

Boosting agribusiness SMEs

Although SMEs in the agribusiness sector play a vital economic role and are involved in farming, food processing, transportation, storage, wholesale and retail marketing, and international trade, many are unable to modernize and their efficiency and productivity remain low. Often agribusinesses are saddled with management problems ranging from financing and investment issues, poor quality of products, and unstable production to labor and staffing concerns. To support SMEs in addressing these problems, the APO organized a training course on Improving Managerial Efficiency of Small and Medium Agroenterprises, 8–17 May, in Bangkok, Thailand.

The course consisted of five modules: Basic concepts in the management of agribusiness; Production planning and management; Product quality and safety management; Investment and financial management; and Productivity and quality improvement tools and techniques. Participants were taught to use software applications for financial analysis and logistics planning; for



Quality and safety management in tuna processing demonstrated at Asian Alliance International

most that was the first experience of using computer-based decision-making tools. They recommended that the APO consider including more computer applications in future training courses targeting SMEs.

The factory and restaurant of S&P Global Co., Ltd., a recipient of various awards including the Prime Minister's Export Award in 2005, hosted a site visit. Its founder was recognized as one of the "Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World" in 2006. S&P Global started as a small ice cream parlor and bakery in 1973, diversified into the restaurant business, and now

has over 70 branches in Thailand and 18 in eight other countries. The company demonstrated the application of best management practices that contributed to its success. Participants also visited Asian Alliance International Co., Ltd., in Samutsakorn province, a showcase for best practices in quality and safety management in the processing of canned and frozen tuna for export. Participants were shown how HACCP and food safety management are applied in the company. 