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Tracking Legislative trends on Food Security: ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) resolutions

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Abstract

This study traces food-security legislation trends in Southeast Asia by analysing ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly resolutions from 1978–2024. Although non-binding, resolutions shape parliamentary discourse and support ASEAN cooperation on transboundary food challenges. Using longitudinal thematic coding, the paper tracks how framing evolves from broad commitments toward specific priorities: sustainable agriculture, nutrition, rural development, climate resilience, trade integration, and agri-food innovation. Recent resolutions have been assessed against ASEAN's Regional Agri-Food Innovation (RAI) initiative, which promotes sustainable collaboration. Findings highlight persistent attention to food security and the growing role of the AIPA Caucus, as limited reporting constrains impact assessment.

Keywords: food security; ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly; nutrition; agriculture

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1.0 Introduction

The global drive to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger, which emphasizes not only the elimination of hunger but also the attainment of food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture, faces mounting pressure with less than five years remaining to meet the target by 2030. Rather than incremental improvements, a transformative policy shift is urgently needed (Giller, 2020). Despite such intentions, progress has stalled: as of 2023, approximately 733 million people, or 1 in 11 globally, are suffering from chronic hunger, while 2.33 billion face moderate to severe food insecurity. In low-income countries, a staggering 71.5% of the population cannot afford a healthy diet, compared to only 6.3% in high-income nations (Reuters, 2024).

In Southeast Asia, a region both highly dependent on agriculture and vulnerable to climate and trade shocks, food security has long been a strategic concern (Sundram, 2023; Taniushkina *et al.*, 2024). The ASEAN Declaration on Ending All Forms of Malnutrition (2018) and the ASEAN Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Nutrition (2018–2030) represent significant regional commitments to address undernutrition, yet implementation has been uneven across member states (ASEAN, 2018a, 2018b; Ludher & Romero, 2024). Against this backdrop, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) has served as a parliamentary platform where food security issues have

been debated and framed for nearly five decades, providing valuable insight into the legislative dimension of regional food security governance.

Nomenclature	
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AIPA	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly
GFSI	Global Food Security Index

1.1 *Exploring the Evolution of Food Security Discourse in AIPA General Assembly*

This study aims to trace the evolution of food security discourse in AIPA General Assembly resolutions from 1978 to 2024 through longitudinal document analysis. Specifically, it (i) identifies food-security-related AIPA resolutions from 1978–2024; (ii) codes them using the GFSI dimensions; (iii) maps thematic shifts across decades; and (iv) assesses alignment with ASEAN executive frameworks, including ASEAN Regional Agri-Food Innovation (ASEAN RAI), while noting limitations in implementation tracking.

2.0 Literature Review

Compared to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which has been widely studied in the context of economic integration, political cooperation, and regional security, AIPA has attracted far less scholarly attention. While ASEAN operates primarily through its executive mechanisms, such as Heads of State or Government, ministers, and sectoral bodies empowered to adopt binding agreements; AIPA represents the legislative dimension of regional cooperation, serving as a forum where parliamentarians deliberate, exchange views, and issue non-binding resolutions (Yildiz, 2024). Importantly, the two institutions converge through the ASEAN–AIPA Interface Meeting, held annually at the ASEAN Summit, which provides a structured platform for dialogue between executive and legislative leaders. This dual-track arrangement underscores how AIPA complements ASEAN by bringing parliamentary perspectives into regional governance, including on transboundary issues such as food security.

Studies on AIPA further observe that it operates alongside ASEAN rather than within ASEAN's formal structure, and has often remained on the sidelines of ASEAN community-building. More broadly, the literature on parliamentary diplomacy is described as comparatively limited, which helps explain why AIPA has received less sustained scholarly attention than ASEAN's executive-led processes. Accordingly, while ASEAN's executive food-security frameworks are well documented, fewer studies systematically trace how AIPA resolutions have framed food security across time. This study addresses that gap through a longitudinal analysis of AIPA General Assembly resolutions (1978–2024).

2.1 *Background of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)*

AIPA was established in 1977 as the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) and was later renamed AIPA in 2007. As a consultative and cooperative body, its primary purpose is to strengthen inter-parliamentary collaboration, promote mutual understanding among member parliaments, and support the broader goals of ASEAN. Although AIPA resolutions are non-binding, they function as important instruments for promoting regional dialogue and political cohesion; providing a parliamentary perspective to ASEAN initiatives; and enhancing accountability and follow-up through mechanisms such as the AIPA Caucus, which was established in 2007 to monitor the implementation of General Assembly resolutions.

The AIPA Permanent Secretariat is headquartered in Jakarta, Indonesia. It is led by a Secretary General appointed for a three-year term, supported by professional staff seconded from member parliaments. In addition, each member parliament maintains its own National AIPA Secretariat, ensuring coordination between national legislatures and the Permanent Secretariat (AIPA, n.d.).

2.2 *Food Security Status in ASEAN Members' State*

Food security remains a core policy concern across ASEAN member states, shaped by the dual pressures of agricultural dependency and vulnerability to climate and market shocks. While national strategies increasingly recognise the need to balance production with resilience and nutrition, implementation outcomes vary, reflecting differences in institutional capacity, resource endowments, and social protection systems (Lin, 2022).

In this regional landscape, AIPA provides a legislative platform for dialogue that complements executive action within ASEAN. By framing shared challenges such as price stability, supply chain disruptions, and sustainable agriculture in its resolutions, AIPA helps to parliamentarise regional food security discourse, ensuring that legislative perspectives reinforce, and at times challenge, the policy directions set by ASEAN's ministerial bodies.

2.3 *ASEAN Regional Agri-Food Innovation (ASEAN RAI)*

The ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (ASEAN RAI) were initiated in 2017 and formally adopted in 2018 by the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting. ASEAN RAI adapts global principles on responsible agricultural investment to the Southeast Asian context. It aims to promote inclusive, sustainable, and innovative food systems by encouraging responsible private-sector participation, strengthening smallholder resilience, and supporting climate-smart practices. While ASEAN RAI is an executive-led initiative, its objectives parallel many of the concerns voiced in AIPA General Assembly resolutions that touched on food security.

3.0 Methodology

This study conducted a systematic document analysis, which is a cost-effective, non-intrusive method, well-suited to critically reviewing and interpreting long-span policy texts, such as resolutions from AIPA General Assembly from 1978 to 2024. The READ model was selected because it provides a transparent, stepwise workflow for policy-document analysis, starting from (i) collection → (ii) extraction/coding → (iii) interpretation → (iv) synthesis, which fits longitudinal resolution datasets and improves auditability of coding decisions.

3.1 Document Analysis

The approach followed the READ model as outlined by Dalglish *et al.* (2020). This four-step framework begins with systematically collecting and preparing documents (Ready), followed by identifying and coding relevant content (Extract). The third stage involves interpreting and categorising themes (Analyse), while the final step synthesises insights into a coherent narrative (Distil). Applying this structured process ensured both transparency and rigour in examining AIPA resolutions on food security. All relevant AIPA resolutions over the period were exhaustively downloaded and manually reviewed, ensuring comprehensive coverage and consistency. The coding process to identify dominant and secondary themes was done manually, capturing the chronological evolution of policy focus.

3.2 Data Collection

The study focused exclusively on official AIPA resolutions, systematically retrieved from authoritative repositories, archives, and official publications. Non-official documents, stakeholder commentaries, or informal sources were not considered, ensuring the analysis remained tightly bound to formal legislative instruments.

3.3 Data Extraction and Thematic Coding

Coding was guided by the four dimensions of the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) by Economist Impact (2022), which are Affordability; Availability; Quality and Safety; and Sustainability and Adaptation. The dimensions remain unchanged even in the most recent frameworks used by Hussin *et al.* (2025) in comparing GFSI between Vietnam and Malaysia. These dimensions provided a stable and internationally recognised structure for comparing policy content over time.

Each resolution was examined to identify its primary thematic focus and any secondary linkages to other dimensions. This dual-layered coding enabled a nuanced mapping of how AIPA addressed food security, revealing both depth and breadth in thematic coverage across decades.

4.0 Findings

Overall, only 38 of 1,071 AIPA General Assembly resolutions (3.55%) issued between 1978–2024 addressed food security. These were systematically coded and labelled R1 through R38. The distribution by decade shows an upward concentration in the post-2000 period: 1970s (n=1), 1980s (n=5), 1990s (n=4), 2000s (n=12), 2010s (n=7), and 2020–2024 (n=9). Early resolutions (1979–1999) were framed mainly around availability and affordability, focusing on staples, reserves, and market/price stability. From 2009–2011 onward, the discourse shifted toward sustainability and adaptation, with climate and resilience becoming increasingly prominent across later resolutions. In the most recent period, all 2020–2024 resolutions referenced sustainability/adaptation considerations, and the agenda also moved toward innovation, with 4 of 9 resolutions (44%) explicitly emphasising smart/digital agriculture and technology-enabled food systems.

4.1 Results of the Analysis of AIPA Resolutions

Dimensions that were discussed extensively in a resolution were coded as the “Primary Frame,” while dimensions mentioned only briefly were coded as the “Secondary Frame,” allowing a clear distinction between dominant themes and peripheral references within AIPA’s General Assembly discourse. Table 1 presents resolution-level coding (R1–R38), whereas Figure 1 summarises decade-level trends by GFSI dimension using primary frames only. Secondary frames were excluded from Figure 1 to avoid overstating thematic prevalence and double-counting, since a single resolution may contain multiple secondary mentions that can blur the main trend signal.

Table 1: An Analysis of AIPA Resolutions from 1978 to 2024 to Identify Trends on Food Security

Label	Year	Resolution Title (shorten)	Food Security Dimension Identified							
			Availability		Affordability		Quality and Safety		Sustainability and Adaptation	
			Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
R1	1979	ASEAN Emergency Rice Reserve (AERR)	✓		✓				✓	
R2	1981	Market Stability & Governance	✓		✓					
R3	1983	Governance of Food Markets	✓		✓					
R4	1985	Regional & Intl Cooperation	✓		✓					

R5	1988	ASEAN Cooperation & Emergencies	✓					✓
R6	1989	Environment & Food Security		✓		✓	✓	✓
R7	1993	ASEAN Food Security (Poverty)		✓	✓			
R8	1994	Food & Nutrition Cooperation	✓		✓			
R9	1995	ASEAN Food Security Agreement	✓		✓			
R10	1995	Agriculture & Food Security	✓					✓
R11	2000	Food Reserves & Cooperation	✓					✓
R12	2002	Intra-ASEAN Economic Coop.	✓		✓			
R13	2002	Food Price Stability		✓	✓			
R14	2004	Boosting Agri in New Members	✓					✓
R15	2006	Modernization of Agriculture	✓				✓	✓
R16	2007	Agri Marketing Info System	✓		✓			
R17	2007	Food Security & Right to Food		✓	✓		✓	
R18	2007	ASEAN Agriculture Cooperation	✓					✓
R19	2008	Food Security	✓					✓
R20	2008	Food Prices & Market Stability		✓	✓			
R21	2009	Food & Energy Security	✓		✓			✓
R22	2009	Sustainable Food Security	✓				✓	
R23	2011	Climate Change & Adaptation		✓				✓
R24	2012	Food Security (GA33)	✓					✓
R25	2012	Nutrition & Food Security		✓	✓		✓	
R26	2012	Disaster Preparedness for FS	✓					✓
R27	2014	Fostering Green Growth						✓
R28	2016	Parliamentary Support AEC	✓					✓
R29	2017	Regional FS Policies	✓					✓
R30	2020	FS during COVID-19	✓		✓			✓
R31	2021	FS & Sustainable Agriculture		✓				✓
R32	2022	FS & Climate Change		✓	✓			✓
R33	2022	Sustainable Agri & Food Systems	✓				✓	✓
R34	2023	Smart Agri & Regional FS	✓					✓
R35	2023	Digital Agriculture		✓				✓
R36	2024	FS & Smart Agriculture	✓					✓
R37	2024	Food Systems Resilience		✓	✓			✓
R38	2024	Sustainable Food Security	✓				✓	✓

(Source: Author's Own)

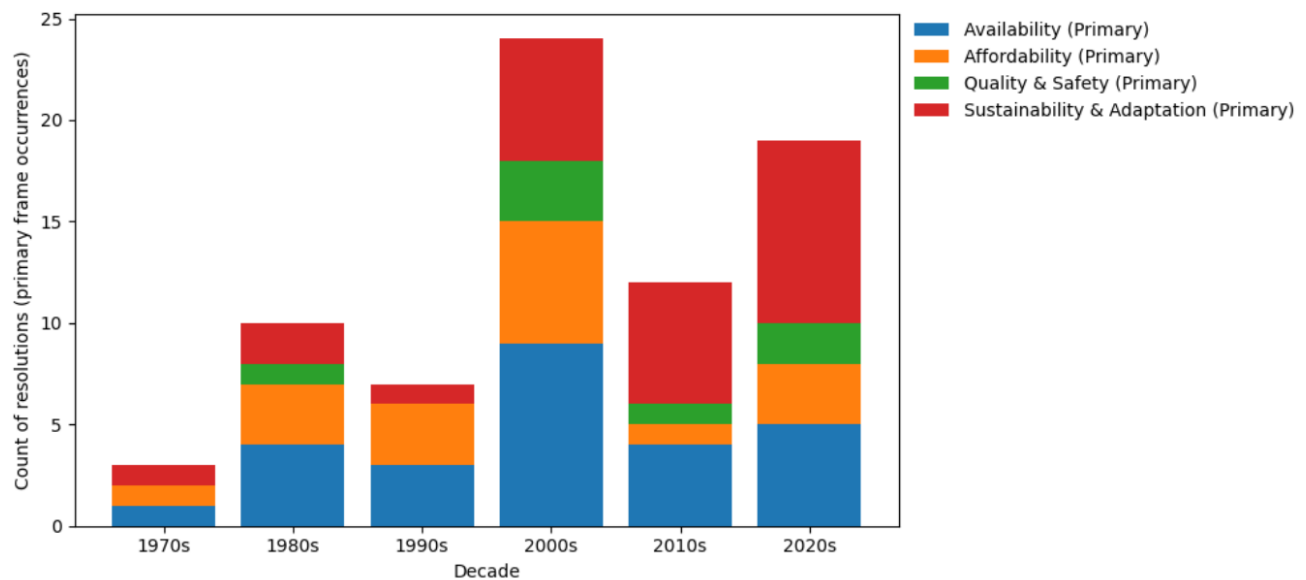


Fig. 1: AIPA Food-Security Resolutions by Decades and GFSI Dimensions (Primary Frame only)
(Source: Author's Own)

5.0 Discussion

Since its early years, AIPA has passed resolutions that reflect not only regional priorities but also wider global food security events. The first resolution in 1979 addressed the ASEAN Emergency Rice Reserve, adopted in the wake of the 1970s food price shocks and concerns over rice supply shortages in Southeast Asia. In 1989, AIPA linked environment and food security, reflecting the growing global discourse on sustainability that culminated in the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. During the 1990s, resolutions such as the ASEAN Food Security Agreement (1995) paralleled efforts to stabilise rice supply amid the region's rapid economic integration and concerns over market volatility.

5.1 Comparing AIPA's Responsiveness with ASEAN's Executive Track

A key difference in responsiveness is institutional mandate. ASEAN's executive track responds through frameworks and action plans, while AIPA—without legislative power at the regional level—responds mainly through non-binding resolutions that signal priorities and encourage national legislative attention. This contrast is visible during major shocks. Around the 1997/98 crisis, ASEAN's response was largely executive, while AIPA's food-security framing remained relatively general. During the 2007–2008 global food price crisis, AIPA resolutions increasingly emphasised food price volatility and the right to food, echoing international debates and complementing ASEAN's stabilisation efforts.

In the 2010s, AIPA discourse expanded toward climate change, disaster preparedness, and nutrition, aligning with the region's exposure to extreme events and post-crisis policy learning. Most recently, in the 2020s, AIPA addressed pandemic-related supply disruptions (R30, 2020) and later highlighted smart/digital agriculture and sustainable food systems (2022–2024), broadly paralleling ASEAN's innovation agenda under ASEAN RAI while remaining constrained by limited implementation tracking.

5.2 Availability

Availability emerged as the most consistently addressed dimension, appearing in almost every decade from 1979 onwards. Early resolutions such as the ASEAN Emergency Rice Reserve (R1 in 1979) and Market Stability & Governance (R2 in 1981) framed food reserves and supply stability as central parliamentary concerns. This emphasis on staple foods, particularly rice, reflected the vulnerability of ASEAN economies to supply shocks.

In later years, resolutions increasingly linked availability to agricultural modernisation and productivity for example R15 (2006); and R16 to R18 (2007). More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic (R30 in 2020), availability was framed in terms of supply chain resilience, highlighting how crises broadened parliamentary focus from production and reserves to cross-border logistics.

5.3 Affordability

Affordability was less consistently foregrounded, but it surfaced prominently in discussions of market stability and price volatility. Notably, resolutions in 1981 (R2), 1983 (R3), and 2002 (R12 and R13) reflected ASEAN's concern with intra-regional economic cooperation and food price stability. The global food price crisis of 2007–2008 further shaped parliamentary debate, as seen in R19 and R20, where affordability was linked to protecting consumers during sharp price spikes.

While less prominent in the 2010s, affordability re-emerged in COVID-19 era resolutions (R30 in 2020) as members of AIPA recognised the strain on household purchasing power. Compared to availability, affordability appears more reactive to crises than consistently institutionalised in AIPA General Assembly discourse.

5.4 Quality and Safety

Quality and safety was the least emphasised dimension, with fewer explicit references across the resolutions. Early recognition appeared in R8 (1994), which addressed food and nutrition cooperation, followed later by R17 (2007), which explicitly linked food security to the right to food. The 2012 resolution on Nutrition and Food Security (R25) marked a turning point, signalling parliamentary acknowledgment of diet, health, and nutritional diversity as part of food security. In more recent years (R32 in 2022; R36 in 2024; R38 in 2024), references to sustainable food systems also touched on nutrition and dietary adequacy, though often as a secondary frame. The relative scarcity of this dimension suggests that AIPA has historically prioritised quantity and access over quality and nutrition.

In fact, R25 coincided with a global policy shift in which FAO and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) began to foreground nutrition as an integral component of food security. For example, the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012 underscored that economic growth alone was insufficient to combat hunger without explicit attention to malnutrition (FAO, 2012). Similarly, the 39th Session of the CFS in 2012 devoted special focus to nutrition, laying the groundwork for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) held in 2014 (FAO, 2012; FAO & WHO, 2014).

5.5 Sustainability and Adaptation

Sustainability and adaptation grew steadily in prominence, becoming one of the defining themes of AIPA discourse in the 21st century. Early mentions, such as R6 (1989) on environment and food security, were precursors to the more comprehensive climate-related resolutions of the 2000s and 2010s. From R22 (2009) on sustainable food security to R23 (2011) on climate change and R24 to R26 (2012) on disaster preparedness, parliamentary attention broadened from short-term shocks to long-term resilience. More recently, sustainability has been closely tied to smart agriculture, digital systems, and innovation (R33 to R35, from 2022 to 2023), aligning parliamentary discourse with ASEAN's executive-level initiatives like the ASEAN RAI. By 2024, sustainability had become the most cross-cutting dimension, with nearly all food security resolutions referencing climate change, resilience, or sustainable systems.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that food security has been a recurring theme in the resolutions of AIPA, spanning from 1979 to present. By coding 38 food security-related resolutions against GFSI dimensions, the analysis highlights the evolving priorities of parliamentary discourse in Southeast Asia, beginning from early concerns with rice reserves and price stability to more recent emphases on sustainability, climate resilience, and smart agriculture.

However, a key limitation arises from the AIPA Caucus reporting mechanism. While the Caucus provides updates on the implementation status of resolutions, these reports remain aggregated and limited in depth, making it difficult to assess the extent to which food security-related resolutions are translated into concrete actions at the national or regional level. The lack of detailed, resolution-specific follow-up data restricts the ability to conduct a deeper analysis of legislative impact on food security governance. For future research, full AIPA Caucus reports should be obtained and analysed, as these could offer more granular insights into the degree of implementation of the food security resolutions. Comparative research could be undertaken to evaluate how AIPA's legislative discourse aligns with ASEAN's executive frameworks, such as the ASEAN RAI and other food security initiatives.

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Paper Contribution to the Related Field of Study

By tracing AIPA resolutions across decades, the study underscores the important role of legislatures as influential actors in shaping food security policy. While much of the literature focuses on executive agencies, international organisations, or technical ministries, this study shows that parliamentary resolutions also serve as a significant mechanism for policy framing, agenda-setting, and regional cooperation. In doing so, the paper broadens the scholarly conversation on food security governance by emphasising the parliamentary dimension, illustrating how legislative deliberation can shape both national and regional trajectories in addressing food security challenges.

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