



Grow Asia Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday 18 September 2019

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. Following the in-person meeting of the Grow Asia Steering Committee at the Grow Asia Forum in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2018, 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.

Key Points from the Discussion

- 1. New Business Council Co-Chair.** The co-chairmanship of the Grow Asia Business Council was rotated from Sinar Mas Agribusiness & Food to Charoen Pokphand Group. The Business Council unanimously welcomed Khun Sumeth Pinyosanit, CEO of Charoen Pokphand Group's Crop Integration Business Unit. The meeting also acknowledged Pak Franky Widjaja's leadership over the last 5 years.
- 2. Country Partnerships (CPs) Progress.** Grow Asia is grateful to Australia's DFAT and Global Affairs Canada for their support since Grow Asia's inception. The Grow Asia network now reaches 1.3 million smallholders, of which nearly 780,000 are involved in Grow Asia's Working Groups (WGs). Grow Asia's model shows that bringing together the private sector, public sector, farmers, and CSOs is an effective way of delivering results. In 2019, Grow Asia launched its sixth CP, Grow PNG, with support from Australia's DFAT. The Business Council also raised the possibility of developing a CP in Thailand funded by private sector partners.
- 3. ASEAN Secretariat Engagements.** Following the adoption of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry (ASEAN RAI Guidelines), Grow Asia will pursue two workstreams related to the Guidelines: (i) alignment of private and public investment policies/regulations with the Guidelines, and (ii) development of a regional blended learning program (which includes e-learning and face to face modules). This follow-up work is likely to be funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), among others. Grow Asia is also supporting regional conversations about the Fall Armyworm. By end 2019, Grow Asia is expected to become an [Entity Associated with ASEAN](#).
- 4. Future Funding.** Australia has indicated continued support for Grow Asia in its next phase. Notwithstanding, Grow Asia will face a shortfall in funding over the next 12-18 months. Regional programs, including Digital, will be reduced as Grow Asia streamlines its operating costs (reduced rent, fewer secretariat staff) while continuing to seek other sources of funding (IFAD, Korea, JAIF). The Steering Committee discussed various strategies, including: (1) country-level funds from Canada, (2) private sector sponsorship (i.e. Digital, Grow Asia Forum) and membership fees at the CPs, and (3) private sector secondees. The Business Council offered to hold a follow-up meeting on fundraising and sponsorship opportunities with Grow Asia. Grow Asia also considered raising membership fees at the regional level but felt this could jeopardize its independence and neutrality. WEF pointed to the shifting donor landscape that is moving from



a food security-focused approach to a food systems-focused approach, which favours Grow Asia's model due to the growing focus on systems-thinking.

5. **Success of the Digital Program.** Grow Asia's Digital Program was recognized as a key component for Grow Asia to reach scale. Success factors for the Digital Program include both external pressure for stakeholders to respond to disruptors and fast-paced change, and a layered value offering that created multiple touch points to facilitate "stickiness" and engage different businesses. This layered value approach can similarly be applied across Grow Asia's programs. IFAD is supporting a scoping study for a more comprehensive regional program, which could potentially unlock a further US\$3-3.5 million. In parallel, Grow Asia is in discussion with Enterprise Singapore on an agri-innovation lab (S\$3 million + S\$7 million start-up grants) and has also submitted proposals to Korea's MAFRA for digital program expansion and core funding.
6. **Connecting the CPs and Regional Programs.** Members discussed linkages between Grow Asia's two tracks. For example, the Grow Asia Learning Alliance (GALA) brings together agricultural researchers and agribusiness in three CPs to establish sectoral fluency among both groups. The Digital Program connects smallholder farmers to technologies that help identify pests and disease as well as access to financing, and some CPs have Digital WGs to facilitate this information exchange. Further, it is envisioned that the Corn WGs will serve as mechanism to encourage regional sharing of best practices regarding the Fall Armyworm. IFAD is also in discussion with Grow Asia on creating a database of farmer organizations to facilitate efficient connections with agribusinesses.
7. **Performance Measurement and Gender Data.** Grow Asia has reached out to Vinod Thomas, former Director General of Independent Evaluation at ADB and at World Bank, to advise on integrating the [CFS' recommendations on measuring multi-stakeholder partnerships](#) as well as how to better integrate gender data into Grow Asia's monitoring and evaluation. The ASEAN RAI Guidelines already has a dedicated guideline (#3) on equality, engagement and empowerment for women, young people, indigenous peoples. Grow Asia will explore ways to disaggregate the results on gender and women's participation, including looking at the representation of women in leadership. Adopting more gender-focused strategies could help Grow Asia become more appealing to donors who are shifting their focus towards gender issues.
8. **Grow Asia Forum 2020.** WEF will resume its World Economic Forum on ASEAN Summit in 2020 and the Grow Asia Forum will be held the day prior to the start of the Summit. Tentatively, this will be around July 2020 in Jakarta, Indonesia.



Meeting Participants

- Fiona Lynn, Director, Agricultural Development and Food Security Section, Development Economics, Private Sector and Agricultural Branch, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Corry Van Gaal, Deputy Director, Development Finance, Global Affairs Canada
- Bouba Housseini, Program Officer, Employment and Growth, International Development Research Centre
- Hans Ramm, Senior Policy Advisor – Agricultural Finance & Responsible Investments, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- Jens Hartmann, Regional Head, Asia Pacific, Bayer Crop Science
- Sumeth Pinyosanit, Chief Executive Officer, CP Crop Integration Business Unit
- Charuk Kuntanarumitkul, Consultant, CP Crop Integration
- Pham Quang Minh, Assistant Director, Sectoral Development Directorate, Head of Food, Agriculture and Forestry Division, Economic Community Department, ASEAN Secretariat
- Ade Soekadis, Executive Director, Mercy Corps Indonesia
- Sean de Cleene, Head of Food Systems Initiative, Member of Executive Committee, World Economic Forum
- Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, Grow Asia
- Paul Voutier, Director, Knowledge and Innovation, Grow Asia
- Reginald Lee, Director, Partnerships, Grow Asia
- Pranav Sethaputra, Manager, Partnerships, Grow Asia
- Nadia Soerjanto, Manager, Knowledge and Innovation, Grow Asia
- Erin Sweeney, Associate, Partnerships, Grow Asia