

Discussion Paper

Sustainability and Food Security:

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES SUPPORTING THE
PHILIPPINES' 2026 ASEAN CHAIRSHIP

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*US-ASEAN Business Council in partnership with the
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2026 ASEAN Chairship

This paper was developed by the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council Philippines (ASEAN-BAC) to frame the roundtable discussion on sustainability and food security scheduled for March 3, 2026, focusing on key issues and private-sector proposals.

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Table of Contents

About the US-ASEAN Business Council.....	3
About the ASEAN Business Advisory Council.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
I. Context and Rationale	7
II. Background of the Discussion Paper.....	7
III. Key Priorities and Alignment with Priority Economic Deliverables.....	8
A. Circular Economy and Extended Producer Responsibility Systems	
B. Resilience and Sustainability of Supply Chains	
C. Food Security Through Better Nutrition	
D. Integration of Smallholders and Local Producers	
E. Alignment with Priority Economic Deliverables	
IV. Proposed Activities and Projects For 2026	10
A. Proposed Project 1: ASEAN Health and Agriculture Nexus Initiative	
B. Proposed Project 2: ASEAN Circular Economy Platform	
C. Proposed Project 3: ASEAN Sustainable Supply Chain Resilience Initiative	
D. Proposed Project 4: ASEAN Nutrition Security and Health Promotion Collaborative	
V. Matters for Roundtable Consideration.....	14
VI. Conclusion	14
Appendices	
References	

About the US-ASEAN Business Council

For more than 40 years, the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) has been the premier advocacy organization for U.S. corporations operating within the dynamic Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), serving as the leading voice of the U.S. private sector in promoting mutually beneficial trade and investment relationships between the United States and Southeast Asia. USABC believes that opening and investing in efficient, resilient, and competitive markets are critical to the continued growth of its member companies and innovation and job creation in the United States and Southeast Asia. ASEAN now represents more than 650 million people and a combined GDP of US \$2.8 trillion across Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Timor Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam. USABC's members include many of the world's largest American multinational corporations in numerous industries and range from those that have been working in Southeast Asia for more than a century to newcomers entering Asia's most dynamic regional economic community. USABC has its headquarters in Washington, D.C. and offices in New York, Bangkok, Hanoi, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, and Singapore.

Over the next decade, by virtue of its growing middle class, infrastructure development and strategic position at the center of Pacific trade routes, ASEAN's eleven members will enjoy growth rates among the most robust in the world. With more than 65 percent of ASEAN's population under the age of 35, ASEAN's demographic trends will continue to fuel growth well into the future. USABC is convinced on strategic grounds that America's economic vitality depends on its success in the Asia-Pacific region, and ASEAN plays a central role.

USABC is the only U.S.-based organization recognized in the ASEAN charter as a supporting organization of ASEAN. In service to its members, USABC leads major business missions to all eleven ASEAN countries, convenes multiple meetings with ASEAN heads of state and ministers and is the only U.S. organization to be given the privilege to raise member company concerns in consultations with the ASEAN Economic, Energy, Finance, Transport, Travel & Tourism, and Forestry & Agriculture Ministers, as well as the ASEAN Customs Directors-General, at their annual meetings.

USABC's committees serve as umbrellas for its membership's initiatives at both the local and regional level. The committees include one for every ASEAN country, ASEAN, APEC, Customs, Aerospace, Defense & Security, Energy, Financial Services, Food & Agriculture, Health & Life Sciences, Information & Communications Technology, Supply Chains, Travel & Tourism, and Sustainability.

About the ASEAN Business Advisory Council

The ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) was established in 2001 to serve as the region's apex private sector advisory body, providing essential business insights and recommendations to ASEAN Leaders. As the primary platform for private sector engagement, the Council advocates for economic cooperation and plays a pivotal role in advancing the ASEAN integration agenda. Each ASEAN member government appoints three high-level CEOs to the Council—including a dedicated representative for small and medium-sized enterprises—to ensure a diverse and influential business voice in regional policy.

The Council's mandate is driven by a commitment to inclusive growth and the modernization of the regional economy. By focusing on critical areas such as MSME empowerment, digital transformation, and sustainable development, ASEAN-BAC works to bridge the gap between government policy and the practical needs of the marketplace. Through its various working groups and legacy projects, it addresses cross-border challenges, promotes circular economy practices, and facilitates the adoption of emerging technologies like AI to ensure that the region remains globally competitive and resilient.

In 2026, ASEAN-BAC Philippines assumes the Chairship under the leadership of Chair Joey Concepcion, alongside members George Barcelon and Michael Tan. Guided by the theme "Advancing Prosperity for All," the Philippine leadership focuses on four strategic pillars: People, Planet, Platform, and Productivity. To turn these goals into action, the Council is spearheading tangible deliverables such as the ASEAN Food Security Alliance (AFSA) and ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (ABIS), alongside policy papers and recommendations presented directly to ASEAN Leaders to shape the economic landscape toward ASEAN 2045.

Executive Summary

The Sustainability and Food Security Initiative is a portfolio of regional projects proposed by the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC), in collaboration with its member companies, to support the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship in 2026. It responds to growing recognition within ASEAN that health outcomes, food security, and environmental sustainability are deeply interconnected, yet often addressed through fragmented policy and institutional approaches. The initiative seeks to convert existing ASEAN strategies into practical, regionally scalable actions through stronger coordination, regulatory coherence, and public-private collaboration.

The initiative is set against rising noncommunicable diseases, climate-induced supply chain disruptions, persistent food loss and waste, antimicrobial resistance risks, and uneven implementation of circular economy and sustainable agriculture frameworks across the region. Although ASEAN has made progress through sector-specific action plans, limited coordination across health, agriculture, and sustainability continues to constrain impact. The Philippine ASEAN Chairship offers an opportunity to address these gaps through targeted initiatives linking preventive health, nutrition-sensitive food systems, sustainable production, and resilient supply chains.

Building on Malaysia's 2025 ASEAN Chairship and aligned with the ASEAN Economic Community's long-term vision, the initiative emphasizes continuity, feasibility, and investment readiness, and supports key Philippine Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs).

The initiative advances four mutually reinforcing projects:

The **ASEAN Health and Agriculture Nexus Initiative** provides a regional platform to strengthen dialogue across health, agriculture, food systems, and environmental sustainability through evidence-based exchange rather than prescriptive policy.

The **ASEAN Circular Economy Platform** supports circular economy objectives by improving coherence in extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems, particularly in healthcare and food-and-beverage value chains, to reduce regulatory fragmentation and encourage investment in recycling and materials recovery infrastructure.

The **ASEAN Sustainable Supply Chain Resilience Initiative** focuses on strengthening transparent, climate-resilient, and interoperable supply chains across food, agriculture, and healthcare, through digital traceability, data standards and targeted capacity-building.

The **ASEAN Nutrition Security and Health Promotion Collaborative** supports regional tools for healthier food environments, including nutrient profiling frameworks, mutual recognition pathways, and practical toolkits, while maintaining affordability, safety, and innovation.

Overall, the Sustainability and Food Security Initiative offers practical, regionally relevant, investment-ready portfolio aligned with ASEAN priorities. By

emphasizing integration, implementation, and scalability, it positions the Philippine ASEAN Chairship in 2026 as a catalyst for more resilient, sustainable, and health-promoting food systems, with benefits that extend beyond the Chairship year.

Finally, as ASEAN's economic centrality accelerates, and its role as a convening hub between major economies grows, policymakers face a narrow but decisive window to lock in this momentum through concrete, implementable initiatives – turning sustainability and food security ambitions into durable regional resilience and shared growth.

I. Context and Rationale

The US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) has developed this implementation-focused discussion paper to support the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship in 2026. The paper consolidates private sector perspectives into actionable, high-impact, and regionally scalable recommendations to guide upcoming high-level roundtable discussions with government and industry.

This discussion paper is one of five Philippines-focused papers organized around the following priority pillars identified by USABC:

- (1) Sustainability and Food Security;
- (2) Healthcare;
- (3) Sustainable Supply Chains;
- (4) Digital Economy and Workforce Development; and
- (5) Artificial Intelligence (AI).

In addition to outlining key issues and priorities, the paper proposes concrete programs aligned with ASEAN priorities to help guide Philippine government decision-makers as they shape the Chairship agenda and related deliverables.

This paper builds on Malaysia's legacy as ASEAN Chair (see Appendix 1), particularly its role in shaping the *ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together* blueprint and advancing the ASEAN Economic Community's vision of a unified, competitive, inclusive, and globally integrated region. Drawing from the joint USABC-SERI white paper developed under Malaysia's Chairship, which identified priorities such as digital transformation, AI, the green economy, energy transition, workforce upskilling, healthcare innovation, and inclusive growth, USABC seeks to carry forward this momentum into the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship in 2026. This approach supports continuity across Chairships and helps lay the groundwork for a seamless transition to Singapore's ASEAN Chairship in 2027.

II. Background of the Discussion Paper

The ASEAN region is at a critical juncture where health, food security, and environmental sustainability increasingly intersect, yet policy and institutional responses across these domains continue to evolve largely in parallel rather than in an integrated manner. While ASEAN has made progress in advancing its health agenda through established cooperation mechanisms and post-2015 frameworks, these efforts remain insufficiently aligned with food systems governance and sustainability strategies. As a result, important nexus challenges remain under-addressed (ASEAN Secretariat 2022 and ASCC 2024).

On the nexus of health and food security, particularly in relation to nutrition and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), noncommunicable diseases account for roughly two-thirds of deaths in the region, with diet-related risks and air pollution contributing significantly to this burden (WHO 2025 and Winijkul and Bannister 2023). At the same time, food systems play a central role in shaping health outcomes through diet quality, food affordability, and safety. The use of antimicrobials in livestock and aquaculture production, combined with weak cross-sectoral governance, has heightened AMR risks that threaten both public health and food security. These challenges highlight the need to better integrate

preventive health objectives, nutrition standards, and AMR controls into agricultural and food system policies (FAO 2015 and ASEAN Secretariat 2024).

On health and sustainability, environmental degradation increasingly drives health risks across ASEAN. Air pollution, plastic waste, hazardous chemicals, and climate-related shocks contribute to rising disease burdens, disrupted food supply chains, and strained health systems. Climate change amplifies these risks through extreme weather events, heat stress, and population displacement, with direct implications for urban food access and nutrition outcomes (Mirzabaev et al. 2023 and Sundram 2023). Despite growing recognition of these linkages, environmental, climate, and health strategies remain insufficiently coordinated in practice.

Lastly, on sustainability and food security, environmental pressures undermine the resilience of food systems. Soil degradation, agricultural emissions, biodiversity loss, and inefficient resource use threaten long-term productivity and food availability. Driven by inadequate cold chain infrastructure, logistics gaps, and uneven implementation of circular economy measures, food loss and waste exacerbate both food insecurity and environmental harm. While ASEAN has adopted frameworks on sustainable agriculture and the circular economy, implementation remains uneven and under-financed, limiting their impact on food system resilience (ASEAN Secretariat 2021 and OECD 2025).

Taken together, these challenges suggest that the core constraint facing ASEAN is not the absence of strategies, but the lack of operational integration across health, food security, and sustainability agendas. The Philippine ASEAN Chairship in 2026 presents a strategic opportunity to advance targeted, cross-sectoral initiatives that explicitly address these intersections. By focusing on practical solutions, such as nutrition-sensitive agriculture, sustainable and resilient supply chains, circular economy applications, and preventive health-oriented food systems, the proposed corridors of success supported by the USABC can help translate regional commitments into implementable outcomes.

III. Key Priorities and Alignment with Priority Economic Deliverables

Reflecting perspectives from USABC members, this section outlines key priorities and their alignment with the Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs) set for the Philippines' 2026 ASEAN Chairship.

A. Circular Economy and Extended Producer Responsibility Systems

USABC members highlight the importance of aligning extended producer responsibility (EPR) frameworks and reducing waste, particularly for packaging and materials used in healthcare and food and beverage products. Members emphasize that effective circular economy outcomes depend on procurement and incentive structures that reward reduced waste and improved resource efficiency, regionally coherent EPR frameworks, and traceable supply chains that limit illicit trade and reduce waste associated with counterfeit or non-compliant products.

Together, these perspectives reflect a shared view of circular economy policies as a means of advancing environmental sustainability and improved business performance.

B. Resilience and Sustainability of Supply Chains

A second priority is resilience and sustainability of supply chains. USABC members stress that sustainable supply chains are not simply a matter of environmental branding, but are essential to ensuring uninterrupted access to health, food, and agricultural inputs and products.

Members highlight the need for resilient supply chains that function end-to-end, from climate-smart agricultural production and long-term farmer engagement to reliable cold-chain logistics, particularly for vaccines and medicines. In parallel, members underscore the importance of sustainability reporting frameworks, aligned with International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) standards, that improve transparency and predictability across markets. They pointed out that these reporting frameworks should be applied equally across markets, enable effective and efficient reporting to reduce reporting burden on covered entities, and allow equivalence treatment for disclosures made through parent/affiliate entities using comparable reporting frameworks.

Members also underscore that regulatory convergence in food standards, through mutual recognition arrangements, regulatory equivalence treatment, or simplified and notification-based approval systems, is critical to resilient and efficient supply chains. Alignment with international standards, such as Codex Alimentarius, can significantly reduce border frictions, shorten clearance times, and improve supply-chain predictability. When combined with digital traceability and track-and-trace systems, regulatory harmonization helps protect legitimate supply chains from illicit trade and diversion, while strengthening food security, enhancing consumer choice, and safeguarding food safety and quality.

Considered collectively, these positions underline the need for integrated, climate-resilient, transparent, and standards-aligned supply chains across the region.

C. Food Security Through Better Nutrition

USABC members recognize the rising rates of diet-related diseases in ASEAN and the need for healthier food environments to reduce the long-term burden of noncommunicable diseases.

Improved nutrition outcomes depend on multisectoral preventive healthcare approaches, that integrate nutrition education with healthy product offerings. Scientifically grounded nutrient profiling and regulatory convergence mechanisms further support availability of healthier food products across borders. Reliable access to essential medicines, together with stable and predictable regulatory environments, reduce distortions in legitimate food and health product markets and thus contributes to better nutrition outcomes.

D. Integration of Smallholders and Local Producers

The fourth priority is the integration of smallholder farmers, micro and small enterprises, and local producers into inclusive value chains.

USABC members emphasize regenerative agriculture models that strengthen soil health, improve yields, and build resilient livelihoods, alongside efforts to empower micro and small enterprises through improved access to digital tools and supplier development programs that help smaller firms meet sustainability and quality standards. Members also note that regulatory gaps and illicit trade undermine local producers, calling for more consistent enforcement that protects compliant firms.

E. Alignment with Priority Economic Deliverables

These USABC member priorities align with several PEDs identified for the Philippine ASEAN Chairship in 2026. PED 16, the ASEAN Implementation Plan for Regenerative and Resilient Agriculture, supports efforts to promote sustainable production systems, farmer inclusion, and climate-smart practices.

The Regional Investment Promotion Action Plan (PED 18) provides an umbrella for mobilizing investment in circular economy infrastructure, sustainable logistics, and health-promoting food systems. The PED on Strategic Trade Management (PED 1) and Critical Minerals (PED 6) are relevant for supply chain transparency and traceability, particularly for high-value commodities and sensitive products. More broadly, the ASEAN agenda on food security, sustainable development, and climate resilience provides a strong policy foundation for the proposed portfolio.

A comprehensive alignment table linking the proposed projects to specific PEDs and USABC member priorities is included in Appendix 2.

IV. Proposed Activities and Projects For 2026

The Sustainability and Food Security Initiative proposes four integrated projects that support the Philippine ASEAN Chairship priorities on sustainability, food security, and health. While each project has a distinct focus, they are designed to reinforce one another and together form a coherent regional program.

A. Proposed Project 1: ASEAN Health and Agriculture Nexus Initiative

This project is designed to strengthen dialogue and collaboration across health, agriculture, food systems, and environmental sustainability. Its objective is to create a structured platform that brings together policymakers, regulators, practitioners, and private sector experts from these traditionally separate fields to identify areas where joint and collaborative action is most needed. While each practice area has advanced significantly in ASEAN, progress has often occurred in parallel, limiting more integrated responses to complex challenges such as nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases, sustainable food production, and food system resilience.

Participating ASEAN Member States would engage in expert- and policy-level exchanges to examine how agricultural practices, food processing, nutrition outcomes, and environmental sustainability interact in different country contexts.

Rather than prescribing specific policy solutions upfront, the platform would facilitate shared learning on areas where alignment gaps exist and where coordinated approaches could add value. Discussions would recognize the diverse roles of food systems, including primary production, food processing, preservation, fortification, reformulation, and distribution, in supporting food security, affordability, safety, and improved nutrition outcomes. The initiative would promote the application of harmonized, evidence-based risk management principles across the food system to support consistent and predictable approaches to food safety, quality, and availability of agricultural materials, while enabling manufacturers to ensure safe, nutritionally appropriate, and affordable food options. It would also emphasize the need for regulatory convergence and clearly recognized pathways that align with or support Codex Alimentarius developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as well as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), enabling global coherence while allowing jurisdictional flexibility.

In addition, participants may explore science-based approaches to nutrition-sensitive food systems, including agricultural strategies that support better diet quality, nutrient profiling tools for informed consumer choice, and product reformulation initiatives, while acknowledging the essential role of food processing in preservation and nutrition enhancement. Any consideration of regional alignment would emerge from these exchanges and reflect the diversity of ASEAN food systems and development contexts. The initiative would be supported by a regional knowledge platform that documents dialogue outcomes, case studies, and practical experiences, and provides training resources for agricultural extension workers and relevant agencies. Over time, the platform may inform joint initiatives such as nutrition-sensitive value chains, resilient cold chain infrastructure, or collaborative research efforts. Government agencies responsible for agriculture, health, nutrition, and environment would participate alongside private sector partners, regional and international organizations, and academic institutions, each contributing expertise in sustainable agriculture, food processing, nutrition science, and capacity building.

B. Proposed Project 2: ASEAN Circular Economy Platform

The second project is intended to support circular economy objectives by improving the coherence and effectiveness of EPR systems in the healthcare and food and beverage sectors across ASEAN. It would establish a regional coordination and harmonization platform that complements ongoing USABC engagement on plastics and EPR, elevating these efforts from country-level or sector-specific initiatives into a broader regional dialogue on policy alignment, implementation pathways, and investment readiness. The project recognizes that fragmented EPR systems and inconsistent regulations across ASEAN Member States continue to hinder the development of regional recycling markets, limit economies of scale, and constrain investment in circular infrastructure.

The initiative would bring together policymakers, industry representatives, and technical experts to review the current landscape of EPR legislation and practice across ASEAN. Rather than duplicating existing work, the project would build on and reinforce existing USABC-supported initiatives. Through this process, participants would identify areas where greater regional convergence could reduce compliance complexity, improve regulatory predictability, and unlock cross-border recycling and materials recovery value chains. Potential outputs

include ASEAN-level reference guidelines for EPR, such as shared principles, voluntary benchmarks, or common reporting templates, while preserving national policy space and different stages of regulatory maturity.

In addition to supporting regional market integration, the platform would provide a forum for ASEAN stakeholders to exchange views on how regional EPR experiences and priorities relate to ongoing global discussions, including the negotiations toward a Global Plastics Treaty. It would also consider how ASEAN could articulate a unified regional position on such a treaty, that reflects shared priorities and implementation realities. A coordinated ASEAN position could enable the region to play a stronger role in future negotiations, and help steer discussions toward practical, scalable solutions, suited to the region. By facilitating dialogue on common challenges, implementation lessons, and realistic transition pathways, the initiative can help ASEAN present more robust regional perspectives in international discussions, reinforcing the region's commitment to practical, scalable solutions while avoiding approaches that focus narrowly on pollution outcomes without recognizing structural constraints.

Moreover, capacity-building activities would support government officials and private sector actors in understanding evolving EPR requirements, investment opportunities, and circular business models. The project would also explore the development of enabling tools, including shared knowledge resources or digital compliance support mechanisms, that connect producers with recyclers and investors, and highlight opportunities for public-private partnerships. Governments, food and beverage companies, pharmaceutical distributors, packaging manufacturers, and international partners working on circular economy and plastics issues would jointly contribute to this platform, positioning it as a coordination and amplification mechanism for existing initiatives rather than a stand-alone or duplicative effort.

C. Proposed Project 3: ASEAN Sustainable Supply Chain Resilience Initiative

The third project seeks to advance resilient, transparent, and interoperable supply chains connecting healthcare, food, and agriculture across ASEAN. Its objective is to strengthen regional capacity to manage disruptions and risks by advancing integrated digital traceability systems, regulatory coordination, and climate-resilient logistics frameworks. The project is grounded in the understanding that supply-chain disruptions undermine health outcomes, food security, and economic stability, and that improved transparency and regulatory predictability support both effective enforcement and consumer trust.

Participating Member States would work toward an ASEAN-wide sustainable supply chain traceability framework defining common data standards for pharmaceuticals, food products, and key agricultural inputs. This framework would outline an interoperable digital architecture enabling national systems to exchange information on product origin, movement, safety, and sustainability attributes, and would incorporate anti-counterfeiting mechanisms and risk-based indicators relevant to health, food safety, and environmental performance. The initiative would emphasize science and risk-based food system management, supporting the application of harmonized, evidence-based risk management principles across the food system to enable consistent and predictable management of food safety, quality, and availability of agricultural materials. In parallel, the project would examine how greater regulatory convergence in food

standards, aligned with Codex Alimentarius and the ISO, can complement traceability systems by reducing border frictions and enabling smoother cross-border flows of goods. Rather than prescribing uniform regulations, this workstream would focus on identifying shared principles, equivalence pathways, or phased convergence frameworks that support trade facilitation while preserving national regulatory authority and food safety standards.

Additionally, the initiative would assess climate vulnerabilities across critical logistics infrastructure such as ports, roads, and storage facilities, and would propose elements of a regional climate-resilient logistics network, including contingency protocols, cold-chain sustainability benchmarks, and potential green logistics certification approaches. Building on these technical foundations, the project could support the development of an ASEAN supply chain transparency platform providing dashboards for regulators and verification interfaces for businesses and consumers. Capacity-building activities would target customs officials, food and drug regulators, agriculture agencies, farmer groups, and micro and small enterprises to support adaptation to traceability and standards-related requirements. Private sector partners with experience in pharmaceutical and food supply chains, traceability technologies, packaging, and logistics would contribute pilot activities, while international organizations working on customs security, food safety, and trade facilitation would provide technical expertise. Considered collectively, these elements position the initiative as a practical pathway for strengthening supply-chain resilience, enhancing regional commerce, and supporting food security through standards-aligned, transparent, and climate-resilient systems.

D. Proposed Project 4: ASEAN Nutrition Security and Health Promotion Collaborative

The fourth project works to promote improved nutrition outcomes, healthier food environments, and robust food safety and quality systems across ASEAN. Its objective is to create nutrient profiling frameworks, mutual recognition arrangements for food safety and quality certifications, and practical toolkits for designing health-promoting food environments in schools, workplaces, and communities.

Under this initiative, ASEAN Member States would work with industry, scientific experts, and technology providers to develop an ASEAN regional nutrient profiling framework that establishes science-based criteria for health claims and front-of-pack labelling. Industry participation would be central to this process, contributing nutrition science expertise, product development experience, data analytics, and technological capabilities to ensure that the framework is practical, evidence-based, and innovation-enabling. The framework would draw on international models, while being adapted to regional dietary patterns, consumption behaviors, and diverse product categories, including both minimally processed and processed foods. In parallel, the project would support technical discussions on regulatory convergence mechanisms, such as mutual recognition arrangements, regulatory equivalence pathways, or simplified approval processes, for sustainable agriculture and food safety certifications. These approaches aim to streamline approvals for safe and sustainably produced food products, reduce duplicative audits, and facilitate cross-border trade while maintaining high standards of food safety and quality.

In addition, the initiative would develop an ASEAN health-promoting food environments toolkit offering guidance on healthy public procurement (establishing nutrition standards and guidelines for food purchased by government institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government offices to ensure access to nutritious food options), school nutrition standards, workplace wellness programs, and urban food environment planning. In developing this toolkit, the initiative would explicitly recognize the important role of food processing in food security, food safety, affordability, and nutrition, including through preservation, fortification, reformulation, and improved product quality. The objective is to promote balanced diets and healthier food choices, rather than privileging particular production methods or food categories. The toolkit would be disseminated to health and agriculture ministries, local governments, and private sector actors to support context-appropriate implementation.

V. Matters for Roundtable Consideration

The roundtable discussion is intended to facilitate open and constructive exchanges on priorities, feasible actions and practical pathways for advancing sustainability and food security initiatives during the 2026 Philippine Chairship.

Recognizing the time, resource, and coordination constraints inherent in a Chairship year, the roundtable aims to provide an opportunity to identify areas where focused public-private collective efforts may generate the greatest impact. The discussion is designed to be exploratory and inclusive, helping surface shared perspectives and realistic opportunities for cooperation.

The session will seek to:

- Invite government reflections on private sector perspectives on sustainability and food security;
- Exchange views on the feasibility and timing of proposed activities outlined in this paper; and
- Explore how private sector engagement, where appropriate, can complement public sector efforts.

VI. Conclusion

The Sustainability and Food Security Initiative presents a coherent portfolio of four high impact projects that support the Philippine ASEAN Chairship objectives for 2026. The initiative systematically links health, agriculture, circular economy, supply chain resilience, and nutrition security in a way that responds directly to the priorities of USABC members and aligns with multiple PEDs of the Philippine Government.

Against this backdrop, timely adoption and implementation of the proposed initiatives offer policymakers a practical pathway to convert ASEAN's emerging centrality into lasting economic and strategic gains; delaying integrated action on sustainability, food security, and health risks leaving these advantages underutilized at a moment when global capital, partnerships, and policy attention are actively aligning with the region.

By focusing on integrated frameworks, digital platforms, capacity building, and investment roadmaps, the initiative seeks to create institutional and technological foundations that will continue to deliver benefits beyond the Chairship period. USABC and its member companies can use this portfolio to demonstrate practical and strategic support for ASEAN's transition toward more sustainable, resilient, and health-promoting food systems.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Project Alignment with Philippine PEDs and USABC Member Priorities

Malaysia's 2025 ASEAN Chairmanship: Achievements in Sustainability, Food Security, and Health

Malaysia's 2025 ASEAN Chairmanship achieved significant progress in advancing sustainability, food security, and health cooperation:

- **Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture:** The Chairman's Statement of the 26th ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting (July 2025) commended progress in implementing the APT Cooperation Strategy on Food, Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025, emphasizing resilient and sustainable food systems through policy coordination, agri-innovation, and advancing green and circular agricultural practices with digital technologies.
- **Emergency Food Reserves:** The meeting underscored effective implementation of the APT Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) and ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) to enhance regional food reserves and strengthen supply chain connectivity.
- **Health Development Agenda:** The Chairman's Statement of the 46th ASEAN Summit (May 2025) welcomed the review of the ASEAN Post-2025 Health Development Agenda and development of the ASEAN Post-2025 Health Development Outlook to guide strategic health sector planning beyond 2026.
- **Nutrition and Food Safety:** Progress in addressing malnutrition through the ASEAN Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Nutrition 2018-2030, including establishment of Framework on Healthy Central Kitchen and ASEAN Guidelines on Healthy Plate Concept.
- **Drug Security:** Adoption of the ASEAN Declaration of Commitment on ASEAN Drug Security and Self-Reliance (ADSSR) to ensure equitable and sustainable access to medicines and strengthen medicine supply chains.
- **Public Health Infrastructure:** Near conclusion of the Establishment Agreement for the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) and strengthened ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre for Food Safety (ARAC).

Appendix 2: Project Alignment with Philippine PEDs and USABC Member Priorities

The following table demonstrates the comprehensive alignment of the proposed projects with the Philippines’ 2026 Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs):

Identified Project	PED Supported	How This Project Addresses USABC Member Priorities
<p>PROJECT ONE. ASEAN Health and Agriculture Nexus Initiative</p>	<p>PED 16 ASEAN Implementation Plan for Regenerative and Resilient Agriculture</p>	<p>Members emphasized food security through nutrition, health, and prevention. Proposals included multi-sectoral preventive healthcare addressing diet-related chronic diseases, health and wellness policies, nutrient profiling, and regional mutual recognition of food standards to ensure affordability, accessibility, and availability. The initiative integrates preventive health systems with sustainable agricultural practices, champions regenerative agriculture, improves farmer livelihoods, and integrates smallholder farmers into regional value chains through technology and knowledge sharing while empowering MSMEs, farmers, and suppliers.</p>
<p>PROJECT TWO. ASEAN Circular Economy Platform</p>	<p>PED 18 Greener Future: Implementation of the Regional Investment Promotion Action Plan 2025-2030</p>	<p>Members aligned on advancing circular economy practices and strengthening EPR systems, emphasizing waste reduction and sustainable materials management. Proposals included circular economy approaches in supply chains, green solutions, the ASEAN Circular Economy Framework Agreement as a flagship deliverable for FDI attraction, EPR and Global Plastics Treaty implementation, and traceable supply chains to reduce waste and environmental risks. The platform harmonizes EPR frameworks, establishes regional recycling infrastructure incentives, and creates the circular economy framework agreement for sustainability credibility and investment attraction.</p>

<p>PROJECT THREE. ASEAN Sustainable Supply Chain Resilience Initiative</p>	<p>PED 1 ASEAN Declaration on Strategic Trade Management for Secured Trade in the Region PED 6 ASEAN Critical Minerals Strategy for Regional Resilience and Sustainable Growth</p>	<p>Members identified sustainable and resilient supply chains as critical across healthcare, food, and consumer goods. Concerns included cold-chain logistics vulnerabilities, regulatory bottlenecks, digital systems to reduce healthcare inefficiencies, regenerative agriculture, diversified crop systems, and traceability to reduce illicit flows. The initiative establishes transparent supply chain monitoring, improves cold-chain infrastructure, implements digital traceability to prevent illicit flows, and builds climate-resilient agricultural supply chains.</p>
<p>PROJECT FOUR. ASEAN Nutrition Security and Health Promotion Collaborative</p>	<p>PED 16 ASEAN Implementation Plan for Regenerative and Resilient Agriculture</p>	<p>Members emphasized improving nutrition outcomes and reducing health risks. Proposals included addressing diet-related chronic diseases through health system reforms, nutrient profiling, regional mutual recognition of food standards, access to essential medicines, and improved regulatory environments. The collaborative develops regional nutrient profiling standards, establishes mutual recognition frameworks, integrates nutrition education with preventive healthcare, and ensures access to essential medicines.</p>

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