

Houston Area Model United Nations Specialized Committee

ASEAN



Chair | Fred Guo

Topic A: Sustainable Food Security Solutions
Houston Area Model United Nations 49
February 1 & 2, 2024

Note to Delegates

Esteemed Delegates,

My name is Fred Guo, and it's my pleasure to serve as your Chair for ASEAN for HAMUN 49! I am currently a student studying Business at UT Austin, potentially minoring in Government, and pursuing a Pre-Law track.

Now that in-person conferences are returning in full swing, I hope that every delegate can enjoy the full experience that HAMUN has to offer. You are all much luckier than me, as I attended my first two conferences through Zoom. It's wild to think how far I've come since joining our MUN in my sophomore year. In my first conference, I probably spent more time putting on my suit than actually speaking! Yet since then, I've learned to develop my public speaking skills, research acumen, and self-confidence, and more. With an active learning mindset, I became Vice President of Glenda Dawson MUN and won multiple awards, including Best Research Paper and Outstanding Delegate. I hope that this will encourage all of you to put yourselves out there and put the "U" in "MUN."

As chair, I intend to work to the best of my ability to make this conference go smoothly for all of you, delegates. However, ASEAN, as a specialized committee, will be different from the general UN committees you may be used to. Because ASEAN is an organization serving the interests of one geopolitical region, the scope and breadth of the topics will be narrower. Therefore, it's particularly important to come into the conference with a firm understanding of your nation's policy and position. Additionally, some topics may require you to explore related subjects.

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Conducting basic research into adjacent topics will put everyone on the same page and enhance the overall conference. Furthermore, while keeping in mind the gravity of the two issues at hand, I encourage everyone to think outside the box and find effective solutions that best reflect within the Indo-Pacific region. Good luck to everyone, and happy delegating!

Fred Guo

Chair of ASEAN

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What is ASEAN?

Established in 1967, the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** aims to foster regional cooperation for peace, stability, and economic prosperity. In addition to its composition of ten member nations, ASEAN also includes Observer nations and ASEAN Dialogue partners at its yearly summits.

ASEAN primarily promotes economic integration and advancement of the Southeast Asian macroregion, as well as addressing national security concerns and territorial disputes. The Association also engages in dialogue with external partners on global issues like climate change and disaster relief. Through unity and shared values, ASEAN seeks to enhance the well-being of its citizens and improve the region's quality of life through regional collaboration.



[Source](#)



[Source](#)

Executive Summary

Despite the economic progress of many ASEAN member nations, food insecurity remains a key issue at almost all ASEAN summits. Among others, the most significant driver of food insecurity is climate change, where elevating CO2 concentrations may dilute the output and quality of crops. Other factors include poor food infrastructure, limited resources, and external events.

The aquaculture industry has also suffered extensive degradation, not only due to climate change but also various other factors. Despite fishing being a crucial source of income for many households, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and water pollution have put immense pressure on local fisheries.

While global food supply chains are slowly recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has prompted some ASEAN national governments to restrict their food exports.



Certain ASEAN observer states, such as the United States, have provided aid to Southeast Asian countries to promote agricultural development. However, many countries are seeking more sustainable, long-term solutions. As delegates, you must strive to formulate not only short-term "band-aid" solutions but enduring frameworks that can foster sustainable food production in Southeast Asia.



Topic Description

Food security, as it has been for much of the Global South, is a key issue in Southeast Asia, most prominently following the wave of decolonization in the early 20th century. Southeast Asia has paid particular interest to food security due to its expanding population size and predominance of the food production industry, with agriculture accounting for ~11% of the ASEAN region's GDP.

There are several main reasons that drive food security in Southeast Asia, chief among which is *climate change*. According to the Global Climate Risk Index, numerous countries in Southeast Asia face extremely high risks of climate change, which include increased flooding and droughts that harm agricultural output. Furthermore, elevated CO₂ concentrations are linked to decreases in nutrient yields in rice cultivars, which can cause malnutrition in children.

Additionally, most ASEAN nations *lack adequate infrastructure*. This can include faulty storage for food, lack of utilities like electricity, and unmaintained transportation. This leads to massive amounts of post-harvest crop loss, which, in Thailand, accounts for about 19% of crop loss.



[Source](#)

Climate change has also threatened Southeast Asia's burgeoning aquaculture industry. Here, however, *lax governmental regulation* also plays a role. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU) activity has spiked sharply, driven by the little regulation that binds fishermen to sustainable fishing practices and the increasingly fierce competition. Current maritime unrest caused by the South China Sea crisis also leads to a lack of oversight.



Recent Developments

The emergence of COVID-19 temporarily but substantially disrupted supply chains, causing a 3.1% decrease in the ASEAN's agricultural sector, severing hundreds of thousands, often in rural areas, from important vectors of nutrition.

Collaboration or Protection?

As international grain imports slowly dry up due to both COVID shockwaves and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, ASEAN nations have begun enforcing food protectionist policies, or limiting exports of food for the foreseeable future, undermining the ASEAN's commitment to cooperation for food security. This has forced countries like Laos, which rely more heavily on food imports, to increase food prices themselves.

Current Solutions

As an association to foster regional cooperation, ASEAN have existing frameworks to protect food security in shortage scenarios, such as:

- the **ASEAN Food Security Reserve**, est. 1979, an emergency reserve store of grain, like rice, committed by member countries;
- the **ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS)**, sharing accurate and timely information related to food security in the ASEAN region;
- and the **ASEAN Food Safety Policy**, to facilitate the free flow of food and enhance consumer health protection while protecting food safety.



[Source](#)



Questions to Consider

- In the wake of current food export shortage, how can ASEAN member nations protect their own domestic food interests without compromising collaboration with partner nations?
- What role should ASEAN, as well as its external partners, play in addressing food security?
- What are some sustainable and innovative solutions to improve grain yield and nutrition?
- What are some safeguards ASEAN can establish to improve resistance to sudden global supply chain shocks?
- What measures need to be implemented for sustainable aquaculture cultivation?



[Source](#)

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