



2024 Bangkok Conference Report





Wholesale Markets at the forefront of technological innovation: how can technologies make markets more relevant, more efficient and more diversified?"

2

Bangkok, Thailand
15th - 17th May 2024



WUWM

BANGKOK 2024



Executive Summary

3

The World Union of Wholesale Markets held its first 2024 conference in Bangkok, Thailand, from May 15 to 17, marking the first time the event was ever hosted in Southeast Asia. Organized by Talaad Thai, the largest wholesale market in Southeast Asia, the conference attracted nearly 300 delegates from over 25 countries across five continents, highlighting the role of Wholesale Markets in advancing technologies for sustainable, resilient and innovative food systems globally.

Themed *“Wholesale Markets at the forefront of technological innovation: how can technologies make markets more relevant, more efficient and more diversified?”*, the conference underscored the transformative power of technology in reshaping wholesale markets to meet the evolving demands of consumers, producers, and the broader food system.

Recognizing that technology is no longer optional but a critical enabler of market resilience, sustainability, and efficiency, the conference explored a wide range of cutting-edge technologies. These included artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) as essential tools to enhance supply chain efficiency, strengthen traceability, ensure food safety, and reduce environmental impacts. These innovations offer wholesale markets the opportunity to optimize operations, minimize waste, and contribute to more sustainable food systems, while increasing market access and equity for all stakeholders.

Central to the dialogue was the acknowledgment of the critical role wholesale markets play in global food security. Facing challenges such as climate change, growing urbanization, and food insecurity, wholesale markets were recognized as essential pillars for ensuring affordable access to food. Technological advancements were emphasized as key to enhancing the ability of wholesale markets to safeguard food security by improving distribution efficiency, minimizing food waste, and providing equitable access to high-quality products across diverse communities.

The conference also focused on the public service function of wholesale markets, which provide vital support to local economies, promote food safety, and facilitate the efficient flow of goods between producers, wholesalers, and retailers. This critical role has become even more significant as global supply chains face increasing complexity. There was broad consensus on the need to modernize market infrastructure and governance in order to improve efficiency, bolster resilience, and support inclusive growth.

Sustainability emerged as a recurring theme, with delegates recognizing the imperative to decarbonize supply chains and adopt circular economy principles. The integration of digital tools, such as AI for predictive analytics, was identified as crucial to achieving sustainability goals while meeting consumer demands for transparency, ethical sourcing, and environmental responsibility. The conference also highlighted the importance of fostering partnerships across sectors – ranging from public and private entities to non-governmental organizations – to create a unified approach to sustainable market transformation.

Furthermore, the conference emphasized the need for wholesale markets to evolve in response to changing consumer behavior. Delegates explored how technological innovation can facilitate the growth of more diversified markets that better serve the needs of diverse communities, support family farms, and promote local food systems. By embracing these changes, wholesale markets can remain relevant and adaptable to future challenges and opportunities.

In closing, the conference issued a powerful call to action, urging stakeholders to accelerate the adoption of technology, foster collaboration, and prioritize sustainability in all aspects of market operations. The insights shared at the event will guide WUWM's ongoing efforts to modernize wholesale markets globally, ensuring that these essential institutions remain robust, efficient, and able to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2024 WUWM Conference served as a pivotal moment for the wholesale market community, reinforcing the importance of innovation and collaboration in building a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food system for the future.



Table of Contents

3 Executive Summary

6 Opening ceremony

7 Welcome address by **Mr. Pradit Phataraprasit**, President of TAWMA and Executive Committee Chairman of TalaadThai

8 Welcome address by **Mr. Stéphane Layani**, WUWM Chairman

9 Welcome address by **Mr. Qu Dongyu**, Director-General of FAO

10 Welcome address by **Mr. Paopoom Rojanasakul**, Deputy Minister of Finance of Thailand

11 Morning sessions

12 **Keynote 1.** Leading transformation: how to become the game changers of the region

13 **Panel 1.** Digital transformation: a game-changer for Wholesale Markets

14 **Panel 2.** The next move of corporate: sustainable business strategies

16 Afternoon sessions

17 **Pitch deck.** Innovative enterprise solutions for Wholesale Markets

→ **Mr. Arunthep Sangvareethip**, co-founder of ThaiMarket

→ **Mr. Tanawit Tonekunya**, CEO of Horgnize

→ **Mr. Wipavee Watcharakorn**, founder and CEO of Fresh Commerce

→ **Mr. Ravi Sethi**, head of Special Projects at TalaadThai

→ **Mr. Apipu Phataraprasit**, founder and CEO of Loop Thailand

20 **Keynote 2.** South-East Asia's role in the global food supply system

21 **Panel 3.** Grow globally: success factors for ASEAN entrepreneurs

23 **Keynote 3.** Thailand's digital transformation in agricultural sector

24 **Panel 4.** Embedding sustainable technology in the food value chain

25 **Keynote 4.** Overcoming global challenges for sustainable development through tech innovation

27 **Workshop.** WUWM launches new working group on Urban Logistics and Digital Economy

28 Conclusion

30 Sponsors & WUWM Partners

Opening ceremony



7 The opening ceremony of the WUWM Conference 2024 was led by Mr. Stéphane Layani, Chairman of WUWM, Mr. Pradit Phataraprasit, President of Thai Agricultural Wholesale Market Association (TAWMA) and Executive Committee Chairman of TalaadThai, FAO Director-General Mr. Qu Dongyu and Mr. Paopoom Rojanasakul, Deputy Minister of Finance of Thailand.

Welcome address by Mr. Pradit Phataraprasit President of TAWMA and Executive Committee Chairman of TalaadThai

In his welcoming speech, **Mr. Phataraprasit** highlighted Thailand's pivotal role in global agriculture, with US\$15 billion in agricultural exports. He emphasized the sector's contribution to 10% of Thailand's GDP and its immense growth potential through technological advancements. With nearly half of Southeast Asia's 660 million people and a combined economic power of over US\$12 trillion, Thailand is poised to lead regional trade.

Mr. Phataraprasit outlined Thailand's strategic investments in infrastructure, including a tripling of international airports, extensive rail and port upgrades, and the promotion of public-private partnerships to strengthen the wholesale sector and improve market access for small farmers.

“ Thailand is stepping up to the challenge of uplifting Southeast Asian markets, unlocking the potential of farmers, diversifying products and improving efficiency in the new digital era (...) The world is calling for a secure future for global supply chains - a delicate balance between sustainability and productivity.”
Mr. Phataraprasit

Welcome address by Mr. Stéphane Layani WUWM Chairman

Mr. Stéphane Layani opened his address by expressing his gratitude to Mr. Pradit Phataraprasit, Pichai Chunhavajira, Qu Dongyu and Paopoom Rojanasakul. He then emphasized the vital role of Wholesale Markets in global food security, connecting producers, traders, and consumers. He urged the adoption of technological innovations like AI to improve operations, reduce waste, and build trust. Highlighting global trends, Mr. Layani noted

“ To thrive in today’s dynamic landscape, markets must embrace technological advancements like AI, which will help optimize operations, reduce waste, and build trust in transactions.”

Mr. Stéphane Layani

“ Wholesale Markets are a central link between producers, traders and consumers, ensuring a healthy, balanced and sustainable diet while contributing to global food security.”

Mr. Stéphane Layani

that Research and Development (R&D) spending is projected to reach \$1.5 trillion, and smartphone penetration will reach 83% by 2025 – offering significant opportunities for tech-driven solutions. He also spotlighted Southeast Asia’s growing role in agricultural innovation, with countries like France, Thailand, India, and Japan leading the way. He concluded by encouraging collaboration to create a future where technology empowers farmers and improves market efficiency.





Welcome address by Mr. Qu Dongyu Director-General of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

9

Mr. Qu Dongyu highlighted that 57% of the global population lives in urban areas, set to rise to 70% by 2050, with 70% of food consumed in cities. This growth demands a transformation of food systems, with wholesale markets playing a central role in improving efficiency, resilience, and sustainability.

He shared insights from his visit to Thailand's TalaadThai Wholesale Market, emphasizing how effective markets strengthen supply chains and enhance food security. **Mr. Qu** also noted FAO's key initiatives, including the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and One Country, One Priority Product, which focus on eradicating hunger and supporting smallholder farmers. He reaffirmed FAO's commitment to advancing sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems worldwide.

“ Investing in improved wholesale market infrastructure improves the supply of fresh products, reduces the cost of nutritious foods, thereby improving food security and nutrition.”

Mr. Qu Dongyu

“ An adequate technology base can facilitate diversification and specialization to expand beyond traditional fruits and vegetables to other types of products.”

Mr. Qu Dongyu



Welcome address by Mr. Paopoom Rojanasakul Deputy Minister of Finance of Thailand

Mr. Paopoom Rojanasakul highlighted the country's strategic position as a global agricultural and food hub, aiming to enhance food security and become the "Kitchen of the World". With a complete agricultural value chain and strong logistics, Thailand is set to connect global markets, serving as a key trade hub for Asia. Under the "Ignite Thailand" vision, the government is focused on advancing food technology and supporting entrepreneurs with tax incentives.

“ We are fully committed to transforming our agrifood systems to become more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive, adapting to climate change and accelerating natural resource management.”

Mr. Paopoom Rojanasakul

“ Thailand is pioneering the transition to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and bioenergy, reducing carbon emissions and creating a sustainable environment.”

Mr. Paopoom Rojanasakul

Mr. Rojanasakul also emphasized Thailand's commitment to sustainability, noting the country's collaboration with FAO to transform agrifood systems and drive renewable energy adoption, including solar and wind energy projects to reduce carbon emissions. He concluded by stressing the government's support for innovation and growth in the food sector, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future.



Morning sessions



Keynote 1. Leading transformation: how to become the game changers of the region

Speaker: Mr. Ariya Banomyong
 Founder and CEO of Transformational IT



Mr. Ariya Banomyong discussed the digital transformation at TalaadThai Market, which involved creating a new operational platform. "In massive market of 850,000 m² and 4,000 traders, the challenge is to operate with the entire ecosystem". The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition, highlighting the need

for new business models and leadership. A key development was the integration of "Loop," a third-party logistics provider now a subsidiary of TalaadThai, which supports 400,000 restaurants in Thailand. The platform enables buyers to access price lists, request quotations, and streamline procurement. TalaadThai's "assisted onboarding" approach gradually introduces sellers to digital tools while meeting buyer needs. The company plans to expand its platform and share insights with other markets to drive wholesale sector digitalization.

“ In massive market of 850,000 m² and 4,000 traders, the challenge is to operate with the entire ecosystem”
Mr. Ariya Banomyong

Panel 1. Digital transformation: a game-changer for Wholesale Markets

Speakers: Mrs. Lola Román Gallego, Director of Corporate Development at Mercamadrid (Spain), and Mr. Ma Linlin, Vice-President of the China Aquatic Production Chamber of Commerce

Mercamadrid's digitalisation journey

Mrs. Roman Gallego detailed Mercamadrid's digital transformation, which spanned eight years and involved a cultural shift among all operators. The market, handling 3.5 million tons of perishables annually, adopted key technologies like a web app for logistics, 5G since 2020, and an e-commerce platform in 2023 to

respond to rising demand for online shopping, especially from younger consumers. The infrastructure, including utilities, is monitored through Building Information Modelling (BIM) technology. Mercamadrid is also exploring AI for a digital logistics corridor to improve supply chain transparency. Additionally, it is testing autonomous electric vehicles as part of a European sustainability project.

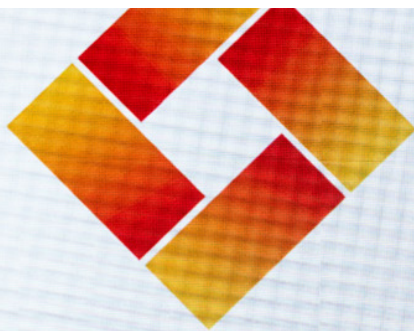
“Perishables are not the easiest category to digitalize but e-shopping is a growing trend we must respond to”

Mrs. Lola Román Gallego

Shanghai logistics park: a digitalized market model

Mr. Linlin presented the Shanghai Logistics Park, a digital platform integrated with global food logistics. The platform collects data via IoT,

13



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offering real-time analytics and digital tools for operators, suppliers, and regulators. A key feature is its integration with financial services, enabling easier access to credit for wholesalers. The system tracks products from origin to destination, optimizing storage and deliveries. The platform has helped increase credit access, with banks offering larger loans – up to \$900,000 per wholesaler – based on verified transaction records.

Both speakers highlighted that digitalization requires collaboration and adaptation and agreed that digitalization is an ongoing process that must evolve with market demands.

“ The objective of our tool is also to address a lack of collateral information between the wholesalers and the service providers like banks”

Mr. Ma Linlin

“ By using our digital platform one bank has been able to reach 200 customers, with a total amount of about US\$90 million; the banks have also been increasing their credit line from 300 to US\$900,000 average per wholesaler”

Mr. Ma Linlin



Panel 2. The next move of corporate: sustainable business strategies

Speakers: Mrs. Panalee Phatprasit, Assistant Managing Director of Simummuang Market (Thailand) and Mr. Charles Park, COO of Joburg Market (South Africa)





Simummuang Market: Asia's leading wholesale hub

Mrs. Phatraprasit, Assistant Managing Director of Simummuang Market, shared its sustainability efforts. Spanning 550,000 m², Simummuang handles 8,000 tons daily, serving 70,000 workers and 4,000 vendors. It supplies 70% of Bangkok's fruit and vegetable consumption and operates a "truck market" for direct sales. Sustainability initiatives include recycling organic waste into animal feed, investing in a water treatment station, and generating solar energy for 20% of its operations. The goal is net-zero emissions by 2030.

Joburg Market: a distinctive model

Mr. Park, COO of Joburg Market, discussed its unique model. Established in 1893, Joburg is Africa's largest wholesale market, with 75,000 m²

“ It's not just about business; it's about managing a community”

Mrs. Panalee Phatraprasit

of space and 1.4 million tons of annual produce distribution. Employing 5,000 workers and serving 8,000 farmers, it operates on a commission basis. Over 23 years, revenue grew by 758%. Joburg focuses on sustainability with solar-powered cold storage and advanced tech like IoT and AI for efficiency.

Sustainability challenges and solutions

Both markets face challenges: Joburg contends with high energy costs and political instability, while Simummuang focuses on energy efficiency, waste management, and solar energy (covering 20% of electricity needs). Simummuang also provides education for market workers' children. The panel emphasized that businesses must commit to sustainability long-term. For **Mrs. Phatraprasit**, success relies on stakeholder involvement and worker education on sustainability practices, which Simummuang has prioritized for eight years, blending environmental and social goals.



Afternoon sessions



Pitch deck. Innovative enterprise solutions for Wholesale Markets

17

Speakers: Mr. Arunthep Sangvareethip, co-founder of ThaiMarket, Mr. Tanawit Tonekunya, CEO of Horgnize, Mr. Wipavee Watcharakorn, founder and CEO of Fresh Commerce, Mr. Ravi Sethi, head of Special Projects at TalaadThai and Mr. Apipu Phataraprasit, founder and CEO of Loop Thailand

Mr. Sangvareethip introduced the platform as a simple solution connecting market owners and vendors. It helps retailers and restaurants find rental spaces easily, boosting sales and product diversity. ThaiMarket also connects wholesalers, franchises, and international suppliers. Arunthep highlighted its environmental impact, working with YBCG to reduce footprints by optimizing market locations. The platform allows users to register, track status, and finalize contracts.

With over 100,000 markets and 2.5 million spaces in Thailand, 5-20% of which are empty, ThaiMarket has onboarded 600 markets in six months. Future plans include expanding into consulting, transportation, and international markets by 2026.



“ We believe that we can connect market owners and sellers across Thailand, and ultimately across the world.”
Mr. Arunthep Sangvareethip



Mr. Watcharakorn introduced TalaadThai Online, a platform designed to enhance the wholesale market ecosystem. The platform addresses challenges such as the need for face-to-face connections, complex order management, logistics barriers, and payment constraints. For buyers, TalaadThai simplifies issues like quality inconsistencies, high logistics costs, and bulk purchase restrictions. In just 20 months, TalaadThai Online has gained significant traction, with 753,000 app installs, 300 wholesale merchants, and over 9,500 Stock Keeping Units (SKU) across 20 fresh food categories. The platform has sold 1.62 million product units and ranks 5th in followers on social media compared to other B2B platforms.

Mr. Tonekunya introduced MyketPro, a platform developed with TalaadThai Market to digitally transform wholesale markets. The platform addresses key challenges like fraud, space management, late payments, and scattered data. MyketPro manages over 18,000 buildings and 1 million rental units in Thailand, processing more than 10 billion THB annually.

Key Features:

- **Smart Management:** Real-time synchronization of market operations.
- **Smart Payment:** Multi-channel payment acceptance and verification.
- **Smart Services:** Add-on solutions integrated with the platform.

With over 40 markets using MyketPro, Tanawit aims to expand its services to logistics and e-commerce, creating a digital backbone for wholesale markets in Southeast Asia.

“ TalaadThai Online elevates the market ecosystem, using new technologies to create value for every stakeholder involved”

Mr. Wipavee Watcharakorn



“ Logistics and e-commerce will be the next level of our online services, in order to become the backbone of the entire web market ecosystem”

Mr. Tanawit Tonekunya





19

Mr. Ravi Sethi presented Thai Agro Fresh, a company based within TalaadThai Market specializing in high-volume, customized food sourcing and distribution. Catering to buyers like hotels, restaurants, and catering companies, Thai Agro Fresh offers over 3,000 SKUs, sourcing products based on precise specifications such as size, colour, and weight. The company focuses on product quality, enhancing shelf life, and ensuring products withstand long logistics durations. It partners with logistics providers offering temperature-controlled vehicles for nationwide delivery, including multi-location drop-offs.

Thai Agro Fresh also provides customized packaging, ensuring it meets the specific needs of each product. Handling 8-10 tons of produce daily, Thai Agro Fresh maintains high standards of quality, flexibility, and reliability for wholesale buyers across Thailand.

“ Catering to buyers like hotels, restaurants, and catering companies, Thai Agro Fresh offers over 3,000 SKUs, sourcing products based on precise specifications such as size, colour and weight.”

Mr. Ravi Sethi



Mr. Apipu Phataraprasit highlighted the importance of logistics in connecting small farmers and cooperatives to the supply chain in Thailand. Loop was created to address the challenges of delivering perishables in diverse and remote conditions, referencing over 3,000 specialized drivers across the country for full truckloads, smaller volumes, or parcel deliveries.

Loop offers flexible transport quotations based on weight, units, or case specifics. Currently, it serves three wholesale markets and provides door-to-door electric delivery within 2 miles of the market. Annually, Loop delivers over 600 products, handling 1.4 million tons over 45 million kilometres.

Keynote 2. South-East Asia's role in the global food supply system

Speaker: Emeritus Professor Mrs. Pavinee Chinachoti, board member of the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFOST) and advisor to Food Science and Technology Association of Thailand (FOSTAT)



20

Professor Chinachoti discussed food waste as a major global issue, particularly with crops like tomatoes. She advocated for short supply chains and circular economy practices to reduce waste, focusing on bio-refining and alternative proteins, including plant – and insect – based options. She highlighted the role of smart farming technologies in addressing waste and improving efficiency. She pointed out that while COVID-19 worsened global hunger, ASEAN countries showed resilience due to small family farms. Laos and Singapore were highlighted for their strong Global Food Security Index (GFSI) scores, which reflect their ability to maintain food affordability, quality, and sustainability.

Professor Chinachoti emphasized the need for diversifying food sources to address health and environmental concerns. While over 300,000 plant species exist, only a small number are used for food. The reliance on nutrient-poor crops like rice, wheat, and maize has contributed to

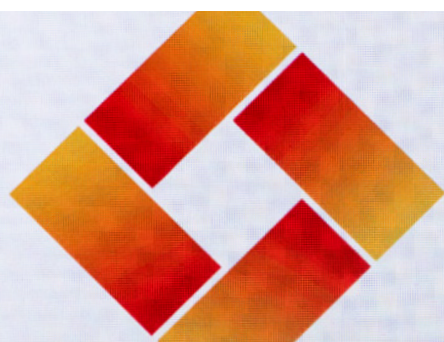
health issues. With the Asia-Pacific population expected to reach 3.75 billion by 2050, she stressed the need for more diverse and nutritious food production. She discussed the environmental impact of the food supply chain, which emits 13.7 billion metric tons of CO₂ annually. Meat production, especially beef and lamb, contributes the most to carbon emissions, while fruits, such as those grown in Thailand, offer a more sustainable and climate-friendly food source.

Professor Chinachoti highlighted the growth of the ASEAN fruit and vegetable juice market, valued at US\$26.39 billion in 2022 and projected to reach US\$33.67 billion by 2028. She also noted the expanding vegetable seed market, with Asia-Pacific leading in global hybrid and open-pollinated seed production.

Professor Chinachoti concluded by emphasizing the need for food diversity, sustainability, and innovation to tackle food security challenges in ASEAN and globally.

“ Covid-19 suppressed food security in many regions except ASEAN countries and Central Africa, where there is a dominance of small family farming, which proves to be more resilient.”

Professor Chinachoti



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Panel 3. Grow globally: success factors for ASEAN entrepreneurs

21

Speakers: Mr. Ioannis Triantafyllis, Vice-Chairman of WUWM and General Manager of the Greek Central Markets (Greece) and **Mr. Benoît Mathieu**, Vice-Chairman of the French Federation of Wholesale Markets and Chairman of MIN Cavaillon market in Provence (France)

Mr. Triantafyllis highlighted that WUWM is the largest global network of wholesale markets, with 217 members across four continents, serving 200 million consumers in Europe. These markets handle 25 million tons of fruit and vegetables (40% of supply), 1 million tons of fish (10%), and 1 million tons of meat (2%). **Mr. Mathieu** shared that the French Federation represents 20 markets in France, serving 15 million customers daily, with rising imports from Asia, though market activity has remained flat.

They shared that the EU upgraded its relations with ASEAN to a strategic partnership in 2020, with a €180 million budget for cooperation. ASEAN is the EU's third-largest trading partner, and the EU is its second-largest investor, with €350.1 billion in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in 2020. Despite these ties, the EU faced an €8.6 billion agri-food trade deficit in 2022, importing €18.3 billion from Southeast Asia, a 13.3% increase from the previous year.



“ Imposing Non-tariff measures (NTM) is crucial for market access and performance in agri-food trade.”

Mr. Ioannis Triantafyllis

“ Adaptability should be complete which is why lobbying, training and finding a way to penetrate the European Markets is the key.”

Mr. Ioannis Triantafyllis

Mr. Triantafyllis advised ASEAN producers to focus on sustainable agriculture certifications, market research, and forming strong relationships with European stakeholders. He also emphasized leveraging free trade agreements, investing in innovation, and enhancing logistics.

“ One of the greatest obstacles to agri-trade between ASEAN and the EU are non-harmonized standards for essential goods.”

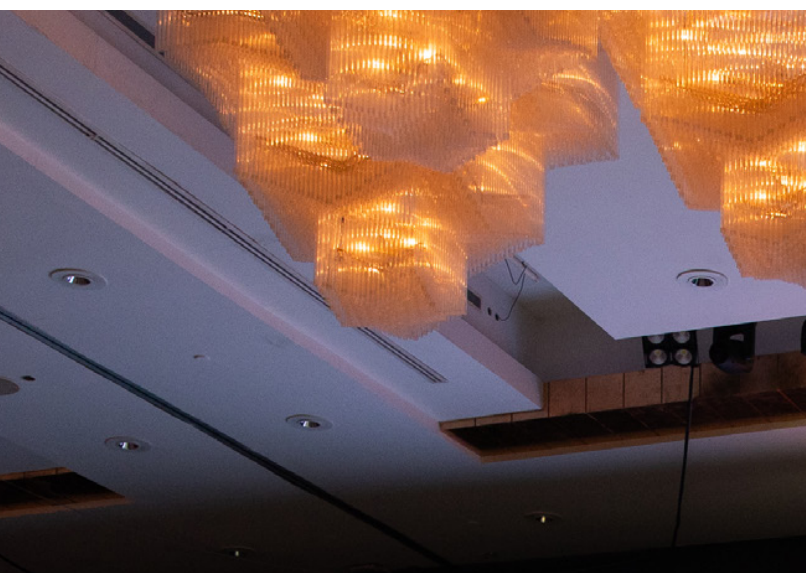
Mr. Ioannis Triantafyllis



Mr. Mathieu warned that new EU regulations, such as the carbon footprint regulation and the Cross Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), could offer a competitive edge to Thai exporters who meet EU sustainability standards. He stressed the importance of leadership, traceability, and technology in supply chains, citing Thai Union's success in Europe. **Mr. Triantafyllis** added that small and medium-sized farmers must be involved in technology adoption to enhance supply chain efficiency.

“ Opportunities include expanding market share and entering new markets, while challenges range from European CO2 emission regulations and import restrictions to evolving consumer expectations.”

Mr. Benoît Mathieu





Keynote 3. Thailand's digital transformation in agricultural sector

Speaker: Mr. Teeranun Srihong, Chairman of the Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA)

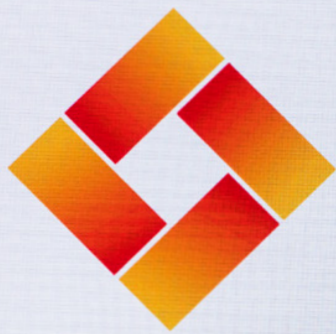
23

Mr. Teeranun Srihong outlined Thailand's digital transformation in agriculture. The government is tackling challenges like inadequate infrastructure, limited digital skills, and high costs by implementing IoT, satellite imaging, AI, and precision farming. These technologies monitor soil, weather, and water conditions, improve crop planning, and reduce waste. Drones and AI are also used for inspections, disease detection, and eco-friendly pest management. The Big Data Institute and 5G development support data processing for sustainable agriculture. DEPA's sustainability strategy focuses on eco-friendly production, value-added products, and sustainable supply chains. It encourages reducing waste, carbon footprints, and creating new products from agricultural waste. The government also promotes digital innovation through training programs and subsidies.

Mr. Srihong stated that the "Digital Valley" project, linking Bangkok and Rayong, aims to transform Thailand's economy. With infrastructure connecting industrial zones and parks, this initiative will boost investment and economic growth, covering 15% of the country's GDP.



“ We developed at DEPA a comprehensive system to help both farmers and other people in the same ecosystem to advance towards digital transition.”
Mr. Teeranun Srihong



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Panel 4. Embedding sustainable technology in the food value chain

24

Speakers: **Mr. Zengjun Ma**, Chairman of the China Wholesale Market Association (CAWA), board member and former Chairman of the WUWM (China), **Mr. Jérémie Malvy**, head of purchasing at Rungismarket.com (France) and **Mrs. Sara Zri**, Tech Entrepreneur at Rungismarket.com (France)

“ Technology is not anymore a bonus or a luxury, it has become a necessity to grow and improve performance.”

Mrs. Sara Zri

reduce carbon emissions by 110,000 tons and food waste by 70,000 tons by 2027, using natural gas trucks and optimized order aggregation. Technology is proving crucial for both operational efficiency and sustainability in the food industry.

Chairman Ma highlighted China's digital transformation in logistics for sustainable food supply. **Mrs. Zri** emphasized that technology is now essential for improving efficiency, reducing food waste, and ensuring traceability in the food value chain. **Mr. Malvy** shared how Rungismarket.com's Califrais platform is transforming food sourcing by integrating logistics and offering tools like inventory management and demand forecasting. The platform serves over 3,000 B2B customers, with a €420 average order value and a 98.5% satisfaction rate. Rungismarket aims to





Keynote 4. Overcoming global challenges for sustainable Development through Tech Innovation

25

Speakers: Mr. Luke Tay, Founder of Cornucopia Futurescapes and Singapore Futures Fellow at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (Singapore) and **Mr. Vincent Martin**, Director of the Office of Innovation at FAO

Mr. Tay underscored the challenges of sustainability amid overlapping risks – a concept he referred to as *polycrisis*. This includes climate change, food insecurity, and geopolitical instability, which collectively threaten global food systems. With food production accounting for one-third of global carbon emissions and livestock contributing 15%, **Luke Tay** stressed the importance of balancing gradual reductions in red meat consumption with decarbonizing livestock production, a sector that supports 1.3 billion livelihoods.

He highlighted alternative protein sources like insects and South Asian superfoods, including foxtail millet and moringa, as opportunities to enhance nutrition and reduce emissions. Innovations such as urban farming, aquaponics, and Singapore's CO₂-based protein production exemplify technological advancements, though **Luke Tay** warned of their environmental costs without renewable energy integration.

“ There is a lot of misinformation about food. Governments must lead the way in educating people about new food technologies and their benefits.”

Mr. Luke Tay

Global food insecurity has worsened since the mid-2010s, exacerbated by inflation and population displacement. **Luke Tay** cited studies showing food systems generate \$2 in social and environmental externalities for every \$1 spent. Chokepoints in global shipping routes, especially for staples like wheat and maize, pose additional risks, further compounded by geopolitical tensions.

“ The path forward is not to choose between embracing nature or doubling down on technology, but to pursue both and create synergies.”

Mr. Luke Tay

Mr. Tay advocated for stronger regional food flows, investments in agronomy, and climate-smart agriculture to bolster food sovereignty. Regulatory frameworks, carbon credit systems, and personalized diets are essential to optimize resources and drive sustainable transformation. Concluding, **Mr. Tay** called for youth engagement, informed consumer behaviour, and cross-sector collaboration to create resilient, sustainable food systems capable of navigating future challenges.



“ Connecting youth to the soil and nurturing them as conscious consumers is key to shaping a sustainable food future.”

Mr. Luke Tay

Mr. Vincent Martin, FAO Office innovation Director, highlighted the challenges facing the global food system, including climate change, food loss and waste, and hunger. He emphasized the need for collective action, innovation, and strong partnerships to achieve sustainable development goals. The FAO's strategic framework, focusing on science, innovation, and climate change, provides a roadmap for addressing these challenges.

He also underscored the importance of leveraging technology to transform wholesale markets, reduce food waste, and improve supply chain efficiency. He finally called for strengthened public-private partnerships and invited attendees to the upcoming World Food Forum for further discussions.

“ While daunting at FAO, we believe these challenges represent an opportunity to rethink our food system and together define a better future.”

Mr. Vincent Martin





Workshop. WUWM launches new working group on Urban Logistics and Digital Economy

27

This initiative marks a strategic step toward addressing the evolving challenges of urban food supply chains and positioning Wholesale Markets at the heart of innovative logistics solutions.

This group aims to develop forward-thinking strategies that integrate logistics and data-driven trade into urban and regional planning. By embracing digitalization and multimodal transport solutions, the group will enhance market efficiency and sustainability, ensuring wholesale markets remain essential infrastructure for food security and economic resilience. A key objective of this initiative is to engage in European and international Calls for Projects and Tenders, leveraging funding opportunities to develop cutting-edge logistics models. The group will play a role in preparing projects which seek to harmonize multimodal logistics operations across wholesale markets in Europe and worldwide. With a focus on rail corridors, digital marketplaces, and AI-driven logistics, the work aims to reduce emissions, optimize supply chains, and reinforce wholesale markets as urban logistics hubs. Wholesale Markets are no longer just about

supply; they are becoming data-driven logistics hubs. This working group will explore how AI, predictive analytics, and digital marketplaces can transform the trade of perishable goods. The ultimate goal is to enhance efficiency, minimize waste, and create resilient supply networks that benefit cities, regions, and businesses alike.

With the launch of the Urban Logistics and Digital Economy working group, WUWM is taking a decisive step toward the future of wholesale markets. By aligning with major European initiatives and fostering innovation, WUWM ensures that Wholesale Markets remain not just suppliers, but drivers of sustainable, intelligent, and resilient urban trade.

Conclusion



The 2024 WUWM Bangkok conference marked a significant milestone in the global wholesale market network. As the first-ever WUWM event to take place in Southeast Asia, hosted by the region’s largest wholesale market, TalaadThai, a market renowned for its advanced technological integration, it underscored the pivotal role of technology in driving innovation and sustainability within the food chain.

The conference brought together a diverse group of WUWM members and stakeholders, including representatives from the Agricultural Ministry, National Authorities, CEOs, researchers, entrepreneurs and students. Through keynote speeches, panel discussions and pitch presentations, the event delved into the transformative power of technology in addressing critical challenges facing Wholesale Markets.

Key themes that emerged from the conference included:

- Leveraging digital technologies to enhance market efficiency, reduce costs and improve supply chain visibility.
- Adopting environmentally friendly practices and social responsibility initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Exploring opportunities for ASEAN entrepreneurs to expand their businesses into international markets.
- Harnessing cutting-edge technologies to improve food security, reduce food waste and enhance consumer experiences.

The conference concluded by emphasizing the imperative need for investment in technological infrastructure and digital solutions.

“ By embracing innovation, wholesale markets can not only improve their operations but also contribute to broader societal goals such as food security, economic growth, and environmental sustainability”.

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