



Photo Credit: Canva.com

## ASCC 2045: ASEAN's Food Security and Resilience Amidst Disruptions

*Kayven Tan*

In the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Strategic Plan, food security is positioned within a broader agenda of sustainability, inclusivity, and crisis preparedness. Yet, the region's food systems are entering a period of heightened uncertainty, shaped not only by climate change and structural constraints, but also by intensifying geopolitical disruptions.

The central challenge for ASEAN would be whether it can secure stable, affordable, and nutritious food for its population in a world where the very systems underpinning food production and trade are becoming more fragile.

### **From Interdependence to Vulnerability**

ASEAN's food system has long been defined by interdependence. Major agricultural exporters such as Thailand and Vietnam supply staples across the region, while highly urbanised economies like Singapore rely heavily on global imports. This model has delivered efficiency and growth but it has also created exposure to external shocks.

In this regard, the ASCC Strategic Plan recognises this tension, calling for stronger regional coordination, improved supply chain connectivity, and enhanced emergency response mechanisms. Initiatives such as regional food reserves and trade facilitation are intended to cushion disruptions. However, it is also important to note that these mechanisms were largely designed for short-term shocks, not for the prolonged and compounding disruptions that increasingly define today's global environment.

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## A More Fragile Global Food System

Recent geopolitical developments highlight how quickly food systems can come under strain. Ongoing tensions like the Iran war and instability around the Strait of Hormuz have exposed critical vulnerabilities in the deep linkages between food production and energy supply chains.

Modern agriculture is highly dependent on energy inputs, not only for transportation, but also for fertiliser production. A significant portion of global fertiliser trade relies on energy-intensive processes and transit routes that pass through key maritime chokepoints. Disruptions in these flows can drive up fertiliser prices, constrain availability, and ultimately raise food prices.

More broadly, such disruptions illustrate a structural shift where food security risks are no longer solely confined to weather patterns or domestic production capacity. They are increasingly shaped by geopolitical tensions, energy supply volatility, and the stability of global trade routes. In this context, the traditional efficiency-driven food systems may become liabilities rather than strengths.

## Bridging Policy Ambition and Structural Reality

The ASCC Strategic Plan reflects a comprehensive understanding of food security as a multidimensional issue which encompasses availability, access, nutrition, and sustainability. It also promotes climate-smart agriculture, digital innovation, and stronger social protection systems to safeguard vulnerable populations.

However, translating these ambitions into outcomes will be challenging. Structural constraints persist across ASEAN member states, including limited agricultural land, uneven technological adoption, and disparities in infrastructure and governance capacity. Many smallholder farmers who form the backbone of regional food production often lack access to financing, technology, and markets which further limits their ability to adapt to changing conditions. As food security risks become more complex and transboundary in nature, the need for faster and more decisive regional action will grow.

## Rethinking Resilience for 2045

ASEAN may need to rethink resilience beyond traditional frameworks. Diversification of supply sources, production systems, and trade partnerships will be increasingly essential. Investments in local and regional production capacity, including urban agriculture and alternative food sources could reduce dependence on external supply chains.

Recent discussions at the 48th ASEAN Summit further underscore how food security is becoming increasingly intertwined

in the region's strategic thinking. Amid disruptions linked to instability in the Middle East and concerns over prolonged supply shocks, ASEAN leaders proposed new measures including a regional fuel stockpile and a standby arrangement for food security to strengthen collective preparedness during crises. These discussions reflect growing recognition that resilience can no longer be pursued solely at the national level but may increasingly depend on coordinated regional mechanisms capable of cushioning supply disruptions and stabilising food prices during periods of geopolitical uncertainty. In an increasingly turbulent world, ASEAN's resolve and ability to align its long-term vision with immediate realities will be tested.

Ultimately, the question is not whether ASEAN can produce enough food, but whether it can sustain a food system that remains functional under pressure. In an era of overlapping crises from climate change to geopolitical disruptions, food security will depend less on abundance, and more on resilience.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

ASEAN. "ASEAN Community Vision 2045: Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic, and People-Centred ASEAN." Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2025.

UNCTAD: Strait of Hormuz Disruptions: Implications for Global Trade and Development." UNCTAD, 10 March 2026.

Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros, Kayven Tan, Mely Caballero-Anthony. "Securing ASEAN's Food Resilience Amidst the Middle East Conflict". RSIS Commentary No. CO26053. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, 20 March 2026.

Jose Ma. Luis P. Montesclaros, Kayven Tan, Mely Caballero-Anthony, Mercedita Sombilla. "Food Security in ASEAN's 2026 Agenda: Perspectives on Human Security and Inclusiveness Amidst Crises". RSIS Commentary No. CO26076. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, 10 April 2026.

Paul Teng. "Aligning Climate and Food Security Policies in ASEAN". Fulcrum, ISEAS. 2026/49.

# CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

## NEWS & COMMENTARIES

### **'Historic breakthrough': Colombia climate talks end with hopes raised for fossil fuel phaseout**

The inaugural conference on transitioning away from fossil fuels has concluded, with governments asked to develop national "roadmaps" setting out how they will end the production and use of fossil fuels. The conference, marking a departure from the annual UN climate negotiations, consisted of countries willing to commit to a phaseout has helped present a pathway forward to break the consensus deadlock that has limited progress at UN-level negotiations.

**Fiona Harvey and Jonathan Watts**

The Guardian | 30 April 2026

### **El Niño likely to return: The case for early action**

Climate models indicate that a strong El Niño is likely to emerge by mid-2026. Amplified by climate change, investments in resilience are critical to mitigate potential large-scale implications for Asia including droughts, food insecurities, and public health emergencies.

**Kareff Rafisura**

UNESCAP | 8 May 2026

### **Climate archives and the new geography of risk**

New scientific tools – from DNA analysis to climate archives – are transforming how history is written and used. By reconstructing past environments and crises, we are able to gain vital insights for navigating an ongoing climate reorganisation that will have a profound impact on water availability, food provision, disease environments, and more.

**Peter Frankopan**

RSIS Commentary | 8 May 2026

### **Global green shipping deal still on course, say advocates**

The Net-Zero Framework aimed at curbing the shipping sector's emissions has survived renewed attempts to wreck it during recent meetings at the UN's maritime agency, International Maritime Organization (IMO). With approximately 3 per cent of global gas emissions stemming from shipping, a vote on the framework may occur in November, and is currently supported by slightly above half of voting countries.

**Regina Lam**

Eco-Business | 10 May 2026

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### **Country climate and development report: Malaysia**

This report offers analysis and guidance on how Malaysia can pursue resilient and sustained growth, while addressing the dynamically evolving climate change crisis. With macro modelling and sectoral analysis, it identifies major climate challenges, estimates potential impacts of climate risks on economic development, and provides tailored policy recommendations.

**World Bank | 2026**

### **European state of the climate: Report 2025**

Since the 1980s, Europe has been warming twice as fast as the global average, making it the fastest-warming continent on Earth. Heatwaves are becoming more frequent and severe. Glaciers in all European regions continue to melt. Changes in precipitation patterns, including an increase in the intensity of the most extreme events, have been observed. In 2025, annual temperatures were above average across almost the entire continent (at least 95%).

**Copernicus Climate Change Service | the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts and World Meteorological Organization | 2026**

## EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

### **2026 UN General Assembly Signature Event on Climate**

Under the theme of 'Accelerating the Global Energy Transition: Advancing Renewables and Mobilizing Investment', the event will offer an opportunity for the UN General Assembly to take stock of progress in the energy transition, share best practices and lessons learned among Member States, and identify actions to accelerate implementation of already agreed goals.

**New York, USA**

1 June 2026

# ENERGY SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

## NEWS & COMMENTARIES

### From oil shock to nuclear surge in Asia

*The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has delivered a sharp energy shock to Asia, exposing the region's deep vulnerability to external supply disruptions. Yet even before the conflict, a growing urgency was evident among policymakers to accelerate alternative, reliable low-carbon energy sources, with nuclear power increasingly central to recalibrating Asia's energy strategies.*

**Julius Cesar Trajano**

*The Interpreter* | 15 April 2026

### Asia is turning to coal in the Iran crisis, but nuclear power will be the real endgame

*Coal may be a readily available buffer for now, but the Iran war will not derail the transition to cleaner energy. The Iran war will reinforce, not reverse, the region's shift to a more diversified energy mix. Energy policymakers are recognising that nuclear power offers a reliable, low-carbon, and domestically controlled energy source compared to imported fossil fuels.*

**Julius Cesar Trajano**

*Fortune* | 24 April 2026

### How is war in the Middle East reshaping Asia's energy transition?

*Geopolitical disruption to fossil fuel supply is both a strong long-term argument for accelerating renewables deployment and a powerful short-term brake on doing so. Asia's dependence on imported fossil fuels is turning geopolitical tensions into an economic strain, with energy security and diversification emerging as core strategic policy priorities.*

**Nicholas Wagner, Sacha Bazin and Ojasvee Arora**

*World Economic Forum* | 6 May 2026

### Will the Iran war finally spur ASEAN into collective action on energy security?

*The oil supply shock is a crisis for South-east Asia. But it can also energise political efforts to finally accelerate long-delayed plans for regional energy integration, diversification and collective resilience against future energy shocks,*

**Ong Keng Yong**

*RSIS Commentary* | 7 May 2026

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### Exploring socio-psychological drivers of nuclear power acceptance in Jordan: A machine learning approach

*From a governance perspective, results emphasize regulatory credibility, safety oversight, and effective communication of societal and environmental benefits in shaping public acceptance. Overall, the study provides insights to support evidence-based policymaking and regulatory capacity building for countries pursuing nuclear energy.*

**Ahmad Sattam Alhawamdeh, Ierene Novendah and Yogi Tri Prasety**

*Nuclear Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 58, No. 8 | 2026

### Critical mineral traceability for energy and economic security

*Amid rising risks linked to the high concentration of critical mineral supply chains, the ability to track where minerals originate, how they move through supply chains, who has custody of them and how they are transformed is increasingly important for policymakers seeking to create diversified and responsible supply chains.*

**International Energy Agency** | 2026

## EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

### GIF - IAEA Joint Webinar: Artificial Intelligence Advances in the Nuclear Energy Sector

*The panel session presented and discussed current artificial intelligence (AI) activities for nuclear power applications, including to support reactor design, plant operations, the nuclear fuel cycle, as well as engaging, training, and educating nuclear engineering students in the AI domain.*

**Recorded Webinar**

5 May 2026

# FOOD SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

## NEWS & COMMENTARIES

### Food security in ASEAN's 2026 agenda: Perspectives on human security and inclusiveness amidst crises

Farmers form the backbone of ASEAN agriculture but are increasingly vulnerable amidst crises and longer-term structural challenges, including ageing, urbanisation, and natural disasters. ASEAN's 2026 agenda should elevate food security to a core focus, with greater inclusivity, while addressing the human concerns of vulnerable groups including bridging knowledge and skill gaps in digital technologies.

**Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros, Kayven Tan, Mely Caballero-Anthony, and Mercedita Sombilla**

RSIS Commentary | 10 April 2026

### Fuel shortage in crisis-hit Myanmar deepens daily hardship, raises food security concerns

Farmers in Myanmar are struggling to harvest their crops given the fuel-dependence of machines for threshing grains from husks, and of milling machinery as well. Amidst the middle east tensions, fuel is scarce, putting them at the mercy of black market operators which sell fuel at double the official prices. Such tensions add to ongoing challenges posed by the Mandalay earthquake in the previous year.

**Leong Wai Kit and Louisa Tang**

Channel News Asia | 28 April 2026

### Iran war may cause food shortages in Africa, world's largest fertiliser firm says

The Iran war could have "dramatic consequences", causing food shortages and price rises in some of Africa's poorest and most vulnerable communities. World leaders need to guard against soaring prices and shortages of fertiliser which can cause a de facto global auction for fertiliser supplies – one that would leave the poorest countries scrambling for supplies they can ill afford.

**Lisa O'Carroll and Matthew Pearce**

The Guardian | 1 May 2026

### ASEAN agrees to boost intra-bloc trade to strengthen food security

An outcome of the recent ASEAN Leaders' Summit is the agreement to strengthen intra-bloc trade and reinforce regional food security mechanisms amid rising energy prices and disruptions to global shipping routes caused by conflict in the Middle East. Crisis-response provisions designed to ensure the uninterrupted flow of essential goods during emergencies are also being included in the upgraded ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA).

**Viet Nam News** | 8 May 2026

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### Trade-offs associated with achieving food self-sufficiency: The underlying mechanisms

This study examines how food self-sufficiency policies are increasingly promoted in response to global trade disruptions and food security concerns and how they can create both benefits and trade-offs across economic, social and political dimensions. It argues that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to achieving food self-sufficiency, highlighting the need for context specific strategies that balance resilience, sustainability and socio-economic objectives.

**Achraf Mamassi, et al.**

Global Food Security | March 2026

### What's needed for agrifood systems transition in the Pacific?

This study examines agrifood systems transitions in the Pacific and their role in promoting sustainability, equity and resilience. It highlights the unique characteristics of Pacific food systems and identifies opportunities to strengthen transitions through improved knowledge systems, alignment with existing initiatives and greater regional and international collaboration.

**Lucy Carter, et al.**

Sustainable Food Systems | 2026

## EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

### 7th International Conference on Agriculture, Food Security and Food Safety

This year's conference, themed "Strengthening Agri-Food Resilience: Technology, Safety and Sustainability in the Climate-Challenged World." brings together a diverse community of experts, researchers, policymakers and practitioners to explore innovative solutions to some of the most pressing food security issues. The event will focus on sustainable agriculture, food security, food safety and the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health.

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Hybrid)**

4-5 August 2026

# HEALTH SECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

## NEWS & COMMENTARIES

### **Commentary: Ageing Singapore could use a better way of thinking about 'good' healthcare for seniors**

Singapore's ageing population highlights healthcare's value dilemma: balancing measurable outcomes and costs with patients' dignity, quality of life, and meaningful relationships. True value-based care requires shared decision-making that honours individual preferences, not just clinical metrics.

**Faisal Johandi, Philip Yap, and Tan Kok Yang**

Channel News Asia | 23 April 2026

### **Polyclinic identifies oral frailty as early warning sign of physical decline, aims to prevent falls**

Singapore's Serangoon Polyclinic now screens seniors for oral frailty, linking tooth loss and chewing difficulties to malnutrition, falls, and social isolation. This holistic, proactive approach aims to preserve independence and promote healthy ageing through early, integrated, community-based interventions.

**Joyce Teo**

The Straits Times | 28 April 2026

### **11 cancers on the rise in young people - scientists find first clue why it's happening**

Eleven cancers are rising among young adults. While increasing obesity likely contributes, it doesn't fully explain the trend. Cancer remains rare in this group, and healthy lifestyles can reduce risk, though researchers continue investigating other causes.

**James Gallagher**

BBC News | 29 April 2026

### **Singapore study to examine impact of parents' sensitivity and responsiveness to kids' needs**

Singapore's largest parenting trial, the "Learning about Our behaviour is Valuable for Increasing Nurturing relationship and healthy Growth" (LOVING) study, recruits 624 families to test whether video-feedback coaching on sensitive caregiving improves young children's emotional, cognitive, and physical health.

**Joyce Teo**

The Straits Times | 4 May 2026

## SELECTED PUBLICATION

### **From fragmentation to integration: Can Japan's JIHS deliver a resilient system to deal with health emergencies?**

Japan's 2025 JIHS integrates infectious disease and clinical institutions to strengthen health emergency preparedness. While early progress exists, success hinges on addressing workforce gaps, R&D sustainability, and governance, thus offering lessons for building resilient, coordinated public health systems globally.

**Norihiro Kokudo and Takaji Wakita**

Global health & Medicine | 25 April 2026

### **Health and security: New perspectives on the EU's internal and external action**

Post-pandemic, the EU integrates health and security through the European Health Union, emphasising strategic autonomy and geopolitical positioning. While reforms enhance preparedness, balancing self-interest with global equity remains essential for legitimate, effective health governance worldwide.

**Louise Bengtsson**

Springer Nature | 28 April 2026

## EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

### **Biennial International Congress on Mental Health 2026, Singapore**

Singapore hosts the second Biennial International Congress on Mental Health (BICOMH) 2026, uniting global experts to advance mood and anxiety disorder care through digital innovation, multimorbidity research, and therapeutic transformation, improving treatment outcomes and empowering communities worldwide.

**One Farrer Hotel, Singapore**

15-17 July 2026

# BIOSECURITY



Photo Credit: Adobe Firefly Generated Images

## NEWS & COMMENTARIES

### **Hantavirus: Spread by rodents, potentially fatal, with no specific cure**

*Hantavirus, being linked to deaths on a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean, circulates in rodents and can be deadly when transmitted to humans. The virus can cause respiratory and cardiac distress, as well as haemorrhagic fevers. There are no vaccines or specific medications to combat hantaviruses, meaning treatment consists solely of attempting to relieve the symptoms.*

**Channel News Asia (CNA) | 5 May 2026**

### **Bipartisan primate act aims to ban monkey imports to US**

*A new bipartisan bill could end the import of primates for U.S. research, targeting the roughly 20,000 monkeys brought into the country each year for laboratories or their suppliers. The Preventing Risky Importation of Monkeys to Avoid Toxic Exposures (PRIMATE) Act (H.R. 8471) aims to reduce the risk of introducing dangerous pathogens and strengthen U.S. biosecurity.*

**Will Maddox**

*Fierce Biotech | 6 May 2026*

### **Indonesia boosts biosecurity to curb pests, wildlife trade**

*Indonesia is strengthening its biodiversity protection system through closer inter-agency coordination and operational collaboration to prevent invasive pests and illegal wildlife trade as cross-border environmental risks increase. As part of these efforts, the Forestry Ministry recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indonesian Quarantine Agency to enhance biosecurity coordination.*

**Antara | 6 May 2026**

### **Antarctica's tourism boom raises concerns about contamination and disease**

*Driven in part by fears that the frozen landscapes of Antarctica may be irreversibly melting away because of climate change, tourism to the bottom of the world is soaring. Experts warn that with more visitors comes an increased risk of contamination, illness and other damage to the continent.*

**Sam Mcneil**

*AP News | 6 May 2026*

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### **CEPI Biosecurity Policy**

*This Biosecurity Policy, a key activity set out in CEPI's Biosecurity Strategy and Implementation Plan, is the result of extensive consultation, technical review, and engagement across sectors. It reflects a growing recognition that rapid advances in vaccines R&D and manufacturing, which are essential to realising the ambition of the 100 Days Mission, must be matched by clear, robust and responsible safeguards.*

**Jane Shallcross and Andres Hebbeler**

*Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovations | 2026*

### **Synthetic nucleic acids in a post-agent biosecurity era**

*Since 1980s, DNA synthesis technology has evolved from chemical to enzymatic methods, from single-column synthesis to massively parallel chip-based approaches, and from a handful of commercial providers to a vast global market supplemented by decentralised benchtop system. While these advances have delivered substantial benefits, they have also raised concerns about dual-use risks that existing biosecurity frameworks may not adequately address.*

**Jacob Hofman-Bang, et al.**

*Bioeng. Biotechnol., Vol. 67 | 2026*

## EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

### **Artificial intelligence and biosecurity: Bridging science and practice for predictive animal health**

*The webinar organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation brings together cutting edge innovation and practical field experience to explore how animal biosecurity can be strengthened from farm to policy level. Participants learnt how artificial and digital tools such as predictive analytics, sensors, and real time surveillance, are reshaping animal health system by shifting biosecurity from reactive disease control to proactive prevention, while also addressing governance, ethics, and data challenges.*

**Recorded Webinar**

*4 May 2026*

# MIGRATION



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

## NEWS & COMMENTARIES

### UK sanctions people, entities for recruiting migrants to fight for Russia against Ukraine

The UK announced sanctions against 35 individuals and entities it said were linked to recruitment activities related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as the production of drones associated with the war.

**Sam Tobin**

Reuters | 6 May 2026

### Philippines, India to form joint TWG on migrant labour cooperation

The Philippines and India will be stepping up collaboration on migrant labour governance by forming a joint technical working group (TWG). Both the Philippines and India are among the top global labour-sending countries providing millions of workers for various sectors in the Middle East, North America and European countries.

**Marita Moaje**

Philippine News Agency | 6 May 2026

### A community leader in Mauritania helps youth chart safer paths forward

In Sélibabi, Mauritania, the Young Volunteers for Safe Migration club mobilises young people to bring migration awareness campaigns to their peers, with support from IOM and the Watanouna Programme.

**Kalidou Diagana and Moctar Sy**

IOM Migration | 6 May 2026

### Migrant workers are assets, development drivers

Migration is a major driver of human development globally, says IOM, with an extensive dissection of the immigrants' socio-economic contribution. Remittances from international immigrants amount to \$913 billion in 2025, and it is increasing.

**Richard Mahapatra**

Down to Earth | 7 May 2026

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### World migration report 2026

The publication found that climate disasters have increased in frequency, leading to high numbers of internal displacements. At the same time, international migration has grown at a gradual pace. Globally, migration and mobility remain important drivers of development, innovation and resilience.

**International Organization for Migration | 2026**

### From exile to return: Rebuilding lives and states after conflict

This report maps the options available to migration policymakers as they consider phasing out protection statuses and offers guidance on weighing the trade-offs inherent in managing returns to a country affected by conflict. It focuses in particular on the cases of Syria and Ukraine.

**Samuel Davidoff-Gore and Susan Fratzke**

Migration Policy Institute | 2026

## EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

### Beyond deterrence: What really drives migration decisions

This webinar organised by the Migration Policy Institute Europe presents new empirical evidence from Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria on the forces that shape migration aspirations: how economic transformations disrupt livelihoods and social protection, how large-scale societal change creates the conditions in which people decide to move.

**Recorded Webinar**

April 2026