Engaging ASEAN on Agriculture and Sustainable Rural Development: The AFA- AsiaDHRRA experience
Why Engage ASEAN: opportunities in ASEAN engagement

• Learning platform of governments
  - ASEAN can leverage good CSO-GO relations vis non-CSO friendly states

• Platform for CSO advocacies
  - A rules-based ASEAN might offer more hopes for productive engagements

• CSO engagement with promising gains
  - Existing thematic engagement advanced by other CSOs (HR, Women & Children, RDPE-FAP)
1. On-ground Project Cooperation
   • Farmer Exchange visit (1999-ASEAN Foundation)
   • Linking small Farmers to Market (2007- ASEAN Foundation)
   • Southeast Asia Rural Development Award-SEARDA (Bureau for Human Development and SOMRDPE)

2. Targeted Policy Dialogue / Musyawarah at all levels
   • SOM-AMAF (AIFS-SPA, AFCC; Small-scale Farmers’ Council and Peoples’ field School)
   • SOM-RDPE (RDPE FAP; making agriculture central concern towards poverty eradication)

3. Solidarity with broader civil society agenda
   • SAPA (ACSC/APF); RDWG – harmonizing agenda and expanding constituency of support
FEV cooperation led to Independent Asian Farmers’ Association (AFA) with 11M farmer members facilitating the gathering and bringing voices of ASEAN small-scale farmers in regional and global platforms.

Facilitated Dialogue between Farmers and ASEAN Secretariat key leaders.
Small victories in Influencing Policies

• On AIFS
  - Recommendations drawn from national and regional consultations consolidated and presented to relevant bodies/carious conferences on food security

• On RDPE-FAP

• Transmission Channels for institutionalization identified
  - AWGATE (for Peoples’ Field School)
  - AWGAC (for Small-scale Farmers’ Council)
  - ASWGC (for crop-specific engagement)
Regional CSO solidarity
(SAPA – Broad/multi-sectoral; RDWG-thematic; MTCP – sectoral; AFA / AsiaDHRRA-strategic /membership-based)
10 LESSONS

1. Clarity of goal and strategy of engagement (define strategic value of engagement)
   - Singularity of purpose (work on something concrete / focus on issues anchored on the ground)
   - Multiplicity of strategy (negotiation, confrontation; advocacy, joint cooperation)

2. Know the terrain
   - Familiarity with ASEAN Structure, processes, and "dynamics"

3. Find good entry points
   - Maximize Accreditation (existing legal frameworks and spaces for participation)

4. Primacy of national/local engagement
   - Bottoms-up / local constituency (popularize issues, raise awareness, generate on-ground input)
   - Identify government “champions”

5. Access to timely and quality information

6. Seize key moments of decision/policy making

7. Be clear, concrete, brief & concise on position papers / Offer sound alternatives (evidenced-based advocacy)

8. Mobilize resources / Participation is costly
   - Advocate subsidy for meaningful participation (translation; logistics)

9. Build solidarity with other CSOs / expand constituency for reform

10. Invest in relationship and nurture positive attitude
    - Breaking stereotyping thru confidence building activities (formal and informal)
    - Suspend judgement / be open and flexible yet firm; passionately diplomatic
    - Sustained commitment, persistent—"impatiently patient,"
Challenges for Effective Participation

1. Re-defining Strategic value of ASEAN engagement
2. Stereotyping (both side)
3. Accreditation (right vs privilege)
4. High Cost of Participation
5. Language Barrier (effective translation and accompaniment is needed for small-scale farmers)
6. Consolidation / aggregating our voices
7. Access to quality information at the right time
Recommendations / Ways Forward

• Expanding access to information and meaningful participation
  - Review CSO accreditation guideline
• Invest in CSO participation
  - Set-up ASEAN Grant for grass-root and CSO participation
• Institutionalized mechanism for policy dialogue and joint action
  - PO / CSO – AMAF & AMRDPE Regular Dialogue
  - ASEAN Small-scale farmers’ Council as consultative body
• Promotion of good practices in ASEAN Community
  - Thematic Learning Exchanges / knowledge sharing (ASEAN Peoples’ Field School)
  - Annual recognition: Southeast Rural Development Award (SEARDA)
• Capacity Building for constructive engagement
  - Deepening of CSO 101 / ASEAN 101
  - Use of the training module on constructive engagement