

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR KHAW BOON WAN,
COORDINATING MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT,
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 38TH MEETING OF THE
ASEAN MINISTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY (AMAF)
AND 16TH AMAF PLUS THREE MEETINGS
ON 6 OCTOBER 2016 (THURSDAY) AT 9.15AM
AT MARINA MANDARIN HOTEL**

Your Excellencies, ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry
Senior Officials and Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 1 Good morning and a warm welcome to Singapore.
- 2 Singapore is honoured to host the 38th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) and the 16th Meeting of the AMAF Plus Three this year.

AMAF's commitment to food, agriculture and forestry

- 3 ASEAN cooperation in the food, agriculture and forestry sectors dated back many years, to 40 years ago. This is not surprising as agriculture is a key engine of ASEAN Member States' economic growth.

4 In fact, ASEAN is one of the most productive agricultural baskets of the world. Our region is home to two of the world's largest rice exporters, and we are a major producer and exporter of seafood.

5 That is why AMAF is a very important platform. We need to continuously strengthen and develop these sectors. Over the years, AMAF has provided leadership and established strong and dynamic regional cooperation in agriculture, food security, fisheries and forestry matters.

Food security and agricultural transformation to meet new demands

6 Last year, the 37th AMAF Meeting adopted a new Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF) towards 2025. One of the goals of the vision is to ensure food security and better nutrition for the region. Singapore is heartened that food security is high on the ASEAN agenda and we encourage sustained efforts to enhance food security for the region.

7 We need to continue to produce safe, high-quality food for our growing population. Our region's food security will depend heavily on each country's ability to become more productive, resilient, and sustainable in food production. This will become increasingly challenging in the face of many uncertainties, including climate change.

8 Climate change is a global problem. It is not by chance that the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' World Food

Day theme this year is “Climate is changing. Food and agriculture must too.”

9 Thus it is timely that we are implementing the *ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change*. Progress has been made in information exchange, cross-sectoral coordination, and stakeholder collaboration on climate change adaptation and mitigation projects.

10 Last year, AMAF endorsed the ASEAN Regional Guidelines for Promoting Climate Smart Agriculture Practices, which detail technical practices for rice and corn. I am confident that so long as we all continue to work together on climate-smart agriculture policies and practices, we will be climate-ready.

11 While there are challenges, there are exciting new opportunities too. New technologies and innovations enable us to re-think how current agricultural practices can transform and become more resilient. A modern and technologically savvy farm sector is also key to attracting a new generation of agricultural professionals. These “agri-specialists” will write the next chapter in global and regional food security efforts.

12 Singapore is moving in this direction and developing our strategies for local farm transformation. Even though the agriculture sector is small in Singapore, we can contribute and play our part in food security.

13 The Singapore Government has been developing policies and support to help our local agriculture sector transform to be highly

productive and resilient. We have been engaging and working with our agriculture industry on this.

14 We envision our farms of the future to be high-tech, innovative, highly intensive and productive, able to do more, with less. As an urbanised state, Singapore promotes the development of urban farming solutions and progressive farming technologies. There is potential for us to be a “living lab” for new food production technologies.

15 Beyond production, we are also actively looking at the use of technology and R&D throughout the agricultural value chain. For instance, we have been developing indoor vertical vegetable production systems for Asian leafy greens that are potentially five times more productive than conventional farming systems. To reduce food loss and waste, we are also test-bedding novel food packaging. We will be happy to share our experiences and contribute at this AMAF platform.

Antimicrobial Resistance requires collective efforts

16 Other than food security issues, there are many other cross-cutting complex issues in agriculture, fisheries and forestry that we need to address together. One of these issues is antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in agriculture.

17 This is an emerging concern that threatens global public health, and can significantly impact agriculture, food security and safety, as well as food trade. At the recent UN General Assembly, global leaders committed to tackling AMR.

18 It is encouraging that AMAF is recognising the importance of enhancing cooperation in AMR. Singapore supports AMAF's commitment to building strategic partnerships and technical capacities to address the AMR challenge. We will coordinate ASEAN AMR efforts in agriculture and provide capacity to enhance AMR surveillance. We will focus on reducing antimicrobial usage in agriculture, building up regional laboratory testing capability and promoting sustainable information exchange among all ASEAN Member States.

Conclusion

19 Excellencies, agriculture will always be a key priority for ASEAN. Whether it is to ensure food security for our people or to tackle emerging concerns in agriculture such as AMR, it is important that regional cooperation and partnerships are strengthened. AMAF is the ideal platform for this. As an ASEAN community, we must foster inter-sectoral collaboration and forge win-win multi-stakeholder partnerships to realise our ASEAN Vision 2025.

20 To conclude, let me declare the 38th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry, and the 16th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry Plus Three in Singapore officially open.