

Value addition to agricultural products for new markets

Value addition” to agricultural products refers to processes such as cleaning, sorting, grading, packing, processing, packaging, and branding. Ready-to-eat salad mixes, presliced vegetables, and partially prepared frozen meat and fish dishes are current popular examples of value-added agricultural products. Value addition can also involve product differentiation: food grown and processed organically; regionally branded food; antibiotic-free meat; and specific certification. On-farm value-adding activities can increase the income of farming households, while off-farm ones can create allied enterprises with employment opportunities. However, the key objective is to attract consumers willing to pay premium prices for such products.

The APO organized a training course on Value Addition to Agricultural Products for Greater Access to New Markets in Manila, 9–14 July. Twenty-one participants from 12 countries along with two overseas and two local resource persons attended. The course aimed to illustrate the concepts of and approaches to value addition to agricultural products, analyze market opportunities, and share strategies for wider acceptance of agricultural and food products in international markets.

Managing Director Taneo Moriyama of Insight Inc., a Japan-based consulting firm, noted that increasingly fast-paced lifestyles in urban areas of growth-leading economies create demand for more value-added products as exemplified by convenience food. Currently, microwaveable frozen food is a mainstream item in Japanese supermarkets and convenience stores, a trend also observed in other countries. He also pointed to the rise in consumer demand for functional food among the health-

conscious and aging populations.

International resource person Dr. Navam S. Hettiarachchy, IFT Fellow, Department of Food Science and Institute of Food Science and Engineering, University of Arkansas, USA, concurred, explaining that people are increasingly health conscious and opting for healthy food, functional food, and nutraceuticals. The trend creates opportunities for agribusinesses and entrepreneurs in the food industry. Both resource persons advised that those planning to offer value-added products should target specific consumer groups and their health and convenience needs.

During the course sessions, participants examined various value-adding processes and techniques for fruit and vegetables, grains, and meat and fish products. They also discussed how such products could penetrate overseas markets like Japan. The Vitarich Corporation, a company engaged in processing pangasius fish into finished food products, hosted a site visit. Participants were also introduced to the operations of three small farmers of pangasius fish and a small enterprise that fillets the fish, all in Bulacan province. 🌐



Small farmers harvesting pangasius fish in Bulacan, Philippines, for subsequent value-added processing by SMEs.