



Asian Productivity Organization “The APO in the News”

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Kingdom Eyes Improved Food Safety Standard

While food safety control services and inspection systems for food products at the Industrial Laboratory Center of Cambodia (ILCC) have showed some improvements, the ILCC still lags behind Asean standards, according to Ministry of Industry and Handicraft secretary of state Sat Samy.

Speaking at the National Workshop on Food Safety and Inspection Systems for Food Products in Cambodia yesterday, Mr. Samy recognized the improvements of the ILCC, but added that small and medium-sized industries (SME) were still bringing their products for inspection at laboratory centers in neighboring Vietnam and Thailand in order to comply with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) standards for food safety.

“The ministry has encouraged all SMEs to use the local service as much as possible while the ministry seeks a way to push services at the Laboratory Center to be more efficient in order to support the food safety sector and to reach Asean food safety standards that other members [adhere to],” Mr. Samy said.

Muhammad Saeed, director of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO), said yesterday at the National Workshop that food safety and inspection systems are in place to protect the health and safety of the Cambodian people. Adherence to international guidelines is vital, he added.

“Producers, importers and exporters should be careful about control systems for food safety and should strengthen food production standards. The main challenges to controlling food safety is a lack of policy, awareness, monitoring, coordination, infrastructure and budget,” Mr. Saeed said.

He added that Food safety is not only a Cambodian problem, but an international problem and one of the world’s main causes of illness and disease, which, he said, lead to a loss of productivity that negatively impacts the economy.

Chour Chheng, director of Ky Siv Chheng Protein Food enterprise—a local producer of dried meat, fruit and jam—told Khmer Times that he brought his products to an Industrial Laboratory Center every six months. The price of inspection at the ILCC is much lower than that at laboratories in Vietnam and Thailand where Mr. Chheng sometimes must have his food inspected. \$500 to \$1,000 is charged for the testing of each item at these international laboratories.

“If we do laboratory tests often, we spend a lot of money since one item costs about \$40 for inspection. Moreover, the services and ability to control food safety and inspection systems for food products at the Industrial Laboratory Center of Cambodia (ILCC) is limited. Some products cannot be tested for their quality, as the ILCC doesn’t have enough laboratory equipment to do so. So for some products we have to go to Vietnam and Thailand. Cambodia’s laboratory is cheaper than Thailand and Vietnam, but the Cambodian lab’s ability is not robust enough. Its capacity can only serve to do some work while some products are beyond its capacity,” Mr. Chheng said.

Te Taing Por, president of the Federation of Associations for Small and Medium Enterprises of Cambodia (FASMEC), told Khmer Times that Cambodian SMEs are working hard to make ensure that product quality complies with international and Asean standards after the Asean Economic Community (AEC) began adhering to such universal standards at the end of last year.

He added the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft is also pushing the national standard for imports and exports so that they are comparable to Asean standards.

“Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises are highly updated currently, but I don’t have any information on hand regarding how standardized they are in terms of food safety because the majority of them are family businesses. Among the 530,000 SMEs across the country, we found it hard to figure out issues regarding national standards,” Mr. Taing Por said.