

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON ENHANCING EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF ASIAN FRUITS

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Executive Summary

Promoting international trade and investment provides both opportunities and challenges for agricultural development. Asian tropical fruits have high commercial potential to export to EU, Japan, and developed countries. The export of fruits is one of the viable alternatives for creating employments, generating income of farmers, and driving economic growth in the rural areas of the Asian and Pacific countries. Asian Governments consider that the export is crucial for their development. However, inferior or inadequate post-harvest technology and management system is constraints to the expansion of trade. Those due to low investment, poor strategy and programme, lack of technology dissemination and adoption system, and poor infrastructures such as small-scale farm, unpaved road, agro-facility, transportation, and marketing facility.

This Seminar invites government officials, agro-entrepreneurs, marketers, and growers to participate in discussion of post-harvest technology and management, which will include current status, problems, and solutions on enhancing export competitiveness of tropical fruits. The Seminar will formulate an outline for a follow up programme for increasing investment and assistance from national, bilateral and multilateral development agencies so as to contribute to rural poverty reduction and rural development by way of application of post-harvest technology and management and providing employment opportunities with agro-enterprises in rural areas. The Seminar will also exchange information and lay the groundwork for networking at national, regional and international level.

1. Situation Analysis

The market demand for fresh horticulture produce has been growing steadily since 1990s. However, only about 15% of this trade involves developing countries. On the other hand, Asia alone occupies around 44% of the world's acreage under fruit. Nevertheless, exports of fruit from Asia lag behind those from other major fruit-producing regions such as Central America, which has 33% of global exports, and South America with 37%, for several reasons related to domestic conditions as well as impediments to trade development and requirement with importing regions of the world.

International trade and investment liberalization, globalization and localization, and accelerated urbanization provide opportunities and challenges for agricultural development. Asian fruits have a high potential to access the global consumer markets. The export of horticulture produce will increase farm income, and create employment opportunities among youth and women group, as well as stimulate economic growth of the Asian and Pacific countries.

During harvest, handling, storage, distribution and marketing of perishable fruits, substantial losses are incurred which range from a slight loss of quality to total spoilage. Post-harvest loss of fresh produce is estimated 20-40% in Asian developing countries. This is caused by many deficiencies such as the absence of policy and institutional support in the food chain and may be addressed by investment in better post-harvest technology and improved food chain management. In addition, many importing high-income countries such as EU and some advanced Asian countries request high quality/safety standards while consumers are becoming increasingly demanding high quality and healthy food. In order to strengthen the export competitiveness, effective government policies, adoption of advanced post-harvest technology, well-organized postharvest chains and marketing strategies are required.

2. Strategy

The Asian and Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM) propose to organize an international Seminar on Enhancing Competitiveness of Asian Fruits during 18-19 May, coinciding with ThaiFex 2006 Exhibition. Case studies and papers will be presented on quality assurance and private sector's role as well as other aspects of the food chain for fresh fruits. The Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand has agreed to co-host the Seminar.

Improved postharvest technology and food chain management needs the concerted efforts of all participants such as growers, agro-enterprises involved in marketing and distribution, R&D institutions, and government entities along the food chain. This seminar invites policy makers, researchers, private sectors, especially the agro-entrepreneurs and marketers to participate in discussion of post-harvest technology which will include current issues, measures, and technology for enhancing export competitiveness of Asian fruits. The seminar will address the issues involved in fresh fruit exports, and will also formulate an effective policy framework, strategy and programme for member countries to promote export competitiveness of Asian fruits.

A tentative programme of the proposed Seminar is as follows:

1. Keynote address: Globalization of the agricultural produce markets: Opportunities and challenges;
2. Analysis of status and issues in post-harvest technology/food chain management for fruits in APCAEM Member countries;
3. Opportunities/constraints and strategies for Asian fruits in accessing EU and Asian markets;
4. Strengthening role of the private sector in post-harvest handling and distribution

3. Results Framework

Project Goal

Export competitiveness of fruits in the Asian and Pacific region is promoted and enhanced.

Outcome

Participants take steps towards formulation of policies and programmes in promoting and enhancing export competitiveness of Asian fruits

Outputs and Main Activities

Output A

Participants have better understanding of the issues, measures, and relevant policies on enhancing export competitiveness of Asian fruits.

Activities A

1. Analyze current status and problems of post-harvest technology and food chain management for Asian fruits in APCAEM member countries;
2. Discuss best practices for fruit quality and food safety assurance implementation.
3. Organization of a seminar on Enhancing Export Competitiveness of Asian Fruits.

Output B

Policy options and good practices for promoting export competitiveness of Asian fruits are available for dissemination.

Activities B

1. Recommend policies, institutional issues, options and other mechanism for improving post-harvest technology and food chain management;
2. Formulate strategy for strengthening the private sector's role in fresh fruit export;
3. Disseminate project findings and recommendations through proceedings, APCAEM web-site, and publication, which is reviewed by a technical editor

4. Management Arrangements

The project will be implemented by UNAPCAEM, in cooperation with the Trade and Investment Division (TID) / Investment and Enterprise Development Section. TID will provide technical and managerial/advisory inputs to organizing of the Seminar and project on the food chain management.

As a co-organizer, the Department of Agriculture of Thailand Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives will provide in-kind support such as conference venue, transportation, and other logistic arrangements.

The Seminar will be scheduled for 18-20 May 2006 in Bangkok as part of an effort to execute on the project.