

2023 | Southeast Asia Public Health Nutrition Network

Summary Report

Webinar Series 1/2023 on
Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in Challenging Times -
Experiences in Southeast Asia Countries
8 August 2023 | Zoom Online Platform



Partner Societies/Associations:



Food and Nutrition Society of Indonesia



Nutrition Society of Malaysia



Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines, Inc



Nutrition Association of Thailand under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn



Vietnam Nutrition Association

Supported by Educational Grant from:



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1. ABOUT SEA-PHN NETWORK

Established in June 2014, the Network aims for a more effective implementation of public health nutrition measures to improve nutritional wellbeing of populations in the region. The current 5 members of the Network, which are affiliated with the Federation of Asian Nutrition Societies (FANS) and the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) are Food and Nutrition Society of Indonesia (Pergizi Pangan), Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM), Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. (NFP), Nutrition Association of Thailand (NAT) and Vietnam Nutrition Association (VINUTAS). More details of the Network are available on the Network website: <http://sea-phn.org>.

2. WEBINAR BACKGROUND

Access to nutritious, safe and affordable foods are fundamental for good nutrition and health of the population, to end hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition. However, this remain unaffordable and has become increasingly challenging for many individuals and families worldwide, including Southeast Asian (SEA) countries. An estimated 46% of the population in the ASEAN region are unable to afford a healthy diet, and that the current estimates of malnutrition indicate that progress is too slow in the ASEAN region to meet the 2025 global nutrition targets. Many of the barriers to food and nutrition security e.g. poverty, inequality have persisted over time and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian crises and climate change, alongside other challenges such as changes in eating habits and preference to less healthy foods. These conditions and developments further stressing the price, quantity and quality of foods available, leading to increased food and nutrition insecurity. Action across the SEA region to drive progress and address food and nutrition security through improving sustainability of the food system, innovative/evidence-based programmes, policies and researches are crucial and more important than ever.

This webinar was organised by the SEA-PHN Network to:

1. Exchange experiences on innovations, evidence-based interventions, programmes, initiatives across different SEA countries to address food and nutrition security in different settings and explore possible opportunities for adapting solutions/strategies from various countries for use in local projects.
2. Explore gaps, challenges, lesson learned and opportunities in addressing food and nutrition security issues in SEA countries
3. Explore multisectoral roles in food and nutrition security in SEA countries

The webinar was attended by 251 participants including nutritionists, dietitians, members of academia, researchers, policy makers, public health workers, nutrition graduates and postgraduate students as well as other healthcare professionals. This report summarises the presentations and discussions during the webinar.

3. WEBINAR PROGRAMME

Time	Programme
14:30	Welcome Remarks Dr Tee E Siong, Chairman, SEA-PHN Network
14:35	Keynote Lecture Chairperson: Dr Tee E Siong, SEA-PHN Network Way forward to Improve Food and Nutrition Security in Southeast Asia Speaker: Mr. Pisan Pongsapitch, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand
	Session 1: Addressing Food and Nutrition Security Risk: Experiences in Sea Countries Chairperson: Dr Tee E Siong, SEA-PHN Network
15:05	Indonesia Speaker: Ms Yusra Egayanti, National Food Agency of Indonesia
15:25	Malaysia Speaker: Prof Dr Norhasmah Bt. Sulaiman, Universiti Putra Malaysia
15:45	Philippines Speaker: Mr Michael R. Sollera, Planning and Monitoring Service, Department of Agriculture, Philippines
16:05	Thailand Speaker: Dr Saipin Chotivichien, Bureau of Nutrition, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand
16:25	Vietnam Speaker: Assoc Prof Dr Truong Tuyet Mai, National Institute of Nutrition, Vietnam
16:45	Session 1 Q&A
17:00	Break
17:10	Session 2: Panel Discussion – Overcoming Food and Nutrition Security Challenges to Address Hunger and Malnutrition Moderator: Dr Tee E Siong, SEA-PHN Network
18:00	End of webinar

4. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Tee E Siong, Chairman of SEA-PHN Network and President of Nutrition Society of Malaysia

Dr. Tee E Siong, chairman of SEA-PHN Network gave the opening address and shared with the participants the Network's background and its key activities in promoting public health nutrition in the SEA region. He highlighted the need of continuous support from different stakeholders including nutrition associations, corporate companies and nutritionists in the region to work together towards improving the public health nutrition in the region.

Session 1 – Keynote Lecture

Way Forward To Improve Food and Nutrition Security in Southeast Asia

Mr. Pisan Pongsapitch, Secretary General of National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards, Thailand

Mr. Pisan started his presentation with an overview of food and nutrition security situation at both global and SEA levels, highlighted that countries worldwide, including ASEAN, are far from reaching the SDG target to eradicate hunger as well as the 2025 global nutrition targets. He addressed persistent effects of the pandemic and political uncertainty on global food security as some of the key contributors to the situation.

The context of food security was emphasised, in which it is a multi-faceted entity of stability in food availability, food accessibility, and food utilisation. He then discussed the strategies and activities employed globally and regionally to address food and nutrition security. Among the strategies and activities that are highly relevant to SEA countries include:

- i. ASEAN Framework established to ensure food and nutrition security in the region through several strategies:
 - ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry Towards 2025
 - ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security (SPA-FS) 2021-2025
 - ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR)
 - ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS)
- ii. The ASEAN Food Safety Policy, serves as guidance for the development of a sustainable food safety regulatory framework within the region.
- iii. ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework Agreement to be implemented to facilitate trade, enhance consumers' health protection and ensure food safety.
- iv. Multilateral Arrangement for the Mutual Recognition of Agri-food Standards and Conformity Assessment
- v. ASEAN mutual recognition arrangement (MRA) on organic agricultural products

- vi. ASEAN sectoral MRA for inspection and certification systems on food hygiene for prepared foodstuff products
- vii. Codex's standards and guidelines related to food safety, nutrition and food allergen

Mr. Pisan emphasised on the utilisation and implementation of these standards and guideline to act as the concurrent plan of action that can be the basis of food and nutrition security ensurance strategies in the ASEAN countries. He then shared Thailand's experience in addressing food security through the Thailand Food Management Action Plan, which focuses on four strategic elements i.e. address food security to reduce hunger, malnutrition and food waste; address food quality & safety to increase trade and consumers' trust; food education to increase smart consumers, management system to increase collaboration and integration of all relevant agencies in the food chain.

Mr. Pisan concluded his presentation with several recommendations and ways forward in addressing the food security issues:

- The adoption of the ASEAN Leaders Declaration on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crisis in the ASEAN Summit to strengthen the local resource-based food reserves and infrastructure system.
- Improve food production for safe and nutritious foods in accordance with international standards
- Apply risk-based food standards and regulations
- Invest in technology, innovation, and R&D
- Promote sustainable production
- Promote sustainable consumption and consumer education
- Strengthen local food availability
- Implement ASEAN Integrated Food Security and Food Safety Framework

Session 2 – Addressing Food and Nutrition Security Risk: Experiences in Sea Countries

Presentation 1

National Food Security in Indonesia

Ms. Yusra Egayanti, Director of Food Safety and Quality Standard Formulation, The National Food Agency of Indonesia

Ms. Yusra Eganyanti highlighted that the key policy taken by Indonesia in response to the global threats leading to food crisis is to strengthen the national food reserve, recognising that Indonesia is a region with medium climate vulnerability with higher risk of food crises and insecurity.

The National Regulation No. 18/2012 on Food is used as main reference to formulate food policy in Indonesia, one of it being the Strategic Plan of National Food Agency 2022-2024. Ms. Yusra presented the key policy direction and strategies outlined in this Strategic Plan, emphasising four pillars i.e. food availability, food accessibility, food utilisation and supporting strategies. Among the activities implemented in line with the four pillars of strategies include:

- Food reserve and state-owned enterprises food holding
- Prognosis of national food balance
- Monitoring of food price at producer & consumer level
- Strengthening national food reserve by facilitating cold chain utilities for perishable food
- Prevention of food vulnerability through cross-collaboration to reduce food waste
- Education, promotion of food consumption pattern that are diverse, nutritious, balanced and safe
- Preparation of regulations/standards for safety, quality, nutrition, labels, advertising, food safety and quality institutions
- Food safety and quality supervision

Four indicators are used to measure the food security condition in Indonesia, these include Global Food Security Index (GFSI), Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas (FSVA), prevalence of undernourishment and desirable dietary pattern (DDP) score. The latest results of these indicators showed several challenges faced by Indonesia:

- Indonesia achieved significant increase in the aspect of food sustainability but decreased in the aspect of food availability
- 74 districts/cities in the country (14%) are vulnerable to food insecurity, the main causes identified being insufficient food production, high prevalence of stunting among toddlers, limitation of clean water and high percentage of poor population
- Increased prevalence of undernourishment, mainly in the Eastern part of Indonesia
- The diet of the Indonesian population has not been diverse and nutritionally balanced, characterised by high intake of grains, oils and fats but lack of vegetables and fruits as well as animal-based foods and tubers

At the end of her presentation, Ms. Egayanti provided an overview of the plans and recommendations by Indonesia government to tackle the ongoing issues of food security, these include the reinforcement of the food policy through a multi-faceted approach with collaboration of all of the relevant pentahelix stakeholders i.e. local government, community, private sectors, business association, media and academia to achieve the ultimate goal of food security in Indonesia.

Presentation 2

Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in Malaysia

Prof. Dr. Norhasmah Sulaiman, Head of Department, Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Prof. Dr. Norhasmah in her presentation discussed the status of food security in Malaysia based on the Global Hunger Index and a systematic review looking into prevalence, risk factors, consequences and coping strategies of food insecurity in the country. Malaysia scored moderately for Global Hunger Index in year 2022. She highlighted that low-income households, elderly peoples, university students, indigenous groups and migrant workers are among the vulnerable populations of food insecurity in Malaysia that should be given priority in food security intervention programmes. She added that socio-economic factors, family structure, health problems, traditional lifestyle and limited income are the

identified risk factors contributing to food insecurity among these population, and subsequently resulted in unhealthy body weight status especially among children, inadequate dietary intakes and health problems in adults.

Prof. Dr. Norhasmah emphasised the significance of sustainable, valid and reliable methods and indicators in measuring food and nutrition security especially at the household and individual levels. She then compared the reliability and strengths of direct and indirect food security indicators used in Malaysia, highlighted the need on the use of direct methods which are highly sensitive, specific and designed directly to measure core behaviours and experience of food insecurity. This would help to complement the indirect indicators method to give accurate picture of food insecurity in the country. The Global Food Insecurity Experiences Scale- FIES Survey Module (FIES-SM) is an example of questionnaire utilising direct indicators approach that is commonly used in several nations worldwide.

Prof. Dr. Norhasmah presented Malaysia's approaches in addressing food and nutrition security. The National Food and Security Policy Action Plan 2021-2025 is the country's blueprint in this regard, covering 15 strategies and 96 initiatives across the agencies and ministries. Among the initiatives is the community empowerment through community gardening programme. Other approaches taken by the country include the implementation of National Agrofood Policy, National Nutrition Policy of Malaysia 2.0, National Plan of Action for Nutrition of Malaysia and a series of nutrition intervention programme for vulnerable groups (children under 5 years, pregnant women, community).

In concluding her presentation, Prof. Dr. Norhasmah emphasised the importance of implement more robust targeted social protection programmes to improve access to healthy and nutritious foods. She also shared some recommendations in addressing food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition for building longer-term resilience.

Presentation 3

Food and Nutrition Security in the Philippines

Mr. Michael R. Sollera, Planning and Monitoring Service, Department of Agriculture, Philippines

Mr. Michael R. Sollera started his presentation with an overview of the food and nutrition security status in the Philippines. The Philippines ranked 67th out of 113 countries in the 2022 Global Food Security Index, and while this performance has improved over the 11 years racking period, the 2021 expanded National Nutrition Survey showed worrying findings that 1/3 of the population was moderately food insecure and about two-third of the Filipinos cannot afford a healthy diet in year 2020.

Mr. Sollera moved on to explain further about the county's ongoing efforts in assessing food and nutrition security. In addition to the National Nutrition Survey and referring to the Global Food Security Index, Philippines publishes annual food balance sheets to have a comprehensive picture of the country's food supply during a specific period. The food balance sheets also serve as indication of the adequacy of food supply relative to the nutritional requirements of the population. Medium term plans incorporating nutrition sensitive programmes, projects and interventions have also been developed including National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernisation and Industrialisation Plan (NAFMIP) 2021-2030, Philippine

Development Plan 2023-2028, and Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition 2023-2028. He stressed that food security largely impacts nutritional status of households and the cognitive development of children, thus the importance to strengthen agriculture not only to ensure adequate supply of nutritious food but also erase the threat of cognitive disability.

Mr. Sollera in his presentation also shared that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated food and nutrition security challenges being faced by the country. Several inter agency task force were created to ensure the government coordinated and comprehensive response to the challenges during the pandemic, these include the Interagency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases – Task Group on Food Security, Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger and implementation of the COVID-19 Active Response and expenditure Support Programme to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic on the population's health, income and economic opportunities. In support of national and sectoral nutrition outcomes, the Department of Agriculture also spearheaded the implementation of several nutrition-sensitive interventions covering different segments i.e. food production, logistics and marketing, food safety and livelihood, to ensure food availability for all Filipinos while improving income levels.

In conclusion, Mr. Sollera stated that while there are still many areas for improvement, the Philippines whole of government and whole of society approach to food and nutrition security has already taken significant strides and the Philippines government is committed to holistic food system transformation in support of the global movement to launch new actions and solutions to solving food security and nutrition challenges.

Presentation 4

Addressing Food and Nutrition Security Risk: Experiences in Thailand

Dr. Saipin Chotivichien, Bureau of Nutrition, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

Presenting the state of food and nutrition security in Thailand, Dr. Saipin Chotivichien shared that while the prevalence of undernourishment in the total population has been decreasing in the period of 2019-2021, the prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity in the Thailand population remain higher than the global levels, and that Thailand is facing challenges in reaching all the global nutrition target. She then discussed Thailand's ranking in terms of the Global Food Security Index, pointed out that the scoring for Thailand has to be interpreted with caution as several of the country policies/guidelines in Thai language have not been taken into consideration in deriving the scores.

In terms of agricultural production, Dr. Saipin shared that Thailand is one of the countries vulnerable to climate change (ranked 9th in the Global Climate Risk Index), and that the production of economic crops such as rice, sugarcane and cassava are expected to decrease in the next 2 decades, if the current climate change issue continued. She then spoke about the strategies taken to address food and nutrition security in Thailand. Under the National Food Committee Act B.E.2551 (2008), the National Food Committee is established as the main mechanism for driving food system in Thailand. The Strategic Framework for Food Management (2018-2037) is the master action plan developed to support food security, food safety and quality, food education and food management in the country. This blueprint also guides the integrated

cooperation of agencies from all sectors for maintaining national food production and for attaining food security at the community level. The phase 1 of the Action Plan on Food Management (2023-2027) is currently being implemented with different sub-committee and working groups driving action plans in each area of food security, food safety and quality, food education and food management. Several relevant plans are being developed and implemented under this phase 1, such as the Food Waste Management Action Plan Phase 1 (2023-2027), Plan on Loss Reduction in Production Chain (2023-2027), 5-year National Plan of Action for Nutrition (2019-2023, 2023-2027).

Dr. Saipin also shared several innovations, research and programmes taken place to build a proper food system in Thailand:

- Research on climate resilience of local food system and adaptation plans covering production, process & distribution as well as consumption aspects, to address the climate impact on food and nutrition security.
- Development of provincial crop calendar for monthly agricultural products. The crop calendar covers and links the entire system to forecast the production of agricultural products in terms of production time, harvest time and market launch, thus benefiting production planning, marketing, distribution and food security and nutrition management in both normal and crisis situations.
- Analysis of nutrients availability in each province.
- Revision of food-based dietary guidelines for different age groups across the life cycle.
- Innovation in food of the future such as exploring insect-based, algae-based and plant-based protein as alternative food sources; development of ready to eat meal with retort package for longer shelf-life at room temperature, and development of health snack such as egg white chip.

In conclusion, Dr. Saipin summarised the next steps of Thailand in addressing food and nutrition security, these include driving the Phase 1 of the Action Plan on Food Management in Thailand and its relevant plans or strategies, implementation of FBDGs to communicate guidelines for healthy eating behaviours, smart farmers development, and strengthen the health literacy for all sectors involved throughout the food system. She acknowledged that more time and resources are needed in implementing these strategies in view of several challenges faced, such as the integration of activities and resources through multisectoral collaboration with good monitoring and evaluation system, poverty among farmers and illiteracy in digital technology.

Presentation 5

Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in Challenging Times: Experiences in Vietnam

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Truong Tuyet Mai, National Institute of Nutrition, Vietnam

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Truong Tuyet Mai started her presentation with an overview of the situation of food and nutrition security in Vietnam. It was shared that food production from agriculture as well as the export value of agriculture, forestry and fishery have been increasing in Vietnam (ranked 2nd in SEA and top 15 in the world in exporting agriculture products). In terms of nutrition security, while the prevalence of stunting in the country has been decreasing significantly over the years, the rates of stunting are unevenly distributed between urban and rural areas, ethnic groups and linked to poverty and household income,

with prevalence of stunting in children <5 remains high in northern and central mountains regions where poverty rates are high. At the same time, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in 5-19-year-old children are increasing alarmingly, especially among school children in the urban area. Urbanisation, increasing incomes and shifting consumer preferences are changing diets of the Vietnam population, particularly in urban areas in which the intake of meat has increased significantly and exceeded recommended daily allowances.

Dr. Mai then spoke about the impacts of climate change and COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition security in Vietnam. Some food systems e.g. intensive coffee, pepper and maize systems have caused resource degradation. While having insufficient data on food and nutrition security during the pandemic, it is acknowledged that the limitation of transportation of foods during the pandemic has some impact on the nutrition security of vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

In addressing food and nutrition security challenges, Vietnam is moving towards transforming to responsible, sustainable and transparent food systems by 2030. In this regard, the National Action Plan on Food System Transformation towards Transparency, Responsibilities and Sustainability is developed as a guideline with five objectives. These include ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all, shift to sustainable consumption patterns, boost sustainable food production, advance equitable livelihoods and build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress. The pathways identified to achieve this include focus on agri-food value chains and support services, strengthening policies and institutions, improving technology and innovation, as well as scaling & capability development for agriculture, nutrition and environment. Dr. Mai also delved briefly into several other existing national strategies, plans and programmes relevant to Vietnam's food system, including the National Nutrition Strategy, Scaling up Nutrition Vietnam, Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2021-2030, National Action Plan for Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Suitable Development, and National Action Plan on Zero Hunger in Vietnam by 2025.

In conclusion, Dr. Mai shared that the latest National Nutrition Strategy 2021-2030 has been developed and a series of nutrition activities are being implemented from central to local levels, including nutrition education and communication about food system transformation to change the population behaviour for healthy nutrition and diet.

5. PANEL DISCUSSION – OVERCOMING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

The panellists for this session included all speakers, Council Members of the SEA-PHN Network as well as Associate Members of the Network who participated to provide insights from the industry perspective. The session was moderated by Dr. Tee E Siong. The main goals of the discussion were to identify common platforms/areas for collaboration and further interaction, as well as the roles of private sectors in improving the food and nutrition security in the region.

Main points discussed during panel discussion:

- The need for actions/programmes to address food insecurity among university students; most of the initiatives are by the universities such as budget-friendly meals, food bank, and money assistance.
- The need for protection programmes such as incentives, new technology exposure and better produce transportation system for vulnerable farmers and food producers.
- Improving self-sufficiency of major food commodities is important, among the strategies should include utilisation of new technologies and food industry empowerment to produce more quality and nutritious food products.
- Potential areas for further interaction and collaboration among SEA countries:
 - Sharing of experiences on methodologies for monitoring and evaluation of food-based dietary guidelines implementation.
 - Collaboration with private sectors for the development of healthy food with longer shelf life for both normal and crisis situation.
 - Long-term actions to address the impacts of climate change on agriculture and food supply.
 - Development of information system or collaboration in data collection, in order to build an indicator system that can work at the local level to facilitate decision making process.
 - Adaptation of global or national indicators for applicability at the local level, including early warning systems for impending hunger and malnutrition problems.
 - Implementation of climate smart agriculture and to adapt the disaster risk reduction and mitigation framework.
 - Common food and nutrition security indicators to compare across countries. This could be achieved with common research using same instruments, to obtain big data to enable the design of intervention programme to prevent food insecurity, which is still lacking in the region.
 - Enabling more dialogue and engagement with the agriculture sector is crucial.
- Initiatives by private sectors in addressing food and nutrition security:
 - PepsiCo's Food for Good initiative aims to provide access to nutritious food to 50 million people through food donations by 2030 and support 5 million female farmers by 2025.
 - PepsiCo is also having contract farming partnership with local farmers for production and supply of agricultural products.

- Recognising the impacts of climate change on farming and food productions, Beneo-Institute has invested in technologies at the factory level to reduce the energy consumption by 35% and carbon footprint by 20%.
- Other initiatives by Beneo-Institute include helping small scale rice farmers with harvesting and threshing machinery to ease the harvest labour problem and improve the use of the rice. Financial aids are also provided to rice farmers and vulnerable groups through local charitable community initiatives.

Key points from the panel discussion can be used as reference to call for further interaction and collaboration in the future, as well as for meaningful dialogues with relevant stakeholders on potential efforts to address food and nutrition security in the region.

6. PICTORIAL REPORT



Figure 1. Dr. Tee E Siong, Chairman of SEA-PHN Network gave welcome remarks and shared the background of the Network



Figure 2. Mr. Pisan Pongsapitch delivered the keynote lecture on way forward to improve food and nutrition security in Southeast Asia



Figure 3. Ms. Yusra Egayanti presented on national food security policy in Indonesia

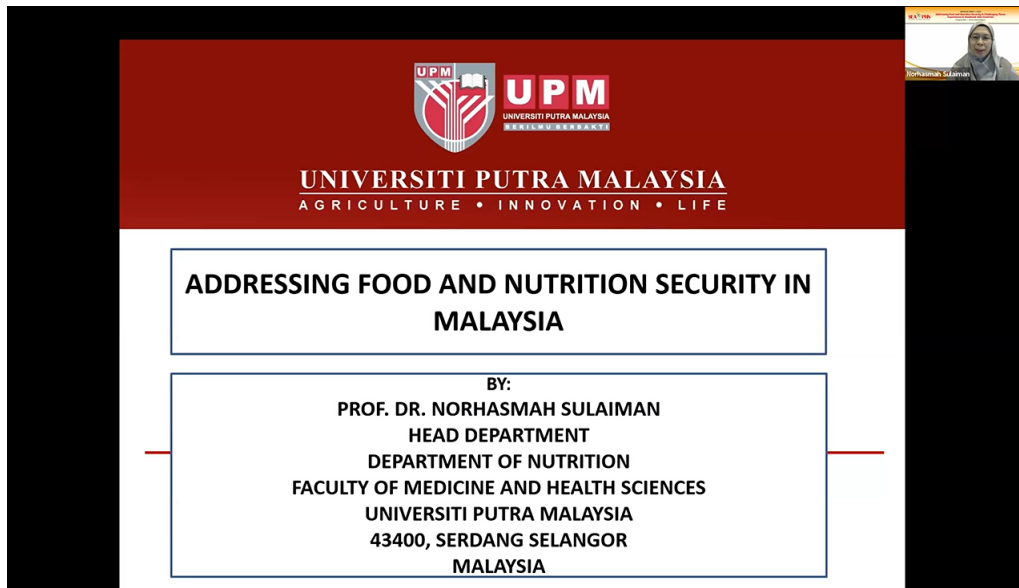


Figure 4. Prof. Dr. Norhasmah presented Malaysia's experiences in addressing food and nutrition security



Figure 5. Mr. Michael R. Sollera presented food & nutrition security in the Philippines



Figure 6. Dr. Saipin Chotivichien presented Thailand’s experiences in addressing food and nutrition security risk



Figure 7. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Truong Tuyet Mai shared Vietnam’s experiences in addressing food and nutrition security

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SEA-PHN Network would like to thank all speakers for their presentations and sharing their views and thoughts during the panel discussion. The Network acknowledges the educational grant of BENEIO-Institute and PepsiCo Services Asia Co. Ltd in enabling this webinar to be carried out. The Network also places on record its appreciation to all participants for attending the webinar. Appreciation is also conveyed to VersaComm Sdn Bhd for serving as secretariat of the SEA-PHN Network and organised the webinar.

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