



**Mandate Spotlight: 021 AOF Thailand**

**Expanding Access to Canada’s Organic Agri-Foods Market for ASEAN SMEs**

**Location:** Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam

**Beneficiaries:** ASEAN Organic Federation (AOF), Thai Organic Trade Association (TOTA), Cambodian Organic Agriculture Association (COAA), Indonesia Organic Alliance (IOA), Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA) & 72 SMEs

**Consultant:** Trade Facilitation Office (TFO) Canada

**Start Date:** Nov. 2019

**End Date:** Mar. 2021

**CTIF Contribution:** CAD \$177,233

**Context**

Established in 2017, the AOF is a collaborative platform of national organic producer and business associations across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Its mandate is to strengthen members’ organic agri-food production standards and facilitate their access to regional and global markets. The Thai Organic Trade Association currently serves as the secretariat for the AOF. The AOF’s member associations represent over 12,000 organic producers and traders whose combined business in organic trade is valued at over USD 14.5 million annually, the majority of which is destined for export markets. However, this trade volume represents only a fraction of its potential. Canada, for instance, imports approximately 80% of all organic food and beverage products sold domestically, and the country’s organic market grew to USD \$5.4 billion in 2017 from \$3.5 billion in 2012. Additionally, organic food and beverage sales in mainstream retail stores have almost tripled in the last six years, and the organic market continues to grow as Canadian consumers look to reduce exposure to synthetic chemicals and make more environmentally friendly choices.

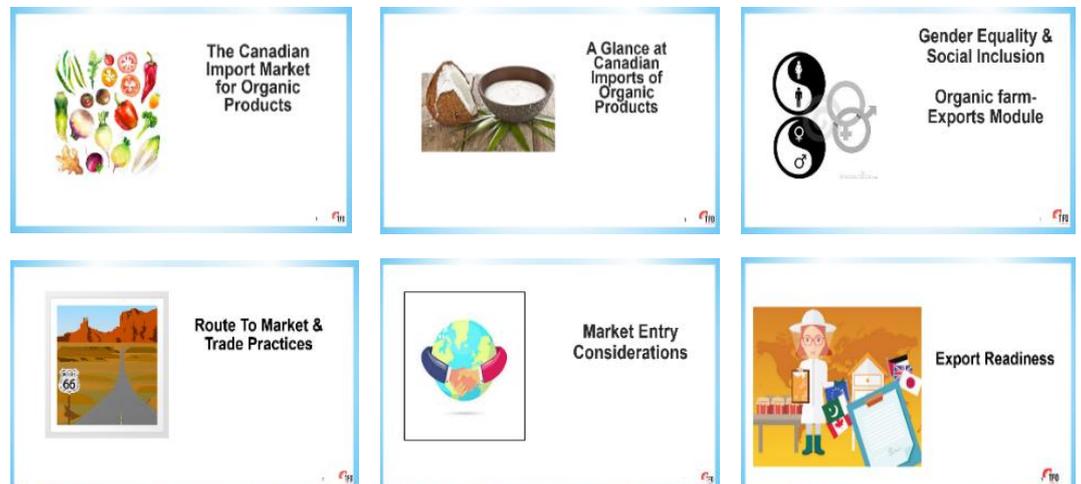
**Brief Description of the Mandate**

This mandate aimed to build the capacity of AOF’s SME members to increase their business with the Canadian market, including by adapting their production processes and products to meet Canadian standards for organic products. CTIF’s consultant, TFO Canada, developed and delivered a series of virtual training workshops and one-on-one coaching sessions to AOF staff and small and medium-sized organic agri-foods enterprises from Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. In addition to training delivery, inputs included profiling women-led SMEs to be targeted for support by national organic federations, developing the design and content parameters for an online platform supporting member SMEs, and developing a gender and social inclusion strategy to guide project activities.

**Selected Results**

This mandate contributed to CTIF’s medium-term objective of increasing the capacity of private sector organizations in the Asia-Pacific region to support their constituencies in areas such as business growth, women’s economic empowerment, market access, access to finance, and responsible business conduct. It did so by achieving the following primary results:

Figure 1: Visual summary of training modules delivered. TFO Canada.



a) Increased AOF's capacity to provide services to its members, particularly women-led SMEs.

b) Increased access to AOF services for existing and new members through an online platform; and,

c) Increased SMEs' knowledge and understanding of business opportunities in Canada and the country's regulatory environment.

CTIF's consultant was also able to identify export-ready companies in all four countries of focus.

### Virtual Training Delivery

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic required the use of virtual platforms for the delivery of all training. Participants gradually became accustomed to this approach and provided strong post-training reviews. While virtual training offers significant time and cost advantages, it was found to nevertheless lengthen the overall amount of time to deliver the same amount of content as a traditional course. From a learning and effectiveness standpoint, CTIF's consultant found that three hours is the maximum amount of time that should be devoted to virtual training delivery in a single day.



Figure 2: Screenshot from Thai SME Workshop. TFO Canada.



### Environment & Climate Change

Organic farmers aim to grow their crops and replenish and maintain soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. In turn, such practices can increase biodiversity while also supporting animal health and welfare. To stimulate the growth of export-ready organic agribusinesses in AOF member countries, CTIF's consultant trained AOF, four national organic federations, and individual SMEs on Canada's required certification and production processes. To access this market, SMEs were advised to adhere to Canada's organic standards that applied to the preparation, handling, packaging, and transportation of their organic products.



The Principle of Health.



The Principle of Ecology.



The Principle of Fairness.



The Principle of Care.

Figure 2: The four principles of organic farming. Source: AOF/Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, [agritech.tnau.ac.in/org\\_farm/orgfarm\\_principles.html](http://agritech.tnau.ac.in/org_farm/orgfarm_principles.html)

### Outcomes

AOF officials and SMEs from Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam now have in hand the knowledge and tools they need to expand their export activities. These include a Market Information Paper for Organic, Global and Fairtrade foods, guidance materials on how to better adhere to Canadian standards for organic products, and other supporting tools to ensure their assimilation of training content. Each national organic association plans to disseminate the Market Information Paper and conduct train for their SME members using the modules and tools that were developed as part of this CTIF mandate.

Additionally, 24 organic SMEs were identified by CTIF's consultant, TFO Canada, as export-ready, and three national organic associations (Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia) have been referred to the Global Affairs Canada-funded Women in Trade for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth (WIT) project for further technical assistance. WIT contributes to inclusive growth by increasing the number of women from developing countries involved in international trade as exporters and by increasing the share of exports generated by women-led SMEs.

*"AOF appreciates the [TA provided through] this project as it contributed to strengthening regional collaboration among organic businesses and [provided] insights into organic markets in Canada." - Viton Panyakul, Chair, AOF*



### Gender and Social Inclusion

CTIF's consultant prepared a status report on AOF's actions regarding gender equality and prepared a roadmap for future action. TFO also ensured that GESI considerations were integrated into training curriculum. For example, a specific module was developed to outline the importance of building the capacity of women-led/owned SMEs to increase their access to the Canadian market. CTIF's consultant also ensured equal participation of men and women and set a target for professional women and women-owned/led SMEs at virtual training events across four countries. As a result, women's engagement as a percentage of total training participants across all four countries ranged from 58% in Cambodia to 100% in Thailand.