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U.S. FDA establishes first ASEAN regional office in Vietnam, reinforcing regional food safety and trade

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Hanoi office will serve as the FDA's regional regulatory hub, deepening U.S.-Vietnam cooperation on food safety, supply chain resilience, and agricultural market access across Southeast Asia

The United States is deepening its regulatory engagement in Southeast Asia with the launch of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) first regional office in ASEAN, selecting Vietnam as the strategic hub for food and pharmaceutical regulatory cooperation. The new office in Hanoi will serve as the U.S. Government's primary regional focal point for food safety and pharmaceutical oversight, reflecting Vietnam's growing importance in global agricultural supply chains and the broader U.S. strategy to strengthen trade and regulatory partnerships across the region.

The announcement was reinforced during a meeting between Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Environment, Vo Van Hung, and Mark Abdoo, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Global Strategy at the U.S. FDA. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to expanding cooperation beyond their long-standing partnership in fisheries to encompass the wider agriculture, forestry, livestock, and food processing sectors. Vietnamese officials emphasized that the FDA's permanent regional presence would facilitate faster information exchange, stronger technical collaboration, and more effective coordination in addressing emerging food safety and regulatory issues affecting bilateral trade.

Vietnam also called for closer cooperation in food safety risk assessment, inspection systems, product traceability, and regulatory capacity building to help agricultural producers and exporters comply with evolving international standards. The Ministry of Agriculture and Environment stressed that strengthening technical exchanges and regulatory alignment would improve the competitiveness of Vietnamese agricultural exports while supporting the development of safe, transparent, and sustainable supply chains.

The expanding agricultural relationship between the two countries provides a strong economic foundation for this collaboration. The United States has become an increasingly important supplier of agricultural commodities and raw materials used in Vietnam's food processing and animal feed industries. In 2025, Vietnam's agricultural imports from the United States increased by 27% compared with the previous year, supplying critical inputs that have helped strengthen domestic processing capacity and create higher-value agricultural products for both domestic and export markets.

For the FDA, the decision to establish its first ASEAN regional office in Vietnam reflects the country's rising strategic importance within global manufacturing and food supply networks. According to Mark Abdoo, the investment is intended to support the modernization of regulatory systems by promoting greater transparency, predictability, and science-based governance. A modern regulatory framework, he noted, would not only enhance consumer protection but also create a more stable environment for businesses and facilitate long-term trade and investment between the United States, Vietnam, and the broader ASEAN region.

FDA officials also highlighted Vietnam's effective management of food safety within the fisheries sector, describing it as an area where bilateral cooperation has already delivered strong results over many years. Building on that experience, both countries are now looking to extend regulatory collaboration into emerging areas of agricultural production that require increasingly sophisticated oversight as global supply chains become more integrated.

Among the new priorities identified during the discussions was cooperation on genetic sequencing for disease surveillance and food safety. The FDA believes deeper participation in international genomic data-sharing networks would allow Vietnam to strengthen its ability to identify contamination sources and track foodborne pathogens in real time. Such capabilities are becoming increasingly important as countries adopt advanced digital surveillance systems to respond more quickly to disease outbreaks and protect international food trade.

The establishment of the FDA's first ASEAN regional office represents more than an administrative expansion. It signals a strategic commitment to building stronger regulatory institutions, improving food safety governance, and facilitating agricultural trade throughout Southeast Asia. As Vietnam continues to expand its role as a regional agricultural exporter and manufacturing hub, the new office is expected to accelerate regulatory cooperation, support supply chain resilience, and further integrate the country's food industry with international markets while reinforcing the broader U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.