



Press Release

EU informed Thai industry about EU Food Contact Materials legislation

Bangkok, 24 February 2015: European and Thai experts on Food Contact Materials (FCM) today explained the European Union's legislation on Food Contact Materials to relevant Thai industry, policy makers and academia. The aim of the gathering was to help stakeholders in Thailand understand the EU's legislation, its relevance to Thailand and to their businesses, and how to ensure that their export products comply with it – a matter of some financial importance. This, in turns, would ultimately help improve Thailand's FCM standards and ensure safer food supply chain for the Thai consumers. The workshop was funded by the European Union.

The materials that come into contact with our food are an important part of everyday life but also pose a significant potential threat to our health. In order to guarantee food safety from "Farm to Fork", food contact materials must be safe and not transfer harmful components, if any, into the foodstuffs in an unacceptable quantity. So, like the USA, Japan, China and some ASEAN countries, including Thailand, the European Union has important legislation to protect the safety of consumers against harmful products coming into contact with the food they eat. The EU's legislation on FCM is one of the most advanced and harmonised among the 28 EU Member States in terms of the materials regulated.

In order both to create a better understanding of the EU's Food Contact Material (FCM) legislation in Thailand and to facilitate trade between the EU and Thailand, the European Union Delegation to Thailand organised today's workshop "*The EU Regulation on Food Contact Materials (FCM) – Plastics, Papers, Coatings and Inks*" together with Kasetsart University's Faculty of Agro-Industry Department of Packaging and Materials Technology. The audience was composed of around 100 representatives of: producers of FCM, food producers using FCM and the academia.

The aim of the workshop was to provide participants with the latest information on food contact materials, a good knowledge of food packaging safety and about how to:

- manufacture packaging materials for food use which comply with the EU legislation;
- demonstrate that FCM products are compliant with EU legislation;
- use FCM products that comply with EU legislation.

The three experts who spoke today had been participating on the previous days in an ASEAN meeting, also funded by the European Union, the purpose of which was to consider how best to harmonize legislations of FCM within ASEAN in view of the forthcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Dr Luigi Rossi (EU Expert) said: "*In the absence of international harmonization on food contact materials, it is useful for Thailand and other ASEAN Member States to refer to the EU legislation in this area. The EU has indeed established a robust and coherent regulatory regime for food contact materials, based on the best available science, which has proved to be compatible with the requirements of international trade, as the EU*



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is both the largest importer and the largest exporter of food in the World."

Dr. Ngamtip Poovarodom (Kasetsart University) said: "*Today Thailand aims at being the "World's Kitchen". We cannot maintain that position if we do not understand, respect and implement foreign regulations and international standards governing food safety, including the important EU legislation on food contact materials. Besides our commercial interest, we have a duty to ensure consumer safety regarding Thailand's food production. So today's workshop, funded by the EU, has been a very valuable contribution to mutual understanding in an important area of Thai industry.*"

Dr. Eric Barthélémy (EFSA) said: "*Ensuring food safety is a top priority and that is what the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) does in Europe. As part of its work, EFSA – which leads the world in this field – provides independent science-based safety evaluation of all EU regulated substances used to manufacture food contact materials and other materials, as well as guidance on their safety evaluation.*"

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Background

Some 10,000 chemicals are involved in the production of Food Contact Materials: there is no such a thing as an “inert” FCM, all have differing levels of toxicity and safety for consumers and, depending on the materials (glass, plastic, paper, etc.), there are also differing levels of migration of FCM chemicals into foodstuffs.

The risk to consumer health is therefore potentially great, so the EU – like the USA, Japan, India and some ASEAN countries, including Thailand – imposes controls on the sort of materials that come into contact with foodstuffs for public consumption. The EU has taken a series of measures, as the science has advanced, to ensure the fullest protection of its citizens against dangers from FCMs.

The EU’s base legislation in this field is Framework Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004. This provides that FCMs must not transfer their constituents to foodstuffs in quantities which could:

- Endanger human health
- Bring about an unacceptable change in the composition of the foodstuffs or a deterioration in the organoleptic¹ characteristics.

This has been supplemented by further specific legislation in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011. The EU’s legislation is one of the most advanced in the world.

Thailand is one of the world's major exporters of food and packaging products and its trade relations with the European Union is significant. The EU has long been a major export destination of Thailand. In 2013, the Thailand's total exports to the EU reached 680 billion Baht (over 17 billion Euros), representing 10% of total Thailand's exports to the world.

For more information please see:

- http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/chemicalsafety/foodcontact/spec_dirs_en.htm

¹ Being, affecting, or relating to qualities (as taste, colour, odour, and feel) of a substance (as a food or drug) that stimulate the sense organs. (Merriam Webster Dictionary)