Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand have managed to halve, or more, the proportion of underweight children as set out by MDG 1. As late as 2006, three in ten Cambodian children under five remained malnourished (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015b).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) assists ASEAN to finalize a draft Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 2016 - 2025. Eradicating hunger through food security is one of the priorities of the vision. The Strategic Plan laid a vision for ASEAN to have: a competitive, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Food, Agriculture, and Forestry (FAF) sector integrated with the global economy, based on a single market and production base contributing to food and nutrition security and prosperity in the ASEAN Community. Ang then the goals set up are derived from the vision: 1) Ensuring equitable, sustainable and inclusive growth, 2) Alleviating poverty and eradicating hunger, 3) Ensuring food security, food safety and better nutrition, 4)

Deepening regional integration, 5) Enhancing access to global markets, 6) Increasing resilience to, and contributing to mitigation and adaptation of climate change, natural disasters and other shocks, 7) Achieving Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015c; FAO, 2015).

In 2021 the ASEAN Secretariat issued the ASEAN Framework: Support Food, Agriculture and Forestry Small Producers, Cooperatives and Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to Improve Product Quality to Meet Regional/International Standards and Ensure Competitiveness. This framework arranges more specific goals for food, agriculture, and forestry to strengthen those sectors in ASEAN Economic Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021).

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Especially for the establishment of ASEAN free trade in 2015 and the ASEAN Economic Community in 2020, ASEAN Vision 2020 served as a platform for deeper integration of cooperation within the association. In the sphere of food security, ASEAN with its AFSIS is an influential component. In the shadow of the ambitious ASEAN Community, AFSIS strives to secure food at the regional level. The ASEAN Vision 2020 arguably is the most meaningful of the association milestones for deeper integration. It was followed by other visions that represent a political commitment and political will from member states' policymakers.

Food security remains a low priority agenda item for ASEAN member states' leaders. The most relevant issue is rice prices, which are discussed in the coordination forums for any food emergency. However, the work of AFSIS, APTERR and AMAF cannot be ignored. Efforts have been made in accordance with the ASEAN Vision 2020 by the AMF and its agencies. As ASEAN is now preparing for ASEAN Community 2025 and ASEAN Vision 2040, the cooperation framework on food security is also set up to achieve the objectives.

As this study limits the discussion on the ASEAN Vision 2020 for food security, therefore it may not present more comprehensive problems and challenges related to food security in ASEAN. The issue of food security and ASEAN provide many aspects and angles to be examined for future studies.

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