

Food Security in Crises

1. Terms and definitions

Food Security refers to the state in which every citizen has access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for consumption, food that meets their health and cultural needs for healthy life, including having in place support production systems capable of sustaining a balanced ecology and natural food resources under normal circumstances as well as during disasters, public dangers or terrorist attacks related to food. (A revised version of the definition of “food security” in Section 3 of National Food Commission Act, B.E. 2551 (2008) [1])

Health crisis refers to the abnormal state of health, in all four dimensions, whether or not as a result of a natural disaster, or an event potentially leading to danger and generally causing adverse health, economic, social or environmental impacts – a situation that requires a policy approach or decision making to solve problems that occur within a limited time [2].

Vulnerable population (in food security dimension) refers to people potentially exposed to health risks as a result of their health conditions, economic status or social context, thus rendering them unable to deal with such risks or situations that have an impact on their food security. (*Based on the definition of “vulnerable groups” in Statute on the National Health System (No. 2) B.E. 2559 (2016) [3]*)

Community refers to a group of people who interact and communicate with one another on a regular and continuing basis, live in the same area, have similar occupations, and share common objectives, cultural practice, belief, or interest. (*Definition in the Royal Decree on Establishment of the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) B.E. 2543 (2000) cited in Statute on the National Health System (No. 2) B.E. 2559 (2016) [3]*)

Right to Food refers to a right of every person to food security that makes them free from hunger [4].

2. Significance of the issue

Food is one of the four basic needs that form of the basis of the quality of good life of a person. “Food security” therefore forms an important part of every country’s development goals [5] and is included as one of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as mentioned in SDG 2 “to end hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture” as well as in SDG 1 on “poverty reduction” [6].

Under normal circumstances each country has to tackle the problem of “vulnerable citizens” suffering from hunger or malnutrition, hence a recommendation to include access to food as one of the basic human rights that must be protected [7]. At the same time, there are problems coming out of development, such as destruction of natural resources and indigenous traditional wisdoms, as well as fighting with each other for resources, hence a recommendation to include “food sovereignty” [8] as part of food security. In the past, the food system has been beset with such problems as food origin, access to food and food distribution, as seen especially seen in the agricultural system. The issue has been advocated and action taken over the years by various stakeholders and sectors concerned, including government authorities, as well as national and international agencies and organizations. The issues include structural concerns, inequity in the food system as manifested in the monopoly of food production, unsustainable agriculture, and problems of food safety as a result of pesticides use [9]. At the same time, urbanization suffers from inappropriate planning, resulting in reduced ability to become food self-reliant. Besides, in the urban context the production system and the way food is distributed fail to empower small farmers and small business operators, while consumers are left with little choice when it comes to

1 access to food sources. Thus, food security has long been a chronic crisis for the “vulnerable
2 groups”, especially the homeless and the urban poor

3 The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 does not only pose a threat to the health of
4 the general public alone, but owing to the virulence of the virus its impact is also felt, with regard
5 to food security, by the general population. This impact is due partly to the country’s lockdown
6 measures, travel ban, and other restrictions of social events and activities. As a result, many see
7 their earnings dwindled and food distribution halted. There are other socio-economic impacts as
8 a result of the global pandemic. The revenue fall from tourism and international trade has turned
9 a large number of people into “vulnerable groups” who cannot get access to food. In April 2020
10 the World Food Programme (WFP) issued its Global Report on Food Crises 2020, a survey of
11 the world’s food situation, revealing that 165 million people in 55 countries throughout the world
12 will face hunger or serious food insecurity in 2020 [10]. Sometime later when the COVID-19
13 pandemic became more serious and widespread, its Task Force added 100 million more, bringing
14 the total to about 265 million who potentially face food shortage. This situation can only be
15 averted if the international community manages the coronavirus in a speedy manner so that the
16 impact may be lessened [11].

17 This is similar to other crises that Thai society has faced in the past. For example, food was
18 not adequately distributed during disasters, or people were left with little or no purchasing power
19 during economic crises even when food was available. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
20 has made the problem of food security all the more prominent. This may be called “a crisis on
21 top of a crisis”. On the one hand, it brings to light the situation of the food source, how people
22 get access to food, problem of current food distribution, and constraints of public policy
23 concerned. On the other, it reveals how people, community, organization and civil society
24 network adjust to the situation and how they come together to deal with the problem of food
25 security at the time of crisis. Again, this may show how various social sectors work together to
26 drive forward “the public policy on food security” to ensure food security in some form or other
27 without having to wait for official public policy from the decision-making authority. This has
28 become an important lesson learned about how to handle a food security crisis over the years.

29 The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the country’s development in several dimensions in
30 such a way that every sector is obliged to adjust itself to the New Normal. Several agencies see
31 the need to review their master plans and change the way/methodology and tools to achieve their
32 targets in the framework of the National Strategy. In this regard, an issue that needs to be
33 considered is the “**Right to Food**”, a concept founded on such international human rights laws as
34 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and
35 Cultural Rights (ICESCR), instruments that each country member is obliged to respect by
36 protecting and fulfilling the right to food of their people. The action can be taken domestically or
37 with international cooperation importantly through legal measures. These measures should be
38 carefully studied, analyzed with regard to possible impacts and assessed and should serve as
39 guidelines for the country’s food security development to ensure resilience, when having to
40 handle the crisis during this difficult time and prepare the nation for future growth amid the
41 changing situation [4].

42 Consequently, the lesson learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has rendered “food
43 security in time of crisis” an important public issue in the sub-theme “Four basic needs in time of
44 crisis”. The issue entails a review of lessons in various dimensions and a concerted effort to set a
45 public policy to promote “Alert Civic Force to Combat Health Crisis” for the 2020 National
46 Health Assembly. The present document and draft National Health Assembly Resolution,
47 therefore, is a result of the review of technical information as well as the processing and analysis
48 of the responses to the “deliberations” on “food security in time of crisis : crisis on top of crisis
49 from COVID-19 to sustainability”. It is the outcome of the effort prepared by the working group
50 from July to September this year.

51

3. Current situation

3.1 Food source and access to food

The source and access to food can be separately considered in five dimensions: 1) buying and selling, 2) production, cultivation and raising 3) food collection from the resource base, 4) exchange, sharing and community culture, and 5) government policy.

1) Food availability on the basis of buying and selling is connected to household economy involving the use of money to buy food and is related to earnings, savings and household debts. According to analysis made by economists, the adverse impact from the COVID-19 pandemic will fall heavily on vulnerable families, especially the urban poor who have to work to earn their living on a daily basis. These people will become unemployed and lose their income. In addition, a survey carried out by Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research in 2020 on the financial situation of farming households reveals that the COVID-19 crisis has the greatest impact on the household earnings from farm and non-farm work. More than 40% are affected. 12% of the households see less income from the money transferred as a result of unemployment of their family members working in another province, while 23% of the households earn less income from their business operation. Thus, while the income is reduced, purchase of food stays the same or even goes higher, and the access to food with regard to the buying and selling dimension is not reduced either [12].

2) Production and cultivation/raising reveals that agriculturally-based people are less affected compared to those in other areas such as trade, business and tourism. According to the survey on “Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on small farmers’ households in the agricultural community” undertaken during 17-26 May 2020 [13], these households are not very much affected when it comes to food, as they can still rely on food sources from their own production plots of land and other resource bases as well as on the community cultural life style of mutual food exchange. Besides, they can buy food from a variety of community markets, for example, green market, mobile grocery or food truck. Nevertheless, although it is interesting to see how the production base needs to adapt in order to survive or thrive, some areas are already beset with production factors including inadequate land, water, and genetics or legal constraints that make land use difficult. In the case of urban areas, unused land may be available for production use, but there are a number of legal constraints or issues due to the changing agricultural scenario of the world or the country. For example, current farmers are getting old, and there are needs to promote a new generation of farmers. Such development has to take place together with appropriate agricultural innovations – a great agricultural challenge.

3) Food collection from the resource base: Natural resource bases, coast and sea, including other public areas of the community, are important food resource bases of the households in the community. Their abundance, therefore, forms the basis of the community food security. It is found that the local community, formerly relying on the food resource base in various ecological systems, is still unable to get access to the food resource base. True, attempts have been made to amend existing laws concerned, and the National Land Policy Committee (NLPC) has come up with measures to assist the livelihood of the community, albeit in a limited manner. The community that barely survives from the resource base cannot generate food economy from it in any sustainable manner. Is it, therefore, appropriate to put in place a policy to revive the abundance of the natural resource base? Granting the community the right to manage all these resources will bring about such revival and create biodiversity, while the households and community will reap the benefit in terms of consumption and household economy.

4) Exchange and sharing has some interesting examples at work. In order to alleviate food shortage and get better access, attempts have been made to put food cabinets at various places containing such food items as rice and dried food. The cabinets are given names like “happiness-giving cabinets”, “happiness-sharing cabinets” or “heart-giving cabinets”. They are intended to help those affected by COVID-19. Sharing is also seen in the form of networks, such

1 as “food-sharing, life-sharing groups”. The Thai City Farm Project, initiated by Sustainable
2 Agriculture Foundation (Thailand), has organized activities in which volunteers help grow
3 vegetable and create a food reserve source for urban vulnerable groups. All the produce from the
4 harvest is given to these people. In this manner, the urban poor can get access to good, quality
5 and nutritious food that will better enable them to face the crisis. Another example is the food
6 bank initiative of “Pan Im” (food sharing) in which ready-made food is distributed to the
7 communities of Rong-kram and Buppharam in Bangkok. At the beginning of the COVID-19
8 crisis action was taken to encourage donations of raw material, rice and dried food, and money.
9 Raw material support was provided by farmer networks in various regions. Another example is
10 exchange and sharing between different eco-landscapes. Exchange of rice and fish was made
11 between rice farmers and “Chao Le” fishermen who inhabit the west coast of Thailand. This is a
12 phenomenon in which Chao Le people from Phang-Nga and Phuket sent dried fish on board the
13 C-130 aircraft to exchange with rice from farmers from the province of Yasothon – a mutual
14 gesture to combat COVID-19. Another example is the Northern Karen Network from Mueang
15 District, Chiang Mai Province, who drove trucks carrying three tons of rice collected from
16 villagers living on the hills in the provinces of Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, and Tak and gave
17 them to the Rawai Community of Chao Le in Phuket Province. These are examples of the
18 sharing phenomenon by people at the local level. There are also several other incidents
19 publicized by a number of media.

20 **5) Government policy** is a dimension with considerable public impacts especially if it is
21 effectively designed, whether it is the policy decision-making process, auditing of expenditure or
22 participation. A properly designed government policy will promote a comprehensive food access
23 and acquisition by the general public and reduce the gap of food access. The government policy
24 made during the COVID-19 crisis will have a significant impact on food security of the public at
25 every level, be it individual, household, community or national. Examples of such a policy are
26 lockdown measures, financial remedy payment and, long-term remedy policy. This may include
27 an internationally-oriented policy on the country’s resource and food security, such as
28 Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement of Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with potential
29 impacts on its seed and medicinal collection.

30 In conclusion, food security during crises, source and access to food are all important routes
31 to food. They are manifested in five dimensions with impacts on food acquisition. The impacts
32 may be differently felt by different target groups, dictated by geography, occupation, and local
33 culture. People who live on the agricultural base or want to engage in production may be
34 concerned with access to such production factors as land, water and seeds, while those nearer to
35 the resource base may look at the right to use forests and sea. Meanwhile, the urban poor may
36 want to earn enough money to buy food or form groups to generate food in small areas. No
37 matter what form it takes, groups, whether urban or rural, will always exhibit an element of
38 culturally-based sharing of food, vegetable or even seeds. Be that as it may, there exists another
39 dimension with public impacts, i.e. government policy. If effectively designed, whether it is the
40 policy decision-making process, auditing of expenditure or participation, the government policy
41 will promote a comprehensive food access and acquisition by the general public and reduce the
42 gap of food access. At any rate, these five dimensions are all inter-related, while groups may feel
43 the effect in several dimensions all at once. It is necessary, therefore, to look at the acquisition of
44 food in an inter-connected manner in order to obtain a comprehensive analysis of factors related
45 to food security.

46

47 **3.2 Food distribution**

48 The development of the trade system in global liberal capitalism is an important factor that
49 contributes to the change in food distribution from traditional to modern practice in Thai society.
50 It is estimated that the pressure on business due to the impact on the supply chain will likely
51 become even more severe. This is especially true with the agricultural and food distribution

1 systems that tend to become more centralized in which the supply chain will see fewer producers
2 and distributors.

3 So far, modern retail trade, or modern trade in short, has changed the way food is
4 distributed worldwide. The world sees greater distribution from cities to smaller towns
5 everywhere. Focus has been shifted from the high end market to the middleclass and today to the
6 low-end market. Retail trade, originally started with canned and dried food, is now expanded to
7 cover meat, fresh fruit and vegetable. In addition, the centralized procurement system puts big
8 retailers at an enormous advantage over small convenience stores or grocery shops due to the
9 economies of scale. Agribusiness in the supply chain system acts like “a link” between the
10 agricultural sector and food industry. Agribusiness plays a role in providing all kinds of
11 production factors for farmers as well as a link between farmers and consumers. It buys goods
12 from the former, transport, process, stores, markets, and distributes them to the latter.

13 A challenging issue on the role of agribusiness in food security is the change in the above-
14 mentioned market mechanisms in which businesses have grown bigger in size and more
15 concentrated. This does not necessarily mean that the country is more competitive or that small
16 farmers and retailers have a participative role in such a change. Therefore, it is important for the
17 country to have “a policy that promotes competitiveness” and “enhances the role of smaller
18 business operators”. This will considerably help small and medium-size agribusinesses in the
19 upcountry to connect small farmers with the supply chain and consumer needs, while promoting
20 equity and sustainability of food distribution for greater food security purposes.

21 The crisis and the New Normal practice in the food distribution system, as found in the
22 media and perceived via the social media, reveal two important patterns in food distribution
23 during the crisis:

24 **1) Food delivery service business** sees substantial growth. The COVID-19 has led to more
25 take-away purchase and food preparation at home. An analysis by Kasikorn Research Center
26 [14] mentions that Thailand’s e-commerce sale and food delivery volume during 22 March – 30
27 April 2020 will register an increase of approximate eight billion baht (consisting of 6.8 billion
28 baht for e-commerce and 1.2 billion baht for food delivery), compared to the normal time. The
29 COVID-19 will act as a significant catalyst in creating consumer needs for food innovation
30 capable of boosting the body’s immunity system in various ways. At the same time, the behavior
31 during the quarantine/isolation period has led to a growth of ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat food,
32 as well as long-shelf-life, nutritious and health foods. Because of the COVID-19 concern and
33 fear, more consumers have adopted a take-away food buying behavior, thus leading to more
34 home cooking. They also prefer buying goods online – a New Normal activity.

35 **2) Many alternatives for food distribution** are available, for instance:

36 **(1) Community green markets:** These are markets which farmers and community members
37 operate themselves. Situated on the local community grounds, they are intended to create
38 community economy. In addition, the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI)
39 has opened ‘community organization markets’ to sell goods online to help community
40 organization members all over the country who are economically affected by the COVID-19.
41 The community green markets play a considerable part in supporting and creating self-sufficiency
42 agriculture focusing on buying goods from community markets near home, local and other
43 domestic markets. Therefore, if efforts are made to develop and promote safe and organic food
44 markets on the basis of mutual help and support capable of creating links between towns, suburbs
45 and rural areas, this will lead to proper food distribution and access to quality food. The recent
46 and current COVID-19 situation has led to the emergence of green markets and local markets
47 with clear inter-connections, an exemplary phenomenon that should be further promoted on a
48 regular basis.

49 **(2) Forming social groups** is made by farmers or those involved in the development of
50 urban agricultural areas to serve as central grounds for raw materials and fresh food, whereby
51 people do not need to stock up food. They can also serve as channels through which urban

1 consumers can get direct access to farmers. Besides food bank networks, food-sharing and life-
2 sharing groups, there are others. For example, in Bangkok there is Better Bangkok Group
3 coordinating with private business companies for box lunches, while the Local Thailand Network
4 makes use of online channels to give help to those facing hard time in the COVID-19 situation.
5 At the community level people come together to form groups and organize activities. For
6 example, the “Khlongtoei Di Chang Pan Kin Im” Group (Very Good, Food Sharing Group) helps
7 to make life less difficult for Rong Mu community members in Khlongtoei District.

8 **(3) Mobile food distribution trucks**, popularly called “Phum-Phuang” trucks or mobile
9 food trucks, are one of the important mechanisms that can help create food security for the
10 vulnerable groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities and those living far away from
11 the market to get access to food during the COVID-19 crisis.

12 **(4) Food distribution in the form of food sharing and exchange**, e.g. happiness-sharing
13 cabinets, Food-sharing Life-sharing Groups, food from the monasteries, and exchange of produce
14 between hill and sea people. Such practice is a form of food distribution via social capital.

15 When viewed from a broad perspective of food security, the current centralized and
16 monopolized form of food security is not a secure and sustainable food system. It is found that as
17 the food industry grows, small farmers tend to decline. At the same time, there are nutritional
18 issues, including lack of food diversity and unsafe food in various forms, whether as a result of
19 chemical use in monoculture or application of genetic engineering to farming. The food
20 distribution system amid this crisis should be adjusted to create food security in the following
21 ways:

- 22 (1) Create a food distribution system, expand local markets, and distribute food directly
23 between farmers and consumers, or develop an alternative online market, with the
24 support of the new generation and various agencies to bring about a system whereby
25 agricultural produce and food can be distributed to the consumers without going
26 through the modern trade system that sees only giant companies take the market lion’s
27 share.
- 28 (2) Promote growing vegetable and food by household and community in both urban and
29 rural areas, reduce food expenditure, and enjoy greater self-reliance on food, as the
30 Thai households see their food expenditure as high as 35% of the total expenditure in
31 general and as high as 45-50% for low-income people.
- 32 (3) Create a food bank network that serves as a community food reserves system with high
33 flexibility as it is designed by local people.
- 34 (4) Have a volunteer system to serve as an important distribution network and as a bridge
35 to link with the community in time of crisis in a speedy manner.
- 36 (5) Create a common community food area that promotes food distribution in a
37 participatory manner, reduces the middleman process and enables a quick access in
38 time of crisis.
- 39 (6) Consider logistics at micro level, taking into consideration importance and relevance
40 to the community, or combine it with the online system to quicken food distribution
41 and shorten as well as reduce the distribution route

43 **4. Review of current public policy**

44 A public policy, as defined in the National Health Charter on the National Health System
45 (No. 2), B.E. 2559 (2016) [3] refers to “the direction or guidelines that society as a whole
46 believes in or recognizes to be in the right direction, including written policy formulated by the
47 State”. The public policy today that has something to do with food security in crises comprises
48 both the part that has an adverse impact on food security and the part that promotes or strengthens
49 food security. This can be summarized as follows:

50 **4.1 Current policies with adverse impacts on food security or limitations** as follows: 51

1 **4.1.1 Short-term policy (during crisis)**

2 1) Policy, plans, measures and activities at central, provincial and local levels
3 designed to assist people during the crisis in the most part tend to be aid-oriented.

4 2) Policy implementation sees little integration between agencies and plans in the
5 management of food security at every level, be it central, provincial or local.

6 3) There is no government agency directly responsible for food security work, thus
7 resulting in the absence of any lead agency taking prompt action in the past. Nor is there a
8 management system fully equipped with ways and means appropriate to the problem that may
9 arise, as seen, for example, in the curfew announcement that affected food transportation.

10 4) Implementation of the government's work and budgetary plans is slow. Action
11 taken does not follow the plan or timeline. The work process is complicated. Procedure and
12 regulations are not conducive to quick action. Measures designed to use in immediate
13 emergencies are slow to come into effect, prompting the people to help one another instead.

14 5) Action taken by various agencies should pay attention to the participation of the
15 community and local people, as there already exist groups, networks and mechanisms ready to
16 handle and adjust to situations that may occur,

17 6) There is a shortage of measures to promote and support access to food and food
18 distribution system in time of crisis not to mention measures to control the price of consumer
19 goods in such difficult times.

20 7) The remedy and recovery policy under the 400 billion baht loan seems to be
21 implemented without participation from every sector. There is also a problem of equity and
22 access on the part of those who are adversely affected and vulnerable.

23 8) The drive to implement the public policy, especially in the social dimension, may
24 have led to a large number of actions in multiple areas. Yet, problems remain when it comes to
25 management, coordination and cooperation in such a way that the existing social capital is not
26 sufficiently mobilized to handle the crisis. For example, although monasteries have a large
27 amount of food available, there are not sufficient management tools to bring it to the people in
28 distress during the COVID-19 crisis.

29 **4.1.2 Long-term policy**

30 1) Production factors: The current policy, laws and institutional mechanisms
31 concerned with production factors (e.g. land, water and genetics) do not effectively promote or
32 enable small farmers to get adequate access to land. Some such mechanisms are the Land Bank
33 Administration Institute (Public Organization), Land and Building Tax Act B.E. 2562 (2019),
34 Regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Community Title Deeds B.E. 2555 (2012),
35 and other laws that may cause barriers to genetic freedom or monopoly by giant companies. The
36 National Economic and Social Development Plan, 20-Year National Strategy, and Country
37 Reform Plan do not really contain the substance and main direction catering for food security that
38 can serve as the starting point for budgetary planning by public authorities and other government
39 agencies.

40 2) Food acquisition: Government support has led to trade monopoly and could
41 destroy the small farmers' food-exchange system. Nor does it promote a greater variety of
42 channels through which consumers can get access to food.

43 3) Distribution and access to food: The policy-based direction still focuses on
44 encouraging market monopoly through modern trade and attaches a principal role to food
45 business in creating food security both in production and distribution. It also paves the way to
46 patent monopoly by way of international agreements. Thus, the existing public policy is not clear
47 about how to promote competitiveness or increase the role of small farmers, producers and
48 operators.

49 4) Access to food sources from community resource bases: There are three important
50 policy-related laws here: National Park Act B.E. 2562 (2019), Wildlife Reservation and
51

1 Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019), and Community Forest Act B.E. 2562 (2019). Despite a
2 number of revisions and amendments, they do not contain provisions on community rights and
3 use of resource bases, thus causing considerable barriers for the local community to get access to
4 food sources from resource bases. As a result, the community cannot create food security from
5 the resource bases. At the time of crisis, food security still lacks clarity when it comes to
6 measures, policy, or other approaches that can assist the vulnerable, the disadvantaged or those
7 left out of social mechanisms. These people are unable to get access to resources or social
8 service or are deprived of opportunity to participate socially or politically, including migrant
9 workers or stateless people.

10 **4.2 Public policy that reinforces or enhances the creation of food security**

11 Public policy that reinforces or enhances the creation of food security consists of two
12 parts. (1) *The government policy* set during the COVID-19 situation can help to reinforce the
13 creation of food security. Examples of such a policy are relief payment under the “We Stand
14 Together” project and Farmer Remedy Project for an approximate amount of 600 billion baht and
15 the economic and social relief and stimulus policy for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic
16 for an approximate amount of 400 billion baht, as well as policy and measures of giving relief-
17 supplies bags and mobilizing food donation in various forms. (2) *In the social domain*, there
18 emerges a food security public policy that does not come from policy decision-making
19 authorities. Rather, it is a concerted effort of various social forces, at the group, organizational
20 and network levels, to help manage public life together and to ensure a guarantee of food security
21 in one form or another, e.g. food exchange and sharing in various forms, development of the food
22 distribution system in the community, and creation of community health charters.

23 **4.2.1 Short-term policy (during crisis)**

24 1) Management designed to handle crises should include important well thought-out
25 measures, e.g. food reserve system and early warning to ensure adequate food supplies in urban
26 and rural areas both during and after the crisis.

27 2) The laws should include additional penalty provisions for individuals and
28 companies, big or small, that stock up goods, while the community and various networks should
29 take action to impose some kind of “social sanctions”, through collective social measures, to
30 make sure that the general public plays a part in the monitoring, follow-up and inspection of the
31 situation.

32 3) During the food crisis there should be measures to use vacant space, including
33 private unused property or other necessary space to create food security in the face of the on-
34 going crisis. This can be done by enforcing the legal provisions, as mentioned in Section 12 of
35 National Food Committee Act B.E. 2551 (2008) that “*During catastrophes, public disasters or*
36 *terrorist activities related to food and giving rise to serious and emergency risks, the Prime*
37 *Minister, with recommendations from the Committee and consent of the Cabinet, shall have the*
38 *power to declare any given area as a temporarily restricted area for food security purposes...*”

39 4) Measures should be adopted so that food and other agricultural products stocked in
40 the storage of various agencies, such as reserve rice kept for security purposes, can be used or
41 distributed to vulnerable people, groups or networks for consumption during the crisis.

42 5) As for management, the government policy should encourage agencies at
43 ministerial level to work in an integrated manner when designing policy, taking action, planning a
44 problem-solving approach, linking or coordinating plans and projects, so that concrete results will
45 follow in the area concerned.

46 6) Focus should be given to the kind of management that attaches importance to the
47 participation of sectors and community groups concerned at every stage, and to the exercise of
48 moral principles in the work, so that everyone cares to give a helping hand to one another in
49 every dimension.
50

1 7) Power should be decentralized to local government so that agencies concerned can
2 take charge of the crisis in the area, while action must be taken to revise the power and duty of
3 local authorities, together with budgetary support.

4 5 **4.2.2 Long-term policy**

6 1) *With regard to public disasters*, the substance in the National Economic and Social
7 Development Plan, 20-Year National Strategy, and Country Reform Plan should be reviewed to
8 ensure their consistency and main direction on the food security issue in time of crisis so they can
9 serve as the starting point in the preparation of budgetary plans of public authorities and other
10 government agencies.

11 2) Food security should be made a national issue, together with policy and measures
12 to promote and enhance the issue in time of crisis. Distinction should be made between food
13 security in the normal situation and in time of crisis to ensure a proper production system, access
14 to food, and distribution system, among others. This will apply to central, provincial and local
15 policies. Attempts should also be made to set up mechanisms to handle the matter, e.g. creating a
16 network of food innovation development specialists.

17 2) Efforts should be made to reduce or end the government role that encourages
18 monopoly in food business and distribution that can influence food security directly in every
19 situation. This includes revoking measures, regulations, laws or policies that promote the
20 monopoly of food business and the four basic needs and enforcing Trade Competition Act B.E.
21 2560 (2017.)

22 3) The government policy and food security in crises should confine the scope to
23 having enough food to sustain life for a short period of time. During the crisis there should be put
24 in place policy and measures that ensure that every person from whatever any group will have
25 enough food for consumption according to their needs in an equitable manner. Some regulations
26 may have to be overruled. Examples are control of food price and creation of areas reserved for
27 food production for domestic consumption.

28 4) The Food Security Network has unanimously come up with a recommendation to
29 adopt the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of the late King Rama IX as a guiding principle for
30 food security.

31 5) Measures should be put in place to use land considered “domain public of State” as
32 set out in Section 1304 of the Civil and Commercial Code about the use of the domain public of
33 State intended for public interests or reserved for common benefits, such as wasteland and land
34 for public benefits.

35 6) There should be a policy designed to strengthen “community-based food security”,
36 allowing the community to serve as a source of food production and a food exchange and
37 distribution system in a normal situation and at the time of crisis. There should be plans to
38 manage areas for food production at household and community levels, to build “refrigerators
39 around the house”, and to promote the creation of food banks in the community, whether urban or
40 rural, in a variety of forms in line with the local geo-social culture based on the important
41 principles of “collecting, re-cycling, learning and sharing”. Meanwhile, the community should be
42 equipped with “a community plan on food security at the time of crisis”, together with
43 community rules and regulations on food security or with a charter on the use of common areas
44 for food security.

45 7) Efforts should be made to prescribe measures and policy to promote food economy
46 or four basic needs at a small or micro-level, in which planning is locally made for production of
47 food and the four basic needs. Food processing, buying and selling is conducted within the
48 clearly prescribed areas at the community, village/sub-district and local levels, driven by the
49 mechanisms of the people, small traders, community and local entity. There should also be
50 measures to compensate for transportation costs, among others.

1 8) Local and community markets should be promoted at every level, e.g. the market'
2 in hospitals, schools/child development centers, restaurants, and hotels, and food distribution in
3 the village in such forms as mobile food truck and mobile grocery. Distribution can be made by
4 producers in the community itself. There are community markets, markets in the hospitals,
5 mobile markets, centers to promote the distribution of community enterprises/groups of
6 producers. There should be community markets in every community. A management system
7 must be developed to distribute food in the local area, promote greater production in the
8 community in order to reduce importation of food from other areas, and reduce the distance in the
9 transportation. Expansion of local markets should be promoted for direct distribution of food
10 between farmers and consumers. The online market system should be developed to enable direct
11 link of the food system between urban and rural areas. All this is designed to reinforce food
12 security in an adequate and speedy manner.

13 9) There are needs for greater skills and knowledge in preparation for the time of
14 crisis, e.g. basic skills for food production and preservation. People must learn and understand
15 the plantation process by themselves. A basis for food security must be established at household
16 and community levels through production for sufficient consumption whether at individual level
17 whereby vegetables are grown for personal consumption or at community level whereby
18 vegetables are grown with partners and consumed in schools and community. People should also
19 learn about food preservation for the long run.

20 10) The urban community should help promote home-grown vegetable practice in
21 pots and other containers as an alternative to growing garden trees in a small area. Permission
22 should be given to use public or waste land, whether state or private-owned, in the community for
23 common good, especially when it comes to growing to serve as a food source for the community.
24 Besides, there should be a good management system.

25 11) Big cities, like Bangkok, must have a safe food preparation system and a food
26 chain management system, together with food distribution logistics. Emphasis could be placed
27 on the distribution system through online rather than on growing something in a limited space –
28 something that requires technology. As it stands, production does not sufficiently meet the needs
29 of urban consumption.

30 12) There must be a policy on the distribution of land ownerships to enable landless
31 farmers to own some land of their own and get access to the production base, thus obtaining
32 important food security. The State should provide public land that farmers can rent at a low price
33 for production use purposes.

34 13) There should be a policy on creating community resource bases, e.g. economic
35 forest. Natural food sources should be managed for common sustainable use by the community,
36 e.g. putting in place rules and regulations on joint management or prevention against destructive
37 collection from other communities. Food plants in crop rotation should be managed to ensure
38 diversity.

39 14) Revision or amendment must be made in the laws, policies, and Constitution to
40 ensure that there are provisions catering for the right to food and community rights and guarantee
41 that community members can make use of the public land. In this regard, promotion and support
42 should be given to the community to manage food sources from natural resources in the
43 community, e.g. in the management of community forests, freshwater swamp forests, marine
44 conservation areas, and public water sources.

45 15) Public space or waste land in the community should be made a common area for
46 creating food sources, storing the produce, distributing community goods, and serving as
47 community vegetable gardens.

48 16) Action should be taken to set measures, policy, etc., designed to help the
49 vulnerable groups, the disadvantaged, and those left out of social mechanisms who cannot get
50 access to resources or social services or who are deprived of the opportunity to participate
51 socially or politically, including migrant workers and stateless persons, among others, in the

1 central and provincial administration, as well as local government organizations. This will help
2 and encourage the vulnerable groups to get access to food.

3 17) Efforts must be made to promote the formation of groups to assist the right target
4 groups of the vulnerable to get what they need, because assistance is often directed to the wrong
5 target groups. Assistance should be given as an urgent measure for the four basic needs, while as
6 a recovery measure the vulnerable groups should be allowed to depend on themselves as far as
7 they can. In addition, an effort to assist them in a comprehensive and equitable manner requires
8 directly responsible agencies to prepare necessary data and community members to coordinate in
9 the collection of data from those affected. Examples of such information are 14 million people
10 who hold state welfare cards (also called “poor person cards”) and 28-30 million people who
11 registered for the government relief payment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

12 18) Efforts should be made to reinforce collective social movements, by groups,
13 organizations or partner networks, to bring about the joint management of public life. There
14 should be a policy that attaches importance to smaller units or groups of people/organizations,
15 including the food chain, so that they can operate through network cooperation and participation
16 of people concerned throughout the system, ranging from production and distribution to
17 consumption. The food production sector consists of productive farmers, groups/organizations
18 concerned with production resources such as land and water resources, groups that support such
19 production factors as bio-fertilizers and soil conditioners. The produce distribution sector
20 consists of small traders, local produce collectors, and local markets, as well as the consideration
21 of consumer needs.

22 19) Efforts should be made to reinforce movements through social capitals so that
23 they can collectively come up with models of mutual support, such as food sharing, happiness-
24 sharing cabinet, CSR activities, foundations in the country, roles of monasteries, sharing of food
25 portions received by monks to the disadvantaged and the poor, promotion of the joint roles of
26 “house-monastery-school”, “walking together, helping each other” model, and sharing model.

27 However, because of the complexity and breadth of the policy issue of food security, the
28 working group has decided to choose the issue with important “lever effects” as a basis for public
29 policy to be submitted to the 13th National Health Assembly for consideration.
30

31 **5. Submission to the National Health Assembly for consideration**

32 Requesting the National Health Assembly to consider Document Health Assembly 13/Draft
33 Resolution 1 on Food Security in Crises.
34

35 **6. References**

- 36 1. *National Food Committee Act B.E. 2551 (2008)*. [online]. Source:
37 https://library2.parliament.go.th/giventake/content_law/law080251-39.pdf. [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 38 2. *Announcement of Technical Subcommittee of the National Health Assembly Organizing*
39 *Committee 2020 – 2021 on Announcement of sub-themes for development into the agenda for*
40 *the National Health Assembly 2020 – 2021, dated 28 April 2020*. [online]. Source:
41 https://main.samatcha.org/sites/default/files/document/app_sam13_2563_2264.pdf. [Oct. 15,
42 2020]
- 43 3. *Statute on the National Health System (No. 2) B.E. 2559 (2016)*. [online].
44 Source: [https://www.nationalhealth.or.th/sites/default/files/upload_files/Statute_on_the_nation](https://www.nationalhealth.or.th/sites/default/files/upload_files/Statute_on_the_national_health_system_591219.pdf)
45 [al_health_system_591219.pdf](https://www.nationalhealth.or.th/sites/default/files/upload_files/Statute_on_the_national_health_system_591219.pdf). [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 46 4. FAO, *Constitutional and Legal Protection of the Right to Food around the World*, 2011.
47 [Online]. Available form: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ap554e.pdf>. [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 48 5. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- 49 6. *Sustainable Development*. [Online]. Available: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 50 7. A. Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

- 1 8. Krisada Bunchai, Banthun Setthasitrot, Withun Lianchamrun, and Anuch Aphaphirom,
2 *Concept and Policy on Food Resource Base*, Nonthaburi: BioThai Foundation, 2007.
- 3 9. Withun Lianchamrun, “A study of the situation and proposal to develop and drive forward
4 important strategic policy issues on agriculture and health,” National Health Commission
5 Office, 2020, unpublished.
- 6 10. UN World Food Programme, *2020 Global Report on Food Crises*, 2020. [Online]. Available
7 from: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/2020-global-report-food-crises>. [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 8 11. UN World Food Programme, *Global Report on Food Crises Update: In times of COVID-19 -*
9 *September 2020*, 2020. [Online]. Available from: [https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-](https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-update-times-covid-19-september-2020)
10 [report-food-crises-update-times-covid-19-september-2020](https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-update-times-covid-19-september-2020). [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 11 12. Sommarat Chantharat, Atchana Lamsam, Latthapon Rattanawararak, Chanakan Ritthinon,
12 Narongrit Adubathananusak, and Bunthida Sangiamnet, “Thai agricultural households in
13 COVID-19 crisis: empirical evidence from interviews with farmers throughout the country,”
14 Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research, 2020. [Online]. Available from:
15 https://www.pier.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/aBRIDGEd_2020_011.pdf. [Oct. 15,
16 2020]
- 17 13. “Economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on small agricultural households in the
18 agricultural community,” *Community Organizations Development Institute*. [Online].
19 Available from: <https://www.ldi.or.th/2020/08/16/eco-covid19/>. [Oct. 15, 2020]
- 20 14. “Retail and food shops to combat COVID-19 quickly go online to compensate for lost income
21 (Krasaethat, issue No. 3093),” in Kasikorn Research Center. [Online]. Available from:
22 <https://kasikornresearch.com/th/analysis/k-econ/business/Pages/z3093.aspx>. [Oct. 15, 2020]