

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** ASEAN Collaborates with USDA to Hold Agricultural Biotechnology Workshop

**Country:** Indonesia

**Post:** Jakarta

**Report Category:** Biotechnology - Plants and Animals, Potatoes and Potato Products, Fishery Products, Climate Change/Global Warming/Food Security

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**Report Highlights:**

From March 4-6, 2024, 26 representatives from all ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Timor-Leste participated in a USDA-funded agricultural biotechnology workshop - along with dozens of private sector stakeholders at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. Representatives from each member state presented on regulations and research updates in their countries, and engaged in substantive conversations on balancing the need to assure the food safety of genetically engineered products with the need to innovate and meet increasing food security challenges. Day 2 of the workshop consisted of a field trip to an Indonesian potato farm growing GE blight resistant potatoes and the University of Padjajaran which is developing GE catfish.



*Figure 1. Participants of Workshop on Bolstering ASEAN Food Security through Partnership and Cooperation on Agricultural Biotechnology*

The Workshop on Bolstering ASEAN Food Security through Partnership and Cooperation on Agricultural Biotechnology was held March 4-6, 2024, in Jakarta, Indonesia, by the Agriculture & Food Systems Institute with support from the ASEAN Secretariat, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of State.

The workshop brought together delegates from 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) and Timor-Leste, as well as stakeholders from international organisations, research agencies, and the private sector. The program increased awareness of the potential benefits of agricultural biotechnology for food security and climate resiliency, shared experiences and updates on the biotechnology and biosafety policy status of AMS, and explored collaboration between the AMS to promote regulatory harmonisation, streamline approval processes, and adopt effective and efficient regulatory approaches.

Experts from Canada, Australia, the African Union, and the United States joined the workshop to provide insights into the global status of biotechnology and biotechnology products in international trade, as well as highlighted bilateral and multilateral cooperation and harmonization. The workshop facilitated closed discussions among participants to consider opportunities for future collaboration and harmonisation in line with the key priorities of ASEAN focusing on ensuring food security, sustainable agriculture, and boosting innovation, research, and development in the food and agricultural sector.



*Figure 2. Workshop on Bolstering ASEAN Food Security through Partnership and Cooperation on Agricultural Biotechnology*

Day 2 of the workshop consisted of a field trip to Bandung, Indonesia to visit Hikmah Farm, the pilot site for the propagation of genetically engineered potato (Bio Granola) as well as the University of Padjadjaran where the Fisheries and Marine Sciences Department had developed a transgenic Mutiara catfish. The group of 45 participants learned about the research and development of the biogranola potato through a presentation by potato breeder Mr. Kusmana of Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)

before touring Hikmah Farm's fields and seeing the potatoes for themselves, and even tasting some in the form of French fries for lunch.

At the University of Padjadjaran, the group heard encouraging opening remarks from the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to ASEAN Kate Rebholz stressing the importance of continuing all forms of agricultural research to keep up with population growth and climate change. Then they learned about the research behind the development of a transgenic Mutiara catfish whose growth rate was three times that of its conventional counterpart after only three generations. After the presentation, they toured the catfish research ponds and even helped the lead researcher Ibnu Dwi Buwono feed the catfish. It was a rare opportunity for the member states to see an example of both plant biotechnology and animal biotechnology in the same area in one day, and an opportunity for Indonesian biotech researchers to shine.

The workshop concluded with forward-looking presentations on genome editing from two other AMS, the Philippines and Singapore. Mr. Darwin Landicho from the Philippines' Bureau of Plant Industry presented on proportionality in genome editing regulations, and Dr. Yong Quan Tan of Singapore Food Agency presented on the implementation of a regulatory framework for genome edited crops for use in food/feed. After recapping all the discussions over the three days of the workshop, the participants developed consensus points and recommendations for future collaboration.



*Figure 3. (Center) U.S. DCM to ASEAN Kate Rebholz with Agricultural Counselor Rey Santella at Hikmah Farm Head Office with ASEAN delegation*



## Photo Gallery:



*Figure 4. BRIN researcher Mr. Kusmana presents on GE Bio Granola potato research*



*Figure 5. Hikmah Farm Director Bunyan Ismail gives tour of GE Bio Granola potato field*



*Figure 6. Workshop participants tour Hikmah Farm's GE potato field*



*Figure 7. GE French fries served to workshop participants*





Figure 8. The Philippines and Singapore present on genome editing regulations



Figure 9. U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to ASEAN Kate Rebholz gives opening remarks at the University of Padjadjaran to workshop participants, faculty, and students

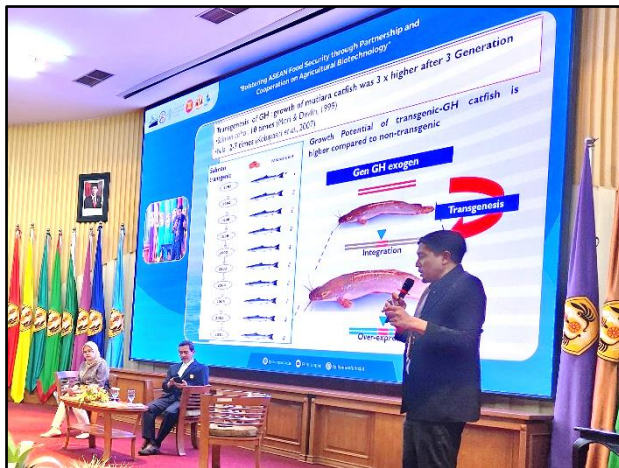


Figure 10. Assistant Professor Roffi Grandiosa presents on transgenic Mutiara catfish research



Figure 11. Professor Ibnu Dwi Buwono feeds the GE Mutiara catfish developed by his team



*Figure 12. Transgenic Mutiara catfish, University of Padjadjaran*



*Figure 13. GE blight resistant potatoes, Hikmah Farm*

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.