

**OPENING REMARKS BY MS TAN POH HONG, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
AGRI-FOOD AND VETERINARY AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE, AT AVA'S FOOD
SAFETY AWARDS NIGHT ON 4 JULY 2014**

Mr Koh Soo Keong
Chairman, Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority

Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. And a very warm welcome to AVA's Food Safety Awards Night. Our Guest-of-Honour, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, the Minister of State for National Development and Defence, will be joining us later after the Break-fast session.

Food Safety Excellence Scheme

2 I am happy to see so many industry players here tonight - coming together year after year to celebrate the achievements of our local food industry in food safety excellence. First, let me acknowledge the efforts taken by every company in the food industry to ensure that we continue to uphold Singapore's high food safety standards since the inauguration of the Food Safety Excellence Scheme in 1995. I am heartened to see that the number of companies receiving the Food Safety Excellence awards has increased by about 30 percent over the past 5 years. On behalf of the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore, I would like to congratulate the 138 companies who will be receiving the Food Safety Excellence awards tonight. Among the award recipients, there are 7 new food establishments who have joined us tonight and I would like to welcome these first time award recipients.

AVA's Public Perception Survey on Food Safety Messages

3 Since the launch of the Food Safety Public Education Programme in 2002, AVA has been actively educating the public on food safety – emphasising the importance of food safety as a shared responsibility. AVA's public education activities have included collaborations with industry partners in reaching out to consumers. This is done through the Food Safety mascot tours at supermarkets such as Cold Storage and NTUC FairPrice outlets, school talks and interactive activities onboard the Food Safety Bus sponsored by Seo Eng Joo. We have also placed advertisements in various media and developed outreach collateral supported by our Food Safety partners such as Nestle, Tai Hua Food Industries and Singapore Food Industries; incidentally, these three companies will be renewing their Food Safety partnership for another two years and receiving their Food Safety Partner award later this evening.

4 All these efforts have paid off as can be seen from the findings of a recent public perception survey commissioned by AVA earlier this year. One of the key findings from the survey is the higher level of awareness on the importance of food safety compared to the survey conducted three years ago in 2011. The awareness levels of our food safety messages range from 78% to over 90%, in which 4 out of 5 messages have an awareness level above 80%. More respondents are aware of the consumer's responsibility to ensure food safety and they generally practise the messages most of the time. On the same note, more respondents now feel that food safety is the shared responsibility of the government, food establishments and consumers.

5 It's indeed heartening to know that such tripartite partnership between government, industry and consumers has yielded good results. I would thus like to take this opportunity to thank all our Food Safety partners for your strong commitment towards food safety consumer education and I hope companies will continue to work closely with AVA to educate the public.

Food Wastage as a Shared Responsibility

6 While we have maintained a high level of food safety awareness, it is also important for us to recognise that we have a shared responsibility in tackling the issue of food wastage. Food can be lost or wasted anywhere along the farm to fork value chain. FAO's study^[1] shows that about one third of the food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally. This amounts to 1.3 billion tonnes of food per year, which is equivalent to US\$680 billion of food in industrialised countries and US\$310 billion in developing countries. This means that not only the food is wasted, but the huge amounts of resources used in food production are also wasted.

7 According to the National Environment Agency's figures, about 796,000 tonnes of food waste was generated in Singapore last year. This constituted about 10 percent of our total waste output.

8 Food wastage reduction was identified as one of the strategies under Singapore's Food Security Roadmap. Reducing food wastage provides a sustainable approach to ensure our food security. In 2012, a Work Group under the Inter-Ministry Committee for Food Security was set up to look at recommendations and initiatives to address this issue. The work group engaged various stakeholders, including food manufacturers, to better understand the issues on food waste and redistribution of excess food. They have recommended a multi-pronged approach, including a comprehensive public education outreach programme targeted at the different stakeholders. I am happy to note that the Singapore Food Manufacturers Association has taken the initiative to develop guidelines on minimising food waste across the supply chain, with the support of the work group. Ultimately, resources which are not thrown away through food waste can be channelled to producing safer and more nutritious food for everyone. I would like to encourage our industry players

^[1] *The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) aims to achieve food security for all by helping to eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable, reduce rural poverty, enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems, and increase the resilience of livelihoods to disasters. FAO's study on food waste highlights losses which occur along the food chain and assesses the magnitude of these losses. The study also identifies the causes of food losses and possible prevention measures.*

to participate in this endeavour to reduce food wastage and to ensure a stable supply of safe food for Singapore.

Conclusion

9 In conclusion, food safety and food wastage reduction are a shared responsibility. We will continue to work together with the industry and reach out to consumers to ensure Singapore's food safety. Similarly, we hope the industry and public can join us as we embark on our food waste reduction initiatives. On this note, I would like to congratulate all the award recipients once again for your efforts in upholding high standards of food safety and I wish you an enjoyable evening.

10 Thank you.