



30 July 2023

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Chair, APEC Food Security Ministerial Meeting
Secretary of Agriculture
United States

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), I would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to address the critical issue of food security in the APEC region. ABAC recognizes the vital importance of ensuring access to safe, nutritious, sufficient, sustainable and affordable food for all, and we believe that strong collaboration between APEC economies and the private sector is essential in achieving this goal.

As the APEC region continues to grapple with the harmful impacts of climate change, food insecurity, population growth, and lingering challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, ABAC acknowledges the efforts made by APEC economies to maintain production, distribution, and trade of food and agricultural goods. Now, more than ever, innovative, sustainable, and resilient food systems are needed to adequately support the APEC region. By working together, we can create an enabling environment that ensures food security, promotes inclusive economic growth, and safeguards the wellbeing of our communities.

As the Policy Partnership on Food Security (PPFS) advances the Implementation Plan of the Food Security Roadmap Towards 2030, ABAC is eager to see the completion of a comprehensive review of the functioning of PPFS, as agreed by all APEC economies in paragraph 18(b) of the Food Security Roadmap. This is fundamental to ensuring that there is a meaningful partnership with the private sector, one which “better reflects the priorities and the interests of the private sector and seeks to optimize their involvement.”

In alignment with the APEC 2023 agriculture sub-theme “Together Achieving Sustainable, Equitable, and Resilient Agri-Food Systems,” ABAC remains steadfast in our support for these efforts, as a way to enable opportunity, equity and sustainability for our communities. Your meeting presents a critical opportunity for members to advance concrete actions that will address both the immediate challenges facing our region and contribute to realizing the Putrajaya Vision by 2040, including through the implementation of the Aotearoa Plan of Action, to ensure lasting food security, food safety, and improved nutrition for all as well as reducing food loss and waste in the region by promoting agricultural and food trade, sustainability, innovation, and by promoting green, resilient, and low-emission agriculture. To that end, we put forward the following recommendations:

1. Promote sustainable agriculture

- Implement climate-smart and modern agriculture approaches and technologies to improve productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, efficiently use resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve resilience against climate change. This includes capacity building efforts to support farmers and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in agriculture value chains.
- Explore and adopt the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economic model in alignment with the Bangkok Goals on BCG Economy, which will drive agricultural transformations, reduce food loss and waste, and encourage regenerative agricultural practices.
- Promote sustainable land management practices, including reforestation, conservation agriculture, and integrated water resource management, to mitigate the impact of climate change on food production.
- Utilize Artificial Intelligence, data analytics, precision farming, and other digital technologies to support greater efficiency, higher yields, and lower environmental impacts of agricultural and food value chains.
- Encourage the growth of future food, such as alternative and plant-based protein and insect-based protein.
- Enhance freshwater management strategies to ensure greater food safety through increased quality monitoring, promote coherence of transboundary water standards, regulation of wastewater management, protection of freshwater resources from plastic pollution, and expanded awareness of impacts of microplastics on food safety and quality.

2. Enhance market access and trade facilitation

- Facilitate the flow of agricultural products by reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, simplifying customs procedures, and harmonizing regulatory standards while ensuring food safety and consumer protection.
- Eliminate trade-distorting agriculture domestic support through the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations.
- Explore the development of a Regulatory Sandbox for Agricultural Technology (AgTech) as potential tool for regulators and innovators to conduct testing with AgTech prior to their full entry into the marketplace to boost innovation while ensuring that consumers are protected by adequate regulations. Given that a significant hurdle for new technology adoption is buyer education, a well-publicized sandbox could provide an important communication and education tool for a new product.

3. Foster public-private collaboration

- Strengthen public-private partnerships to foster innovation, knowledge sharing, and capacity building in the agricultural sector.

- Encourage public and private investments in agricultural research and development, infrastructure, and human capital development to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

ABAC looks forward to continuing to work with APEC economies to successfully implement the food and agriculture goals set out in the Putrajaya Vision 2040, Bangkok Goals on BCG Economy, and the Food Security Roadmap Towards 2040.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

Dominic Ng
ABAC Chair 2023