

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MS LOW YEN LING, SENIOR
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION & MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, AT
THE SINGAPORE FOOD EXPO 2017, FRIDAY, 26 MAY
2017, 5.30PM AT SINGAPORE EXPO HALL 4**

Mr Thomas Pek, President, Singapore Food Manufacturers'
Association

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

1. Good evening. It is my pleasure to join you at the 18th edition of the Singapore Food Expo, one of the largest food events on our local calendar. This year's Food Expo showcases over 130 exhibitors and is expected to draw more than 500,000 visitors, consumers, and trade buyers from Singapore as well as across the region.

2. The Food Expo is an excellent platform for local F&B players to showcase their products, as well as to conduct market testing through first-hand feedback from consumers. I

would like to congratulate the Singapore Food Manufacturers' Association, SFMA, for its efforts and success in organising this event.

Importance of food manufacturing industry transformation

3. Singapore's Food Manufacturing industry plays a significant role in our economy. In 2015, the industry employed about 40,000 workers and contributed S\$3.7 billion to Singapore's GDP. We have built on Singapore's excellent reputation for food safety to seize overseas growth opportunities. Today, more than half of the industry's output is exported, and total exports have increased by a compounded annual growth rate of 6.1% in the past five years.

4. But we face intensifying competition. To maintain Singapore's lead, our food manufacturers must find new means to differentiate their products and gain market share. They will need to further harness technology to innovate new food solutions, improve operations, and raise productivity.

5. The Government is committed to supporting food manufacturers, to develop Singapore as a leading food and nutrition hub. In November 2016, we launched the Food

Manufacturing Industry Transformation Map (ITM), which will chart four key strategies to catalyse the growth and competitiveness of the sector over the next five years. First, strengthening the ecosystem for food innovation and R&D; second, building globally-competitive Singapore food companies and expanding our global footprint; third, driving productivity through automation; and fourth; redesigning and creating quality jobs.

SFMA is an important partner in driving industry transformation

6. Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs) such as SFMA are important partners in driving industry transformation. SFMA's leadership has been crucial to the vibrancy and achievements of Singapore's food manufacturing industry today. It has raised the capabilities of local enterprises through initiatives such as product development workshops and staff training. SFMA has also supported its members in the internationalisation of their businesses via overseas missions, roadshows, and retail promotion. The Singapore Food Expo is one of SFMA's many platforms that food manufacturers can leverage on to stay ahead in the game.

Launch of the SFMA's Food Innovation Product Award 2018

7. I am delighted to announce that SFMA will be launching the second edition of the Food Innovation Product Award (FIPA) in July this year. FIPA brings together food manufacturers and students from institutes of higher learning to collaborate and create new and exciting food products. This gives food manufacturers the chance to go beyond their current innovation capabilities and acquire a competitive edge in local and overseas markets. Teams go through a full cycle of innovation: from inspiration and ideation, to prototyping and testing, and market validation.

8. The first run of FIPA in 2016 saw 25 companies develop new products catering to today's modern consumers. Mr Popiah, a manufacturer of *popiah* fillings and skins, is one of many companies which benefitted from the structured product development process under FIPA. Mr Popiah developed a shelf-stable, ready-to-eat microwavable *popiah* prototype together with Singapore Polytechnic, and their product emerged as the winner.

9. FIPA 2018 will continue to focus on innovation and product commercialisation, with two enhanced features. First,

participants can access a larger pool of innovation partners for support, such as Givaudan, a company that commercialises novel food ingredients, as well as AC Nielsen, which provides market insights. Second, the innovation process will be extended from 4 months to 9 months. This longer runway will enable food manufacturers to develop deeper and more robust consumer insights to support product design.

10. As mentioned earlier, a key growth strategy under the Food Manufacturing ITM is to build globally-competitive food companies in order to expand our global footprint. The winners of FIPA 2018 will enjoy commercialisation support for their new food products through prototype development and advice on market launches. For instance, SPRING Singapore and IE Singapore will partner with SFMA to showcase selected FIPA products at flagship tradeshows such as Gulfood in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and ANUGA in Cologne, Germany. Such end-to-end support will ensure that these new food products successfully transit to a commercially viable stage, thereby driving growth for the companies. I strongly urge our local businesses to come onboard this innovation journey through FIPA 2018.

Food Expo Loyalty Partner Award

11. TACs rely heavily on the involvement and support of their members. I am thus honoured to present the SFMA Food Expo Loyalty Partner Award to 62 companies that have invested their time and resources to participate in at least 15 industry events organised by SFMA since 2000. These dedicated members, many of them pioneers, have put in much effort to contribute to SFMA's and the industry's successes. They have shown unwavering support towards SFMA's annual flagship exhibitions, such as the Singapore Food Expo and the Asia Pacific Food Expo. We need more companies like them to contribute to the vibrancy of the food manufacturing sector.

Conclusion

12. In closing, I would like to thank SFMA for its invaluable partnership in facilitating the transformation of Singapore's Food Manufacturing sector. To all the industry members and stakeholders present today, I commend your contributions and look forward to your continued support and efforts to bring the sector to greater heights.

13. My heartiest congratulations to SFMA on the success of the Singapore Food Expo, and also on your 50th Anniversary milestone.

14. Thank you.

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