

Food supply chains in the land of tulips

The Netherlands, famed for its prize tulips, is the world's third-largest exporter of agricultural products and a leader in high-tech market gardening, dairy farming, and modern food supply chain management from farm to fork. The APO, as an advocate of food safety and quality management, dispatched an observational study mission on Building Reliable, Safe, Green Food Supply Chains to the Netherlands in collaboration with the Wageningen Expertise Centre for Chain and Network Studies (WCNS), 1–5 April. The 13 participants investigated the Netherlands' food marketing system, roles and functions of each player in the supply chain, and related technology-intensive systems.

The mission first visited the Agricultural Economics Research Institute of Wageningen UR (LEI) where experts from the WCNS and LEI explained the horticulture sector, agricultural markets, and food supply chains in the Netherlands. A tour of Naktuinbouw, a nonprofit horticultural inspection service organization, demonstrated its value-added seed quality control practices. On the second day, FloraHolland, the Netherlands' foremost cooperative flower auction center, hosted the participants before they traveled to the commercial supplier Haluco to learn about its interwoven network of contractors, clients, and growers, both foreign and domestic. In the afternoon, participants observed the award-winning, energy-producing greenhouse at the Wageningen UR Greenhouse Horticulture. They also heard a presentation on greenhouses as a source of innovation at the Foundation for Innovation in Greenhouse Horticulture. "The innovative greenhouse was outstanding and proves that a greenhouse can be a source of energy," commented Executive Director Tan Jin Soon, GS1 Singapore Council-cum-member of the Singapore Standards Council, SPRING.

The third day featured speakers from the Product Board for Horticulture, Holland Product Promotion, and Flowers&Food who spoke on the importance of collaboration among trading partners and supply chain members. Then Hessing, a leading vegetable and fruit cutting operation, opened its factory to the mission to demonstrate its processes. The fourth day also comprised three lectures on



Participants at the Wageningen UR Greenhouse Horticulture

food safety practices, governance, and research activities before visiting Friesland Foods Western Europe, a multinational producer of dairy products, fruit drinks, and food ingredients. The mission ended with the annual Kom in de Kas (come in the greenhouse) festival, where APO participants joined locals in learning how growers ensure safe products.

Mission members expressed satisfaction with the study mission. "We saw and studied many wonderful systems, organizations, and processes. We may not be able to apply everything in our country, but most of our learning will be used someday within our organizations," commented Senior Manager Nihal Senerath, Jaykay Marketing Services (Pvt.), Sri Lanka. 🇱🇰