Grow Asia Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday 6 August 2020

Meeting Summary

The Grow Asia Steering Committee acts as the main oversight body for the Grow Asia Secretariat and its diverse representation is invaluable in defining Grow Asia’s plans and addressing differing views and approaches while identifying priority areas to help Grow Asia meet its ambitious targets. The virtual meeting shared updates and defined next steps on the joint action agenda to be taken through this multi-stakeholder platform. Key points are summarized below, as an input to the Steering Committee’s on-going discussions.

Synthesis of Grow Asia Key Progress Points
Grahame Dixie articulated the following major areas of progress for Grow Asia in the last twelve months:

- Launch of the 6th Country Partnership, Grow PNG, with support from Australia’s DFAT
- Continuation of funding from Australia’s DFAT, with a second tranche of funds coupled with new funding from Switzerland for the ASEAN Responsible Agricultural Investing (ASEAN-RAI) program
- Nearly 1.8 million farmers reached and 970,000 participating in the network’s projects. The numbers continue to increase, with an aggregate incremental income increase now more than US$80 million per annum
- Close engagement with the ASEAN Secretariat - now accredited as an Entity Associated with ASEAN, and coordinating a regional response on COVID-19 and pest and diseases
- Survey results showing that partners increasing value the Grow Asia brand and being affiliated with the Grow Asia network

Key Points from the Discussion

1. Business Council Synthesis. Representatives from the Business Council reiterated the importance of ensuring that COVID-19 does not evolve from a health crisis to a food crisis. The COVID-19 Working Groups being led by Grow Asia are well positioned to address some of those regional issues and how solutions can be scaled up. Private sector representatives also emphasized finding synergies between international and local efforts, working with the public sector more effectively, and the role of digital solutions.

2. Civil Society Council Synthesis. Civil society supports the gender mainstreaming program and recognizes that gender is part of a larger social inclusion agenda that Grow Asia can lead. Beyond business implications, COVID-19 has social implications on care and access to land, especially for the returning unemployed. Digital is again acknowledged as potential solutions to many of the challenges brought by COVID-19. Civil society partners are excited to see how the RAI guidelines could be reflected into policy in the long run.

3. Farmer Organizations Feedback. Representatives shared challenges arising from COVID-19 including land conflict, logistics, production (planting and access to seeds) and welcomed ways to work with multi-stakeholders through Grow Asia. Representatives expressed their desire to increase the farmer constituency as part of Grow Asia’s governance bodies as well as in the Country Partnerships. Grow Asia’s scorecards and surveys could also be extended to farmer organizations. Lastly, participation in joint research projects, such as what Grow Asia did with
IFAD on e-commerce/digital marketplaces to support cooperatives and trading, can help integrate farmers' voices in Grow Asia's work

4. **ASEAN Secretariat Feedback.** The SOM-AMAF remains very supportive of Grow Asia, most recently recognizing Grow Asia as an Entity Associated with ASEAN and included in ASEAN’s Charter. Significant ASEAN cooperation includes the Responsible Agriculture Investing program - which was selected for particular mention by the ASEAN leaders in their statement following the ASEAN Summit in June 2020, Fall Armyworm Control, and the regional COVID-19 response. ASEAN Secretariat will continue to work with Grow Asia and interested ASEAN Member States. Grow Asia’s Regional Programs are also highly relevant with plans for an ASEAN Guidelines to promote digital technologies in face of COVID-19, while the SOM-AMAF has also adopted AMAF's Approach to Gender Mainstreaming in the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Sectors. In the future, Grow Asia could consider inviting representatives from ASEAN Member States to also join governance meetings to contribute information about national activities.

5. **Donor Feedback.** COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of smallholder farmers to the region’s food security, and the necessity of building their resilience and helping them manage risks. Donors were appreciative of how the Country Partnerships and the regional approaches were responding to COVID-19 and other challenges arising (e.g. Fall Armyworm). The CPs have been growing, evolving and demonstrating good results in terms of WGs and farmers reached; the focus on gender is very important. Donors concurred with the need for stronger engagements with farmer organizations at a country and regional level. They also emphasized the need for sustainability and applaud the efforts to leverage funding with private sector support.

6. **World Economic Forum Support.** Grow Asia continues to be the strongest example of a multi-stakeholder partnership within the global network and anticipates Grow Asia playing a role leading to the Food Systems Summit in 2021 particularly through its engagement in the Food Action Alliance. The Forum is setting up regional innovation hubs in Latin America, India, Africa, and Asia to understand regional food systems innovation. The Forum is pleased to see that Grow Asia has been recognized as an Entity Associated with ASEAN and that Grow Asia regularly directly engages with committees at the ASEAN level. The Forum commits to continue actively supporting Grow Asia, especially by bringing in its relationships with IFAD, FAO, World Bank and other multilateral organizations.
Meeting Participants

- Jens Hartmann, Head of Commercial Operations Asia Pacific, Bayer Crop Science
- Mun Pew Khong, Head, Public Affairs, Science and Sustainability, Bayer Crop Science
- Pote Jarupanich, Vice President, Charoen Pokphand Produce
- Ade Soekadis, Executive Director, Mercy Corps Indonesia
- Pham Quang Minh, Assistant Director and Head of the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Division, ASEAN Secretariat
- Jose Romeo Ebron, Cooperative Program Manager, Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)
- Fiona Lynn, Director, Agricultural Development and Food Security Section, Agriculture, Infrastructure and Water Branch, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Christine Pahlman, Assistant Director, Agricultural Development and Food Security Section, Agriculture, Infrastructure and Water Branch, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Sean de Cleene, Head of Food System Initiative and Member of Executive Committee, World Economic Forum
- Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, Grow Asia
- Reginald Lee, Director, Partnerships, Grow Asia
- Pranav Sethaputra, Manager, Partnerships, Grow Asia
- Erin Sweeney, Manager, Sustainable Business & Investment, Grow Asia
- Nadia Soerjanto, Manager, Innovation, Grow Asia