

Women in agrifood-processing businesses



Participants engaging in a discussion on certification and safety measures during their visit to the Noraini Cookies Worldwide Sdn. Bhd.

The APO, in partnership with the Malaysian Productivity Corporation (MPC), organized a workshop for Women on Productivity Tools and Techniques for Micro and Small Agrifood-processing Businesses, in Kuala Lumpur, 16–20 November 2015. Seventeen participants from 13 countries attended, with three resource persons from India, the Philippines, and Thailand and one local speaker. The topics covered in the workshop included an overview of women entrepreneurs, women's participation in micro and small agrifood-processing enterprises, food safety and quality management, tools and techniques for productivity improvement, and successful models.

In addition to presentations and sharing of country experiences, the participants visited a family-run business, Noraini Cookies Worldwide Sdn. Bhd. (www.norainis.com.my) in Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan. The company is involved in production, sales, and exports of more than 50 food products such as biscuits/cookies, noodles, pancake mix, and ready-to-eat items enjoyed all over Malaysia and in several other Asia-Pacific countries. Company Director Noraini Bt. Ahmed described the journey she took to establish and sustain the business and was generous in giving useful tips. Hands-on exercises focused on how women can make a difference in productivity in the agrifood-processing sector were based on the Nuraini case study including company profile, good practices, opportunities for improvement (OFI), and recommen-

dations to address the OFI. The participants were divided into four groups and presented their group findings.

On the final day of the workshop, participants evaluated the activities and made informal commitments to utilize and disseminate the knowledge and skills gained. Participant from Vietnam Vu Ngoc Quynh Mai remarked that, "These five days were very special and an unforgettable memory for me. I've gained a lot of information and skills through this workshop and will apply kaizen principles and 5S and share the knowledge with my colleagues." Another participant, Dr. Saitorn Bai-pong from Thailand, found the workshop to be a "wonderful experience." Bangladeshi participant Ismat Jerin Khan stated that, "As an entrepreneur, I have learned a lot from this workshop and it will be very useful to my business career. I thank the APO for giving me this opportunity." APO resource person and Advisor of the Food Science and Technology Association of Thailand Darunee Edwards lauded the workshop as a great achievement and thought that, "All the stakeholders were aware of the important roles of women and the APO should continue more programs with women entrepreneurs, particularly in the micro and small agrifood-processing sector." Chayaa Nanjappa, another resource person and Founder of Nectar Fresh, Pure Honey & Food Products, India, found the workshop to be "an awesome educational experience for networking and sharing a common passion for enhancing productivity and empowering rural folk." 