

FOOD SAFETY FORUM IN CAMBODIA

Driving the Growth of Cambodian Agri-food Sector through Increased Food Standards Compliance

June 7, 2023 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Background

Food safety and quality standards play a vital role in ensuring the health and well-being of the Cambodian people. These standards not only protect consumers from potentially harmful food products, but also provide a framework for businesses to compete globally and contribute to sustainable economic development.

First and foremost, food safety is critical to protect public health and prevent foodborne illnesses. Cambodia has experienced several outbreaks of foodborne illnesses in recent years which underscore the importance of enforcing food safety and quality standards to save lives. Standards such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000 provide a systematic approach to identifying and controlling biological, chemical, and physical hazards in the food production process, from farm to fork. These standards help to minimize the risk of contamination and ensure that food products are safe for consumption.

In addition to protecting public health, food safety and quality standards are essential for businesses to compete in the global marketplace. Cambodian agriculture and food production industries are poised for growth, with increasing demand for exports to international markets. In order to access these markets, businesses must comply with strict food safety and quality standards set by importing countries. Compliance with international standards such as Codex Alimentarius, GlobalGAP, and Fairtrade, not only improves the quality of products, but also enhance their marketability by enabling Cambodian businesses to participate in global value chains. This, in turn, creates economic opportunities for farmers, food processors, and other stakeholders in the supply chain.

Moreover, food standards are an essential element of sustainable development. By adopting and implementing standards, businesses can reduce waste, save resources, and optimize production processes. For instance, adherence to Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) can result in higher yields, improved quality of produce, and reduced environmental and health risks associated with the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Similarly, compliance with Fairtrade standards can help to improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers by ensuring fair prices and social and environmental sustainability.

While food safety standards offer numerous benefits, there are challenges to implementation and compliance. Cambodia has made significant progress in adopting and implementing standards, but there is still room for improvement in multiple areas, from regulatory capacity to stakeholder engagement to technical resources. Effective implementation of standards requires collaboration between public and private sectors, and a willingness to invest in training, education, and infrastructure. In addition, it is essential to engage local communities

and stakeholders along the supply chain, in order to ensure the standards are not only effective but also appropriate and relevant to their needs and context.

Food safety and quality standards are essential for trade, health and well-being, and sustainable development in Cambodia. These standards can significantly benefit key stakeholders in the supply chain, from farmers and processors to consumers and society at large. However, the successful implementation and adoption of standards require a concerted effort by all parties involved, from government, businesses, civil society organizations, and international partners. Only by working together can Cambodia ensure the safety and quality of its food products, enable businesses to compete globally, and promote sustainable development for all.

In partnership with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) under the leadership of Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) jointly organized the first World Food Safety Day on 30 June 2022. The event highlighted the need to strengthen efforts to ensure that food safety is mainstreamed in public agenda to reduce foodborne diseases, while facilitating Cambodia's trade opportunities. In order to leverage the progress on the promotion of food safety and nutrition, the Prime Minister of RGC provided eight recommendations for all stakeholders to implement by facilitating the planning and preparation of national food safety programs and analysis of potential risks. Additionally, RGC assigned CARD to collaborate with other stakeholders in organizing the World Food Safety Day every year to raise the public awareness on the benefits of food safety for health and well-being. This year, the World Food Safety Day is scheduled in early August 2023.

Forum Objectives

As part of the joint effort, this one-day food safety forum is conducted to promote food safety, build agri-food industry competitiveness, and enhance trade opportunities for Cambodia. Specifically, it will:

1. Increase public awareness of the importance of food safety and quality standards for trade, health, and well-being in Cambodia and how they can impact the food industry;
2. Provide a platform for practitioners to share knowledge and best practices among stakeholders, including government, industry, academia, and development partners, on food safety and quality standards; and
3. Encourage stronger collaboration among stakeholders to improve food safety and quality standards in Cambodia, including better regulation, support for food industry actors, and development of innovative solutions.

Target Participants

Government officials: Officials from the ministries responsible for food safety regulations, such as the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Commerce (MOC), Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries



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(MAFF), and Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD); as well as leaders from provincial, regional and local government bodies.

Knowledge Institutions: Research institutes and universities; and technical assistance providers.

Private sector representatives: Business owners of food production and processing companies, vendors, and distributors; industry associations representing the food sector, such as the Cambodian Food Manufacturing Association (CFMA), farmers' associations, and consumer associations.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): NGOs working on food safety, public health, and development.

Structure of the Event

The forum will be structured in a way that allows attendees to participate actively in discussions and collaboration, and provide opportunities for exchanging knowledge and practical experiences. Providing a platform, where representatives from government, the private sector, CSOs, and international organizations can meet and discuss ideas, will create an opportunity for building a strong food safety culture in Cambodia.

Keynote Address: Unlocking the Potentials of Cambodian Agri-food Products with Food Safety and Quality Standards

This section will open the forum. The address is expected to provide an overview of the following:

- Current state of Cambodia's agri-food sector
- Health and economic benefits of improving food safety standards
- Positive impacts of food safety compliance on trade relations and food exports
- Barriers and opportunities to compliance
- Importance of collaboration and commitment of relevant stakeholders to improve food safety standards

Forum Sessions

- ***Regulatory Frameworks and Trade Implications of Enhancing Food Safety and Quality Standards in Cambodia***

This session will discuss the current national regulatory framework on food safety and quality and explore ways to improve it to meet international standards. This will also highlight the impacts of food safety and quality standards on trade relations between Cambodia and other countries and how compliance with international standards could improve market access and competitiveness. Speakers from both public and private

sectors will provide the existing food safety and quality standards, as well as issues and challenges in widespread adoption and compliance.

- ***Best Practices in Food Safety Management and Consumer Awareness***

This session will feature food safety projects and private sector-led initiatives being implemented in Cambodia. It will also highlight the importance of consumer education and awareness on food safety and quality, with a focus on promoting healthy eating habits and proper food handling practices.

Closing Address: Building a Culture of Food Safety

This final section will tie the workshop together, create a sense of closure, and encourage further reflection and assimilation about the day's outcome. It will also explore how to build a culture of food safety in Cambodia, through collaborations among government, industry, and consumers to ensure the highest standards of food safety and quality.

Provisional Agenda

| TIME | ACTIVITY |
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| 08:30 | Registration |
| 09:00 | Opening program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opening remarks by Ms. Maria Theresa S. Medialdia, Director of the Agricultural Development and Commercialization, MI ● Welcome message by H.E. Sok Silo, Secretary-General, Council for Agricultural and Rural Development ● About the forum by Ms. Thyda Laing, Program Manager and Master of Ceremony, CE SAIN ● Photo opportunity |
| 09:30 | Keynote Address: Unlocking the potentials of Cambodian Agri-food Products with Food Safety and Quality Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ms. Rebekah Olivia Bell, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Cambodia |
| 10:00 | Break |
| 10:30 | Session 1: Regulatory Frameworks and Trade Implications of Enhancing Food Safety and Quality Standards in Cambodia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● H.E. Chan Sopha, Director-General, Institute of Standards of Cambodia, Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation ● H.E. Phan Oun, Director-General, Consumer Protection and Fraud Repression, Ministry of Commerce ● Dr. Mak Soeun, Deputy Director-General, General Directorate of Agriculture, MAFF ● Mr. Chim Tony, Official, Food Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health |
| 12:00 | Lunch |



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| 13:30 | <p>Session 2: Best Practices in Food Safety Management and Consumer Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Charya Khim, CAPFish-capture: Post Harvest Fisheries Development Project, UNIDO• Dr. Paul D. Ebner, Professor, Purdue University Indianapolis, West Lafayette, Indiana, United States (<i>online</i>)• Dr. Peng Chantol, Lecturer and Researcher, Institute of Technology of Cambodia• Dr. Chrun Rithy, Lecturer and Researcher, Royal University of Agriculture• Mr. Naeng Thai, Manager, Organic and GAP Quality Assurance, Eco-Agri Co., Ltd. |
| 15:30 | Break |
| 16:00 | Closing Address: Building a Culture of Food Safety |
| 16:30 | End of Forum |