

# The Challenges on Agricultural Cooperatives in ASEAN

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## ABSTRACT

The ASEAN, which comprise ten countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand, was founded in 1967. Since ASEAN will fully intergrated by the end of the year 2015, the ASEAN member countries have to move toward a single market and production base. It means that the goods, services, investment, capital as well as skilled labour could be free flow from a country to another member country (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008:6). Therefore, they have to prepare for trade liberalization among ASEAN countries in order to improve the quality of life to their people. Cooperatives are a tool for people to sustain in developing countries. Different countries context causes difference in structure and management. Agricultural cooperatives dissimilarly rely on a country's difficulties and issues. Therefore, they should examine the issue on how cooperatives respond to the changes. Consequently, the objective of this study was to find out the fundamental structure and system of developing cooperatives among ASEAN member countries. As a result, basic information including organizational structure about agricultural cooperatives of each country, the current situation as well as government support were discussed. The study also revealed the challenges on agricultural cooperatives on these aspects: the knowledge on cooperative movement and networking, financial management, marketing including management knowledge, the sufficiency of basic infrastructure and technology as well as the related rules and regulations.

**Keywords:** Agricultural Cooperatives, ASEAN

## INTRODUCTION

### Significance of problems

Since ASEAN will fully integrate by 2015, the challenge issues are on how to understand the ASEAN agreements. Due to the AEC Blueprint, ASEAN will integrate as a single market and production base, an extremely competitive economic region, a region of equitable economic development and a region entirely joined into global economy. As ASEAN single market and production base, it

comprises five elements: 1) free flow of goods; 2) free flow of services; 3) free flow of investment; 4) free flow of capital; and 5) free flow of skilled labor (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008; 6). The liberalization aims to enhance trade among ASEAN members' countries and increase long-term competitiveness on food and agriculture products. Therefore, ASEAN agricultural products must be much more competitive in the world market (Roehlano and Danilo, 2012). Moreover, there is a wide gap in the AEC blueprint on collaboration

relating to the agricultural cooperatives, research development, including the private sector connection. According to the World Bank Data in 2015, the agriculture includes forestry, hunting, fishing, cultivating crops and livestock production as shown on **table 1**.

**TABLE 1:** Agricultural, Value Added (% of GDP)

Country Name	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Brunei Darussalam	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.7	-
Cambodia	36.0	36.7	35.6	33.6	29.8
Indonesia	14.3	13.8	13.7	13.7	13.7
Lao PDR	32.7	29.5	28.1	26.5	27.5
Malaysia	10.4	11.8	10.0	9.3	9.1
Myanmar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Philippines	12.3	12.7	11.8	11.2	11.3
Singapore	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thailand	12.4	13.3	12.3	12.0	11.6
Vietnam	18.9	20.1	19.7	18.4	18.1

However, there is no available data in Myanmar and Singapore. Since Singapore area is limited, the only natural resource is human. Therefore, there is no agriculture in Singapore. Cambodia is the highest percent on contributing agriculture of GDP in ASEAN member countries. The second rank is Lao PDR. The lowest country is Brunei Darussalam. Since most ASEAN member countries depended on agriculture, agricultural cooperatives have a very significant role for the country development and also affect the ASEAN members' countries. Therefore, this study would discuss the challenges on agricultural cooperatives in ASEAN.

**Objective of Research**

The objective of research is to identify agricultural cooperative context in ASEAN member countries.

**Research Question**

What is agricultural cooperatives context among ASEAN members' countries?

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Current Situation**

The current situation of ASEAN cooperatives would be discussed by countries.

**Brunei Darussalam:** According to Said and Hamid (2013) mentioned that Brunei is a self-governing sovereign Sultanate governed by virtue of the 1959 written constitution. His majesty is also the Prime Minister, the Defense and Finance Ministers. The total area is about 5,765 sq.km, which comprises land of 5,265 sq.km in land, and water 500 of sq.km. In 2012, the total population reached 408,786 while an annual population growth rate was 1.691%. Such a few population, Brunei cannot provide the manpower needed to serve the development project. The largest employer is the government sector, and it offers security, benefit, and flexible working time than the private sector. Since the main revenue of country is export of crude oil and natural gas which accounted for over half of Brunei's GDP per capita. In 1994, the First KPLB were found a communal cooperative farm that it was as a mandatory requirement for approval of the villages to get the land to produce fruits and vegetables. In 2013, there were 227 cooperative's having been established with 39 percent of active operation; however, the rest was inactive. The only one successful case relating to agricultural cooperative is KOSEKA. However, KOSEKA is a non-agricultural cooperative interested in growing Padi.

**Cambodia:** Phalla and Sothea (2013) stated that Cambodia is located in the West and the North of Thailand, Laos to the South and east by Vietnam, and the Gulf of Thailand. The total area is 181,035 km<sup>2</sup>. The population is 15 million people. Around 85 percent of Cambodians live in rural areas and 19.5 percent in urban areas. So there is a wide gap between the rural poor and urban population. The economic base is shifting away from agriculture, fisheries and forestry with the sector accounting for around 30% of GDP. Cambodia industry sector is accounted for 30% of GDP; however, the textiles, garments and services is accounted for 40%. The Cambodia GDP growth is around 6.2%. The policy for administrative system is to define the objectives of the national decentralization and de-concentration reforms strategy. The sub-national governance system is categorized into three levels: Commune-Sangkat, District-Khan and Provinces/Municipalities. According to the Cambodia data in 2013, there were 385 agricultural cooperatives in 24 provinces. The total member was 35,630. The total capital was around 2,436,677 USD.

**Indonesia:** Lydia *et al.* (2013) cited that Indonesia is an archipelagic country which comprises 17,480 Islands. The country is located in Southeast Asia. The north boundary connects to Malaysia (Sarawak and Sabah States) and Pacific Ocean while the south connects to Arafura Sea. The east connects to Papua New Guinea whereas the west connects to the Indian Ocean. The total length of Indonesia's coastline is 95,181 kilometers. The total area is about 1.9 million square kilometers. The total area of the sea is 7.9 million square kilometers with an exclusive economic zone. The government system is classified into three levels: central government, provincial government (34

provinces) and district government (409 district government). The population is around 240 million people. The growth rate is 1.49%. Most Indonesians are in agricultural sector, following by trade, hotel and restaurant, transportation and communication, processing industry respectively. Agricultural cooperative development is still slow due to several kinds of problems that derived from both international problems and external conditions. However, the Indonesia government takes into account for promoting cooperatives development through policy and program of cooperative development. Cooperatives, as economic enterprises, participate in strategic functions for supporting the achievement of agricultural development.

**Lao PDR:** Lattanamala *et al.* (2014) declared that Lao PDR has 17 provinces, and a capital: Vientiane. It has 147 districts, 10,574 villagers and 931,000 households. Lao has only one party. Lao population comprised 3 ethnic groups: Lao Loum (57%), Lao Theung (34%), and Lao Soung (9%). The total population is approximately 7 million people. Most of Lao populations (around 80%) live in rural areas. In 2012, Lao economic growth rate was 8.3%. The service sector accounted for 40% of GDP, following by the industry sector (34% of GDP) and agriculture (26% of GDP). Lao PDR has set up 212 farmers groups to produce the agricultural commodities. In early 2013, the country established the Department of Agriculture and Extension and Cooperatives. An agricultural cooperative on coffee and rice miller association was also set up. The ministerial decrees is legislated such as Village Cluster (PM/13, 2008), Land Leases or Concession (Om/135, 2009), Association (PM/115, 2009), Cooperative (PM136, 2010), Standard for Poverty

Reduction (PM/201, 2012), MAF organization and functions (PM/262, 2012).

**Malaysia:** Hambal (2013) mentioned that Malaysia has the area of 300,308 km<sup>2</sup>. The population is approximately 29 million people. Capital city is Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia is a federal constitutional elective monarchy since 1957. The federal head of state is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, commonly referred to as the “King of Malaysia” There are 14 states in Malaysia. The economic activity is classified into five areas: financial services, wholesale and retail, tourism, personal & healthcare, agriculture & agro-based industry, and plantation. The socio-economic development in Malaysia focused on agricultural sector. The cooperatives in Malaysia were in rapid growth in 1970s, and its manifestation in economic development of the nation. Therefore, agricultural sector plays a significant role in the socio-economic development in Malaysia. Sharnsudin and Apandi (2014) also stated that this sector contributes around 12% of Malaysia GDP. However the agriculture is mainly for self-consumption and traditionally bound. The first cooperative in Malaysia was introduced in 1922 by the British. The objective of cooperative is to control widespread indebtedness of rural farmers and government servants. Cooperatives are regarded as a benevolent institution to improve the social and economic status of the less privileged section of the Malaysian society. All cooperatives, regarding the rural, urban, agro or fisheries’ based were under the supervision of the Cooperative Development Department.

**Myanmar:** Myanmar is the 40<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world and the second largest country in South East Asia region. The country comprises seven states and seven regions. At present, the capital of Myanmar is

Nay Pyi Taw. Myanmar is located in strategic area with connecting border with Asian countries such as China, Thailand, Bangladesh. According to Kyaw and Tun (2014), they found out that the population was about 60.38 million in 2013; however, the annual growth rate is only 1.01%. The 72 percent of people live in rural area cultivating on agriculture and livestock farming. Due to the landscape and resources, Myanmar is prominent as an agricultural country. The 26 percent of GDP is from agricultural sector. Additionally, agricultural sector contributes 16.4 percent of the total export earnings and 61.2 percent of the total labor force. Rice is the main export commodity of Myanmar and announced as the national crop. In 2001-12, rice production accounts for 45 percent of the total agricultural crop production, 17.6 percent of the total agriculture export, utilizes 44 percent of total available commercial fertilizers and 84 percent of the total farm credit.

**Philippines:** According to Jarvinia & Claveron (2014), Philippines is in Southeast Asia. The country contains 3 main island groups: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Philippines is one of the largest island-groups in the world with 7,100 island and islets. Around 4,000 islands are named and about 1,000 islands are inhabited. Only 460 islands are larger than 2.6 square kilometers. The total area is 300,000 square kilometers while the length is 1,850 kilometers (North and South) and the width 1,100 kilometers (East to West). The capital city is Manila. Philippines has 101,833,938 million people with an annual growth rate 1.9%. Most Filipinos (96% of total population) can read and write. The language is English, Filipino (Tagalog) and eight (8) major dialects. Services sector (54%) is the most contribution

sector, following by industry sector (31%) and agricultural sector (15%).

**Singapore:** Singapore is an island. The country is located in the South of Malaysia. The area is around 716.1 km<sup>2</sup>. The population is around 5.469 million people in 2014 (World Bank, 2015). At present, Singapore is known as a global financial center with tropical climate and multicultural population. Moreover, the country is highly ranked for its living standards, education, healthcare and economic competitiveness. The cooperatives in Singapore is broadly classified into three categories: a) consumers and service co-ops, b) credit co-ops, and c) school co-ops. Since the area is limited, the natural resource is also limited. Therefore, there is no agricultural cooperatives in Singapore (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2014).

**Vietnam:** Nhung and Chi (2013).cited that Vietnam is located on the Eastern border of the Indo-Chinese peninsula on the East Sea Coast. In 2013, Vietnam population was about 86 million people. An annual population growth rate was 1.1%. However, Vietnam forecasted that population would reach 90 million people in 2014. The main sector is agriculture, which contributes 19.3% in 2012. Vietnam is also a major exporter of agricultural products in the world. The agricultural products export was estimated at US\$ 19.9 billion in 2010. In 2013, there were 9,351 agricultural cooperatives in Vietnam, an increase of 1,884 cooperatives comparing with 2002. When considering on each sector, it was found that agricultural cooperatives accounted for 93.8%, 5% of fishery cooperatives, 0.45% forestry cooperatives and 0.75% of salt cooperatives. Each cooperative can operate different services. Additionally, Vietnam enacted the Cooperative Law 2012 in order to incorporate to all types of cooperatives, especially to support

agricultural cooperatives. However, agricultural cooperatives rely on self-financing to operate business activities. Only a few cooperatives acquire a small amount of loan from Bank. Profit distribution is based on member share which is executed in number of cooperatives. In general, cooperatives use 30%-50% of the net profit to distribute as dividend on share and the rest is used for cooperative funds.

**Thailand:** Thailand is located in South-East Asia. The northern border connects to Myanmar and Laos while the southern border is Malaysia. The East connect to Laos and Cambodia, whereas the western border is Myanmar and Indian Ocean. The total area is 514 thousand sq.km. The country comprises 76 provinces which are further divided into districts, sub-districts and villages. The capital city is Bangkok and the center of political, commercial, industrial and cultural activities. Thailand has four natural regions:1) mountains & forests of the North, 2) vast rice field of the Central Plains, 3) semi-arid farm lands of the Northeast plateau, and 4) tropical islands and long coastline of the peninsula South. The population is around 67.5 million people. According to the data in 2012 agricultural sector contributed 8,4% of the country GDP (Maila *et al.*, 2013). However, the labor force in agriculture is around 39.6% which is the highest one. In 1915, the first cooperative division was established in Thailand. There are seven types of cooperatives as following:

- 1) agricultural coops,
- 2) fishery coops,
- 3) land settlement coops,
- 4) thrift and credit coops,
- 5) consumer coops,
- 6) service coops, and
- 7) Credit union coops.

There are 8,045 Thailand cooperatives and the members are 11.11 million people.

**Discussion**

The purposes on cooperatives are different in common; however, there are three reasons (O’Connor, 2004). The first reason is to increase bargaining power. The second reason is to raise perishability of the product they produce. The last reason is their opportunity to pursue a particular business opportunity through acting together. **Table 2** showed that most ASEAN member countries strongly supported agricultural cooperatives,

**TABLE 2:** Government Support of Agricultural Cooperatives

Country Name	Government Support
Brunei Darussalam (Said & Hamid, 2013)	Incentives were given by the government through the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources to develop every cooperative.
Cambodia (Vanny <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	The agricultural policy was issued by the royal government to support farmers such as the one-village one-product policy.
Indonesia (Gandini <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	Indonesia government strongly supported agricultural cooperatives, by providing credit and incentives (credit guarantee paid by government).
Lao PDR	N/A
Malaysia (Ahmad, 2006)	The government had supported the agricultural cooperatives by financing the loan through the Malaysia Agricultural Bank (BPM) and joint venture with the private sectors.
Myanmar (Kyaw & Tun, 2014)	The government also dominated all processes along the supply chain of major crops.
Philippines (Jarvinia & Claveron, 2014)	The cooperatives registered under the law of RA 6938, giving the privileges such as government offices free of charge, and the custodian of such articles etc.
Singapore	N/A
Vietnam (Nhung & Chi, 2013; Ducc & Ha, 2014)	Vietnam government supported the cooperatives by using taxation and supporting activities.

Country Name	Government Support
Thailand (Maila <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	Thai government assisted agricultural cooperative through the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, and other lending agencies.

and the government provided incentives, loans, credit, joint venture as well as the other privileges. According to **table 3**, the challenges on agricultural in ASEAN can be concluded as following:

- 1) Members have less knowledge movement and experience on agricultural cooperatives. Some agricultural cooperatives lacked trust in the operational cooperatives.
- 2) The agricultural cooperatives have less commitment among related members and agencies. Though agricultural cooperative have been developed more than a century, they still lack understanding about what the market needs. Moreover, they don’t have capability to meet the huge market demands.
- 3) Since agriculture is based on seasoning, agricultural cooperatives may face financial problems. Some countries such as Cambodia lacks financial resource.
- 4) The agricultural cooperatives lack knowledge in agriculture techniques and technology as well as research and development.
- 5) The agricultural cooperative lack human resources, and also the management skills,

entrepreneurial skills and technological access and capability.

- 6) The agricultural cooperatives have inadequate agriculture infrastructure and inefficiency on delivery system in some countries.
- 7) The agricultural cooperatives have inappropriate rules and regulations in some countries such as Myanmar.

**TABLE 3:** Challenges of Agricultural Cooperatives

Country Name	Challenges on Agricultural Cooperatives
Brunei Darussalam (Said & Hamid, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Less knowledge of cooperative movement</li> <li>2) Less commitment on farm management</li> <li>3) Less understand in marketing</li> <li>4) Financial problems on some cooperative</li> <li>5) Insufficient basic structure</li> <li>6) Limited skill on human resources</li> <li>7) Not fully utilized on some land</li> </ul>
Cambodia (Vanny <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) High cost of facilities, lack of warehouse, lack of grain dryers</li> <li>2) Low competitive comparing with private sector</li> <li>3) Inadequate capital,</li> <li>4) Lack of financial resources</li> <li>5) Membership limitation</li> <li>6) Lack of knowledge and experience</li> <li>7) Lack of networking and market linkages,</li> <li>8) Lack of knowledge in agricultural techniques</li> <li>9) Lack of transportation means.</li> </ul>
Indonesia (Gandini <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Limited access to finance, resources, technology and market</li> <li>2) Lacking not only low human resources but also the management skills, entrepreneurial skills and technology capability</li> <li>3) Limited used of modern equipment</li> <li>4) Low quality of cooperatives institution</li> <li>5) Limited capacity to fulfill huge market demands</li> <li>6) Inability to optimize the economic scale due to limited cooperation/networking among and between cooperatives and other business entities.</li> </ul>

Country Name	Challenges on Agricultural Cooperatives
Lao PDR (Lattanamala <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	Some cooperatives are bankrupt due to the following reasons:1) government policy was founding the cooperative in other to food security, 2) everyone has to share growth, land and labor into cooperative activities after that sharing benefit and products equaling, 3) it is still lack of trust in the operational cooperative.
Malaysia (Sharnsudin & Apandi, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Slow transforming process from small scale planting to modern agriculture sector</li> <li>2) Deficiency market competitiveness and private sectors participation</li> <li>3) Enhanced occupational prospects in the manufacturing sector</li> <li>4) Inadequate agriculture infrastructure</li> <li>5) Decrease in values chain</li> <li>6) Low penetration of information and communication technology to increase productivity</li> <li>7) Inefficiency in the delivery system</li> <li>8)Weaknesses in the marketing system as well as research and development</li> </ul>
Myanmar (Kyaw & Tun, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lack of trust and information</li> <li>2) Insufficient information technology, market structure and governance structure and farm management in the product flow</li> <li>3) Lack of collaborative relationship in the finances flow</li> <li>4) Lack of bot soft and hard infrastructure</li> </ul>
Philippines (Calonzo & Paler, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The section process is poor, especially on the directors who fail to support their cooperatives.</li> <li>2) The members do not realize how to use their cooperatives and bypass it for a small gain elsewhere.</li> <li>3) Though members use their cooperative, it fails to take responsibility.</li> <li>4) Only a few persons make a policy while the other members have never asked questions.</li> <li>4) The members do not show up on annual meeting and the directors do not join in board meeting.</li> <li>5) The members lack consistent membership education on the cooperative problems and the challenges.</li> <li>6) The cooperatives lack fund to get the job done.</li> <li>7) Since the fund is limited, only low cost management has been applied.</li> <li>8) The cooperatives information still conceal. All facts have to be informed.</li> </ul>
Singapore	N/A
Vietnam (Nhung & Chi, 2013)	1) While private traders are actively dominated in rural areas which is getting more competitive in agricultural supply services, agricultural cooperatives solely managed themselves.

Country Name	Challenges on Agricultural Cooperatives
	2) Vietnam is transforming from self-sufficient agricultural production into commercial concern. 3) The other obstacle of agricultural cooperative is the shortage of working capital.
Thailand (Maila <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	1) Low quality and quantity of the products, 2) Cheap and fluctuated price of agricultural products in the market, 3) Lack of suitable subsidy program from the government. 4) Though agricultural cooperatives successfully run the business, most of them face some difficult problems. 5) Lack of infrastructure facilities

As a result, the study found that the most important issue on developing ASEAN cooperatives were to educate people of their countries on related areas: cooperatives system, management system, marketing as well as up-to-date technology. Since each countries may have same problems or different problems, they have to collaborate and share the idea on how they solve their problems or other relate issues.

**CONCLUSION**

This article divided into three parts: introduction, current situation, results and discussion. Introduction part is illustrated on why ASEAN is quite challenging for the countries preparing on agricultural sectors and how agricultural cooperatives are important. The second part is the current situation on agricultural cooperatives among ASEAN member countries. The study found that all ASEAN countries, except Singapore, mainly focused on agricultural sector since main exported products are from agriculture. The

last part is the results and discussion, which is classified into two parts: government support and challenges. For government support, the government supports agricultural cooperatives through incentives, privileges, loans or credit and the joint venture program. For the challenges, the agricultural cooperatives have inadequate infrastructure, inappropriate rules and regulations. They lack knowledge and experience in cooperatives system as well as understanding in both management and marketing, especially on consumers’ needs. Moreover, they lack financial resources, techniques and up-to-date technology. Finally, they also lack skilled human resources in agricultural cooperatives. Therefore, the recommendation is that the countries should educate their people in the following aspects: cooperative system, management, marketing, up-to-date technology. Additionally, the agricultural cooperatives have to be more collaborative with other countries in order to improve their ability on related issues.

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