



How the StopDrink Network says BIG NO to alcohol in the Thai-EU FTA

Reported by Thaksaphon Thamarangsi, Center for Alcohol Studies

Anti-alcohol group urge MOC to take alcohol out of Thai-EU FTA

Daily news Newspaper 18/06/10

Ministry of Commerce, 18 June 2010: over 300 representatives of the Alliance for Alcohol Problem Prevention (AAPP) and its partners gathered in front of the ministry of Commerce (MOC) to submit the open statement to the Deputy Minister, Alongkorn Pholabutr, against the inclusion of alcohol in the negotiation for the Thai-EU Free trade Agreement.

Komron Choodecha, AAPP representative declared that although the value and volume of alcohol imported from EU are still minority compared to domestic sector, but the inclusion of alcohol in the Thai-EU FTA would significantly stimulate Thai alcohol consumption, at least from the drop of custom duty of these beverages from 60% to 0%. The major leap of market is expected. Therefore AAPP has three stances

1. AAPP strongly oppose the inclusion of alcoholic beverages in the Thai-EU FTA. Alcohol is no ordinary commodity, it negatively affect health, economy and social well-being. Hence it should not be regarded at the level of other commercial product. And APPA urges Thai government to review and consider withdrawing alcohol from already agreed FTA including ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and Thai-Australia FTA.
2. Liberalization of alcoholic beverages cannot be entirely based on economic concept or competitiveness, but has to comprehensively take into concern sustainable social development and other dimensions
3. The inclusion of alcohol in the FTA benefits only few people. The collective benefit is dwarfed by the negative impact. And the inclusion would also significantly limit Thai ability to control alcohol-related problems in the long run.
4. Thailand has to be in the line of modern world, and AAPP is not against FTA as a whole. AAPP calls for the thoroughly consideration in negotiating any FTA, and the social well being and sustainable development must be regarded in the negotiation not less than economic prosperity.

Mr. Alongkorn, Deputy Commerce Minister, said "Currently the Thai-EU FTA is in the public hearing process, according to our Constitution. I see the necessity to exempt alcohol from the negotiation because alcohol is a dangerous good which could do harm to our youth and society as the whole. And because this dangerous property,



we should not promote it. Additionally we should review the need to withdraw alcohol and tobacco from previously agreed FTA, particularly in the custom duty exemption, for societal benefit.

(translated by Thaksaphon Thamarangsi)

Photo



1. Logo for this AAPP movement



2. 300 representatives of AAPP including university students

Some displays:

- Alcohol is no ordinary commodity: Take alcohol out of FTA (in English)
- Alcohol and FTA: For Your Industry Only (in English)
- We won't negotiate alcohol with EU (in Thai)



- Alcohol in Thai-EU FTA: our youth are victim (in Thai)
- Alcohol Giant from EU will undermine Thai youth (in Thai)



3. Mr.Kamron Choodecha declaring AAPP statement





4,5: Live short drama showing how Big Alcohol from EU force Thai youth to drink more through Thai-EU negotiation
Big display (background) 'Alcohol in FTA: cheaper-more sale-more harm'



6. AAPP representative submit open statement to Mr. Alongkorn Pholabutr, Deputy Commerce Minister



7. Group photo, the big display: No negotiate alcohol with EU for our society

Alcohol, tobacco cut from free trade deal

Bangkok Post: 23/06/2010

Health activists are lauding the Commerce Ministry's push to remove alcohol and tobacco products from a list of products covered by a free trade deal with the European Union.

Center for Alcohol Studies director Thaksaphon Thamarangsi yesterday said alcohol and tobacco should be considered "special products" and should not be included on the list of products to be discussed at trade negotiations with the EU.

Deputy Commerce Minister Alongkorn Pholbutr's decision to exclude alcoholic beverages and tobacco from the talks will help safeguard Thai consumers from an influx of hazardous products, which will become cheaper if they are listed under the free trade deal, he said.

The trade pact will also force governments to soften their alcohol consumption control policy, Dr Thaksaphon said.

About 80% of imported alcohol from the EU is well packaged and designed, and could attract young drinkers to try their products, he said.



"If these two products are included on the list, they will be exempt from customs tax," he said.

"The price of imported alcohol and tobacco will be cheaper and these products, which damage health and society, will be more accessible to young drinkers and smokers."

Studies show that more teenagers are drinking alcohol on a regular basis than in the past.

Anti-alcohol and tobacco activists recently petitioned Mr Alongkorn not to bow to pressure from alcohol and tobacco producers.

Imported alcohol products attract 60% customs tax. The volume of alcohol imports from the EU last year - valued at 5.14 billion baht - accounted for half of total alcohol imports to the country, Anti-Alcohol Network coordinator Kamron Choodecha said.

"Free trade agreements are important for economic growth as well as the country's development and competitiveness, but the effect of alcohol on society should be taken into account," Mr Kamron said.

Tobacco Control Research and Knowledge Management Centre director Siriwan Pityaransrit said the removal of tobacco from the Thai-EU trade talks will benefit the public.

An estimated 10.9 million Thais smoke cigarettes. If the customs tax is reduced following the trade talks, the price of a packet of cigarettes will be at least five baht cheaper. This will lead to an increase of at least 4% in the number of smokers, she said.

Govt to exclude 'sin' goods

Bangkok Post 14/07/2010

The government wants to exclude alcohol and tobacco from tariff reductions under free trade agreements because they are hazardous to health and society, says Deputy Commerce Minister Alongkorn Ponlaboot.



"The Commerce Ministry's standpoint is clear to exclude hazardous products, particularly alcohol and tobacco, from a list of products to be discussed at free trade negotiations with any trading partners," he said yesterday.

"The exclusion of alcoholic beverages and tobacco from the talks will help safeguard Thai consumers from an influx of hazardous products, which would become cheaper due to tariff waivers if they were listed under the deal."

The cabinet has already approved the Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement (Tafta) and Thailand-New Zealand Closer Economic Partnership (TNZCEP), with the two pacts in effect since July 1, 2005.

The two agreements are subject to revision and renegotiation every three years.

The two pacts call for tariff cuts for wine and champagne from 54% ahead of the deal to 20% now and to zero in 2015; and for beer and tobacco from 60% to zero this year. However, the government plans to renegotiate this part of the agreement in talks this September.

Mr Alongkorn said the government has also directed the Trade Negotiations Department to study the possible revision of plans to include alcohol and tobacco into the list of products covered by a free trade area agreement framework with other countries and its impact if import tariffs are normalised and excluded from such agreements.

Commerce Ministry statistics show trade between Thailand and Australia over the past five years has been worth about US\$9.88 billion a year, with Thai exports at \$6 billion.

For the five years (2000-04) prior to the FTA, trade between the two countries was worth just \$3.4 billion, with Thai shipments of about \$1.85 billion.

Trade with New Zealand has averaged \$984.18 million for the five years since the deal was signed, with Thai exports worth \$594.2 million.

From 2000-04, trade between the two countries averaged \$441.75 million, with Thai exports of \$233.75 million.

Civil society calls EU to exempt alcohol from Thai-EU FTA

(Phoojadkarn Newspaper; 8 Sep 10) translated by Thaksaphon Thamarangsi



Anti alcohol movement asks EU to stop pressure Thai government to list alcoholic beverages in the Thai-EU FTA. Kamron says Big Alcohol from EU is trading with no moral. HIV/AIDS patient Network points that trade negotiation must not be obstacle to promote health.

Today (8 Sep) 10.30 AM, at the EU Office Bangkok. Kamron Choodecha leader of the Alliance for Alcohol Problem Prevention (AAPP), together with over 150 representatives of like-minded organizations; including HIV/AIDS Patient Networks, Alcohol Victim Network, and Youth Network Against Alcohol, submitted the open letter to H.E. Mr. DAVID LIPMAN Ambassador Head of Delegation EUROPEAN UNION to Thailand, in order to withdraw alcoholic beverages from the Thai-EU negotiation framework and stop pressuring Thai government to include alcoholic beverage otherwise EU will not negotiate.

Mr. Kamron declared three stances of the Alliance; 1) the Networks oppose the inclusion of alcoholic beverages and related businesses in the negotiation and request EU to prioritize moral not less than commercial benefit, and be brave enough to make a historical decision seeing alcohol as a non-ordinary commodity in any international trade agreements; 2) requests EU to stop pressuring Thai government and respect to the Thai society's decision to exclude alcohol from the FTA and; 3) Condemn the alcohol industry from EU, including its puppet organizations, as well as other greedy businesses who see only trade benefit with no concern on health, quality of life and society in Thailand.







VDO Clips

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pnqHXqyijw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdGCPRVTxxM>