

# Meeting quality and safety standards for food

**F**ood safety and quality are vital concerns in agriculture and food trade. Consumers are now more conscious of the quality and safety of the food they buy and demand more assurances from agribusiness and food companies. Maintaining high standards of food quality and safety is therefore an essential strategy of many food-processing and -exporting companies. Companies that have adopted rigorous food safety and quality standards as core values enjoy high levels of consumer confidence, strong brand recognition, and sales in major global markets.

Meeting stringent international food safety standards remains a formidable challenge to most developing APO member countries as they seek to expand agricultural and food exports. The APO organized a multi-country study mission in the Philippines, 20–26 August, to bring together experts, researchers, policymakers, extension workers, and entrepreneurs from the public and private sectors to compare current food quality and safety standards in Japan, North America, and the EU with those in developing member countries. Two international experts from Japan and Canada discussed recent developments in standards, and an expert from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Bangkok, described the Codex Alimentarius and its implications for developing countries.

During the workshop session, the participants pointed out the common issue of multiple agencies involved in setting standards in member countries, resulting in weak coordination and additional burdens on SMEs trying to penetrate export markets. In most member countries, there is no legislation mandating the adoption of



*Touring a unique computer-controlled lettuce farm*

HACCP principles in the standard-setting process. The workshop groups agreed that developing countries should be compliant with ISO22000.

The study mission provided participants the opportunity to learn from the best practices of Philippine agribusiness and food companies that compete in global markets, with products ranging from processed mango juice, to fresh and frozen seafood, to processed meat products. Four local resource persons from the Nutrilicious Food Corporation, Seachamp International Export Corporation, and San Miguel Purefoods Company highlighted the best management practices of their respective firms in food quality and safety management. The participants' knowledge was reinforced by visits to the food-processing plants of Nestle Philippines, Lipa City; meat-processing plant of Purefoods Hormel Company, Dasmariñas; and Basic Necessity Inc., Silang. 🍷