

**Speech by Minister for Trade and Industry Gan Kim Yong**  
**Launch of the Wholesale Trade**  
**Industry Transformation Map (ITM) 2025**  
**5 January 2023**

Mr Alvin Loy, CEO of Fish International Sourcing House,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Introduction**

1. Good afternoon!
  
2. It is my pleasure to join you today to launch the Wholesale Trade Industry Transformation Map (ITM) 2025.
  
3. Today, we also celebrate the official opening of Fish International Sourcing House's (FISH) first processing facility, which will enhance its capabilities and competitive edge. FISH first started its business as a seafood trading company nearly two decades ago. Over time, the company has evolved to keep pace with changes within the industry. It introduced new activities, such as cold chain storage and distribution, as well as product research and development (R&D). FISH's new facility will integrate automated processing technology into its operations, which will enable them to optimise its workforce and allow its workers to take up higher productivity roles.

## **Wholesale Trade in Singapore's economy**

4. The wholesale trade is the second largest sector of our economy, accounting for one-sixth (18 percent or S\$90 billion) of Singapore's GDP in 2021. It comprises over 50,000 companies, and employs more than 300,000 workers in 2021, of which close to 70 percent are PMET jobs.

5. When the Wholesale Trade ITM was first introduced in 2017, we took a two-pronged approach and focused on helping companies develop basic digitalisation and productivity capabilities, as well as nurturing a pipeline of local talent.

6. We have made good progress. Since then, over 8,000 enterprises have adopted at least one digital solution, such as e-commerce and warehouse management solutions. Over 6,000 local PMETs have also joined Wholesale Trade. In addition, we have also attracted over 3,000 fresh graduates and mid-career professionals into the sector.

## **Growing trends within the industry**

7. The economic landscape today is different from when the ITM was first launched.

a. First, recent global developments have caused global supply chain disruptions and acutely driven up costs.

b. Second, the push towards digitalisation has accelerated globally, which means we need to deepen our adoption of digital solutions to stay ahead of the competition.

- c. Last but not least, there is increasing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products, as consumer awareness on climate change and the environment grew.

8. We are therefore refreshing our Wholesale Trade ITM to better adapt to these trends. The refreshed ITM supports the Trade 2030 strategies which I shared in March last year to increase Singapore's trading volumes and widen our trading activities and networks.

### **Strategies of the Wholesale Trade ITM 2025**

9. The refreshed Wholesale Trade ITM lays out our approach to support the next phase of growth and transformation. I will focus on four broad strategies – **Diversify**; **Innovate**; **Grow for enterprises**; and **Transform the workforce**.

#### *Capture growth opportunities from new markets and sustainability*

- a. First, we will encourage traders to **diversify** their businesses to capture new opportunities from overseas markets and to broaden their range of products traded, including sustainable products.
  - i. We will support companies in their global expansion journey, for example, by facilitating partnerships with e-commerce players as well as large global distributors. Companies keen to export to overseas markets can leverage the expertise and networks of these partners to access new customer bases and grow new revenue streams.

- ii. Building on our extensive network of 27 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), we will work with Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs) to further enhance companies' export-competitiveness. I hope to see more companies taking advantage of our FTAs to maximise tariff savings and market access when exporting overseas.
  
- iii. Given the rise of the green economy and sustainability movement, we also encourage companies to seize opportunities and diversify their trade to include sustainable products, such as biofuels, carbon credits, and plant-based proteins. For instance, FISH has invested in research and development to expand its product range to include plant-based seafood products through its subsidiary Lohas Foods.

*Anchor innovation activities by global traders*

- b. Second, we will create new opportunities for global traders to anchor their **innovation** activities in Singapore to widen the breadth of our trading network.

- i. We will partner Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) to pursue innovation projects and help companies build new competitive advantages in product development, so that they can fast-track their innovative products into the consumer market here and overseas. We partnered Nanyang Technological University to launch the Singapore Agri-Food Innovation Lab (SAIL) last year to bring together agri-food players across the ecosystem to address industry challenges, such as improving agri-food productivity and quality. I look forward to partnering more IHLs going forward.
  
- ii. We will also continue to promote co-innovation initiatives between SMEs, startups, and global traders, where global firms can present challenge statements and innovators can offer new ideas and solutions. To date, EnterpriseSG has worked with industry partners to launch approximately 260 challenge statements and created over 140 partnerships. For example, through the SLINGSHOT deep-tech startup competition, Cargill partnered startup STIMSHOP to pilot a safe distancing solution for its workers using a patented ultrasound technology.

*Grow globally competitive Singapore traders*

- c. Third, we will offer differentiated support to Singapore enterprises across different levels of competencies to help **grow** their capabilities, so that they can evolve into globally competitive traders.

- i. For companies which are ready to expand, we will provide targeted support through initiatives such as Scale-up SG and Enterprise Leadership for Transformation, which offers resources and expertise to scale up their businesses domestically and internationally.
- ii. Building on the first ITM, we will continue supporting companies to raise productivity by adopting technology solutions and develop automation and digital capabilities.

*Create new and exciting roles for Singaporeans*

- d. Fourth, we will build on the Wholesale Trade **Jobs Transformation Map** to develop a strong and resilient workforce with the right talent and skills.
  - i. We will curate upskilling and reskilling programmes, as well as job redesign initiatives to enable Singaporeans to take on higher value-added roles that may require specialised skillsets, such as data analytics and carbon footprint management.

- ii. We will also work with governmental agencies, industry stakeholders, and IHLs to grow a pipeline of young talent. On this note, I am heartened that we are onboarding more trading companies onto the Singapore-Industry Scholarship (SgIS) programme, which offers scholarships and job opportunities for students upon graduation. I encourage our students to take advantage of these opportunities and kickstart your career in wholesale trade.

## **Conclusion**

10. In closing, the Wholesale Trade sector will continue to be a major growth engine for Singapore. It has been so since our early years when we were an entrepot hub. While the goods and services we trade have grown significantly in volumes and sophistication, the ambition for Singapore to be at the heart of regional and global trade flows remains.

11. To Alvin, and FISH, congratulations once again on the opening of your new facility! I look forward to seeing many more of our Singapore wholesale traders on the global stage.

12. Thank you.