SESSION SCHEDULE

15.30 TO 17.30 FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2018

SESSION: SUB THEME THREE

PARALLEL SESSION 4.4

Finding the win-win solutions for better health from better food systems:

**Roles of consumer organization in Thailand in moderating antimicrobial resistance policy for better food system**

**Niyada Kiatying-Angsulee, Ph.D.**

1. Global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) threats are increasing at alarming pace. Developing countries were addressed for more than 2 decades as more affected by AMR with various explanations. Burden of diseases, socioeconomic and behavioral factors are remarked. Some other examples are low quality of health facility, weak surveillance system for antimicrobials use and resistance, compromised regulation on distribution, low awareness of both public and professions, and of course weak consumer power. Food system is specifically targeted as one contributor to the spread of AMR due to the unnecessary and unresponsive uses of antimicrobials in agriculture. Hence politics, security, safety, traceability, and sustainability in food system are key issues of concern in developing world. The emergence of mcr-1 gene around the globe also raised awareness that food system and public health are closely linked by the use of antibiotics in both human health and food system. Each impacted and affected each other. Both also impact environment and hence impact back to both human and animal.
2. Thailand, as low and middle income country (LMC), is a case of high risk on AMR both in human and food system. Although there are already some regulations, some policies, some movements, yet lots need to be accomplished soon. So it is the case of cross-cutting and integrating approach in the national strategies used to combat AMR.
3. Consumers are key player in the policy system. They are end users of products, sometimes decided by professions, sometimes by themselves. However, consumers are always targeted as concern on lack of knowledge and poor behaviors in seeking and using antibiotics. So education is being mentioned. However, roles of consumer are far beyond that. Consumer as user, as citizen, as reporter, advocator, and etc. Empowerment and engagement are hence challenging roles for consumer in fighting AMR.

Purchasing power is real key defense in combatting unreliable products including food. In this regard, there is a need to encourage new form of sustainable market to link between producers or farmers with consumers. Consumers in certain countries now are more aware of AMR and further demanding of safe food with proper labelling and environmental concern.

Although eight consumer rights proposed by consumer organization in 1983 have been accepted as fundamental rights in national legislation worldwide, consumers in developing countries are however still poor and less power. Latest revision of consumer protection concept was also updated by United National General Assembly, recently. It is important that this fundamental be implemented at national level. Access to knowledge and information is one key for consumer protection. Monitoring role of consumer should be accepted and facilitated by government. The ultimate role of consumer action starts with the term ‘solidarity’ or ‘united we stand’.

1. Three cases in Thailand elaborate different but coherent actions carried out by consumer organization in addressing steps up into the AMR policy for food system.

Foundation For Consumer (FFC) founded in 1994 with three concepts: value for money, value for people, sustainable consumption. FFC, in cooperation with Consumer International (CI), works on AMR based on role of consumer as monitoring agent, sharing of information, and advocate with relevant bodies including business. CI is one of global platform of consumer organizations that create collective force from consumer perspectives toward AMR in food system. CI ‘Antibiotic Off the Menu’ global campaign in 2016 support FFC and other members at national level. The target on 5 major multinational chain restaurants is a powerful tool and can stimulate attention of policy makers and awareness of consumer with positive responses from industry. To ensure supportive evidence for campaign FFC then bought products from these 5 restaurant chains and sent to a certified laboratory for testing antibiotic contamination. Timeline for this campaign is also a good policy coherent companying another work proposed by another organization, Drug System Monitoring and Development Center (DMDC) that had submitted AMR agendum to the National Health Assembly in 2015. Then in 2017, after the approval of national AMR strategy by cabinet, FFC launched another press conference releasing another test on raw meat from various markets. The result showed 13% contamination of antibiotics in the samples, but within allowance. At the same time SEACC or Southeast Asian Consumer Council serves as regional platform for consumer organization. Policy environment at all levels – global, regional and national, can help in driving AMR policy by consumer.

Drug System Monitoring and Development Center (DMDC) at Chulalongkorn University, funded partly by Thai Health, is a group of academia working technically as citizen science to support consumer organization in relation to pharmaceutical policy. DMDC focuses on AMR as risk factor to health. DMDC targeted AMR in its Annual Report on Drug System Situation in 2010. The report comprised of facts and figures on antibiotics production, situation on antibiotic distribution in the rural area, AMR situation, and some interventions already done somewhere in Thailand. By using funding from Thai Health, DMDC supported a number of activities to fulfill the ecosystem for policy process, such as scale up of ASU project in 15 provinces, some researches, some intervention program, hospital based activities as well as community based activities, strengthen groups of farmer, sharing of knowledge and information. All these activities thus created alliance of people interested in AMR at different levels range from community up to national policy and international platform. Application for National Health Assembly was done in early 2015 and final approval of the resolution done in December 2015. This achievement is a great step for forming national agenda and finally the national strategy -2016-2020 was approved by cabinet (August 17, 2016).

New trend in green and sustainable consumption led to models in organic or green market direct or semi-linking between farmers and consumers. Food for change (Food4Change) project suggests that we know the root of our food, and that we should nurture our environment. Further movement also attract environmental activist that we should preserve our homeland for the future generation. We should not borrow the future resources without paying respect back to the mother earth. Furthermore we should understand our body so good enough before taking into account the materials. National health policy arena has been raised about sufficient economy and sustainable development.

1. Progressive consumer actions toward public policy process: The fifth strategy in the National AMR strategic plan (2016-2020). There are 3 sub-strategies including campaign to raise awareness of whole-of-society on AMR threats and health literacy, communication direct to consumers, and to strengthen alliance, or consumer organization as means to individual consumer. All these three sub-strategies emphasize engagement and empowerment with consumers.

Challenges for consumers are that Thai individual consumer still could not unite and thus individually convinced by advertisement and marketing. Consumer knowledge and awareness are always raised by policy makers and profession as key success. Technical aspects of AMR issues led to weak understanding. Coalition strategy is the way patient groups used when they campaign on access to medicine. Yet still lots to be done such as more evidence, more research, intervention model,

1. Government has a pivotal role to empower the wheel of consumer movement

New approach on sufficient economy that includes organic and sustainable farming with support of organic market should be concerned not merely propaganda that Thailand is kitchen of the world. There is still needs for standard set up with regulations implementation, surveillance of antibiotic use and resistance, and information dissemination for consumer protection. Challenges for government are to raise knowledge and awareness among consumers and facilitate proactive roles of consumer.