

Promoting Asian tastes in Europe

SMEs in developing countries in Asia produce a range of processed agrifood products with great potential in global markets. However, that potential is not fully exploited by SMEs due to their limited capacity to promote their products in major markets. The APO, in line with its goal of enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, dispatched a study mission on Export Promotion and Market Access for Processed Agrifood Products to France, 20–24 October. The five-day mission provided SME representatives in the agrifood sector in member countries the opportunity to explore the EU market and investigate export promotion.

“There are very few Asian food products, other than Chinese, known to many French and European consumers because of the lack of promotion,” said Antoine Bonnel, Director of AGOR-GL Events, the organizer of the Ethnic Food Show in France. However, the market for Asian food is growing in Europe, as evidenced by the increasing import and distribution by the Paris Store in both France and other EU members, according to CEO Kevin Leang, whose family emigrated from Cambodia to France and started the business in Paris.

The group visited the world’s largest food industry show, le Salon International de l’Agroalimentaire (SIAL) Food Expo in Paris. More than 140,000 visitors and 5,300 exhibitors attend and/or participate in this biennial event for food industry professionals. “As a food scientist and professor, attending SIAL 2008 was a great experience. I obtained extensive information about the latest food products in the EU including ingredients and packing and labeling trends,” said Associate Professor Dr. Puntarika Ratanatriwong, Naresuan University, Thailand.

Rungis International Market has turnover of more than €733 billion and is the biggest fresh produce market in the world. Mission participants visited it from 02:00 to 06:00 to see how wholesale transactions are conducted. They also met Stephanie Monnet, an official of the Federation of Enterprises and Distribu-



Touring Rungis International Market

tors, who explained the requirements of its 26,850 member stores, which must be certified for International Food Safety standards.

During the final session at the ARFOI Cultural Center in an Asian neighborhood, participants agreed that they had better knowledge of the food market structure, import procedures, and regulatory standards in France. “This mission has been very informative and beneficial for my company. The various visits were an eye opener for me since I was able to identify market entry opportunities for the products of my company,” stated Bryan Tan, Philippine entrepreneur of BMI Management Inc., which promotes food products. Participants recommended that the APO organize similar study missions on same subject to the USA, UK, and/or Germany, which are among the largest markets for ethnic food items. 🌀