

2014 Grow Asia Agriculture Forum

June 2014





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REF 300614

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Grow Asia – An Overview

The Grow Asia partnership will be developed in 2014 by the World Economic Forum in partnership with the ASEAN Secretariat and will serve as a multistakeholder partnership platform to catalyse action that contributes to food security and sustainable agricultural development in support of national and regional priorities in the ASEAN region. Country-led and locally driven, Grow Asia will support market-based scalable solutions with measurable positive impacts on inclusive and sustainable agricultural growth, especially focusing on smallholder farmer development and environmental sustainability of agriculture.

Grow Asia will draw from the experience of the Forum's New Vision for Agriculture (NVA) initiative, which serves as a platform to build collaboration among stakeholders to achieve a vision of agriculture as a driver of food security, environmental sustainability and economic opportunity. The goal of the NVA is to transform entire value chains and agriculture systems, mobilize leadership commitment to action, and promote innovation and best practice exchange to accelerate progress.

To date, the NVA has catalysed partnerships in 16 countries, including four countries in the ASEAN region (Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines), as well as 10 countries engaged in Grow Africa – a regional partnership with the African Union and NEPAD Agency, which has mobilized over \$7.2 billion in private-sector investment commitments.

On 21 May 2014, the first ever Grow Asia Agriculture Forum convened during the World Economic Forum on East Asia in Manila. The Grow Asia meeting engaged 150 senior leaders from ASEAN governments, the private sector, international organizations, donor agencies, civil society organizations, farmers associations and research institutions. Eight of the ten ASEAN countries were represented by ministers, vice-ministers or senior officials from their respective ministries

of agriculture and forestry (Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia and Singapore).

Participants interacted in high-level panels and workshops, and explored opportunities for investment and partnership for agriculture development in ASEAN. They also shared best practices and innovation and shaped the strategic priorities of the future Grow Asia platform.

Key highlights from the Grow Asia Agriculture Forum included:

- Grow Asia was received with optimism by government leaders, as well as private sector, civil society and farmer representatives as an innovative regional platform to advance food security and sustainable agricultural growth in ASEAN, using a multistakeholder and market-led approach to solutions and scaling impact.
- In country discussions and solution-oriented workshops, participants shared partnership opportunities, exchanged experiences from the region and jointly defined strategic priorities for Grow Asia.
- The Government of the Philippines expressed strong interest to catalyse a new country-level public-private partnership with the Forum through the Grow Asia platform and held an initial consultation with Grow Asia Business Council members to discuss priorities in terms of crops and geographies.

The World Economic Forum will incorporate the perspectives shared in this meeting into its ongoing public-private dialogues on agriculture and food security in priority regions, both globally and through the Grow Asia platform. The Forum is pleased to share highlights of the discussions at the Grow Asia Agriculture Forum and looks forward to further opportunities for interaction and collaboration with relevant stakeholders on these issues.



“
If we are serious about inclusive growth, agriculture is going to have to be at the core of the solution.
”

Stephen P. Groff Vice-President for Operations in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank, Manila



“
If we are to achieve food security, we must first secure our farmers.
”

Francis N Pangilinan, Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization, Office of the President of the Philippines

Grow Asia Agriculture Forum

Building a New Spirit of Partnership

Top leaders from ASEAN gathered in the opening session of the inaugural Grow Asia Agriculture Forum on 21 May 2014 to set an agenda and define priorities for Grow Asia, which was received with optimism by government leaders, as well as private sector and civil society and farmer representatives. During a high-level panel, leaders shared insights and progress from unique and innovative multistakeholder partnerships underway at the country level to advance sustainable and inclusive agriculture transformation as well as lay out their vision for a regional partnership.

Panellists agreed that the region's agriculture system is challenged by rising demand and diversifying diets and face further threats from climate change, market volatility and an ageing farming population. They warned that no one sector can tackle this alone and shared good examples of collaboration that have already showed strong results. They also encouraged the exchange of good models, inclusivity of voices, and, above all, a central focus on the region's smallholder farmers for a shared goal to scale impact.

Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam, highlighted progress made by the Vietnam Public Private Task Force, a successful multistakeholder programme led by his ministry. The Vietnam task force – launched in 2010 by the Government of Vietnam in cooperation with the World Economic Forum, the private sector and other stakeholders – works with priority commodity value chains to improve farmer productivity, profitability, quality and competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable manner. “We strongly support this multi-partner approach and think that we should all work together to develop the Grow Asia partnership, so we can scale impact,” Cao Duc Phat said. Vietnam is working to implement these pilot programmes at a national scale



01: Left to Right: Sean de Cleene, Senior Vice-President, Global Initiatives, Strategy and Business Development, Yara International, Belgium; Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam; Rusman Heriawan, Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia; Nandu Nandkishore,

Executive Vice-President, Asia, Oceania, Africa and Middle East, Nestlé, Switzerland; Estrella Penunia, Secretary-General, Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), Philippines; Franky Oesman Widjaja, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sinar

Mas Agribusiness & Food, Indonesia; Anna Chilczuk, Regional Director, East Asia, Mercy Corps, Indonesia

02: Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam; Rusman Heriawan, Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia

and will also explore cross-border collaboration opportunities to support similar efforts in its neighbouring countries.

Although public and private actors are often reluctant to invest in the agriculture sector in developing nations, Rusman Heriawan, Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia, highlighted the Partnership for Indonesia's Sustainable Agriculture (PISAgro), which facilitates partnerships with the private sector and smallholder farmers. “For farmers in Indonesia, seeing is believing, so demonstrating best practices in the field is very important,” he said.

Franky Widjaja, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sinar Mas Agribusiness & Food, Indonesia, and Co-Chairman of PISAgro, stressed the need to create sustainable and

innovative modular approaches so they can be effectively scaled up. He said if best practices were implemented in the palm oil sector, for example, yields would be doubled and a million hectares of new planting would be saved, resulting in a significant decrease in deforestation.

Speaking from the experience of emerging ASEAN countries such as Myanmar, U Tin Htut Oo, Chair of the National Economic and Social Advisory Council, Myanmar, said his country, once the “rice bowl” of Asia, has a lot to learn from successful public-private partnerships in Indonesia and Vietnam. Proceso Alcala, Secretary of Agriculture of the Philippines, also shared his enthusiasm for a new approach and welcomed the “mutually enriching discussions and creative partnerships” between the public and private sectors

together with civil society that Grow Asia would generate.

Estrella Penunia, Secretary-General, Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), Philippines, stressed that farmers across the region see themselves as equal partners with governments, companies and NGOs, and should be part of the strategic conversations as Grow Asia goes forward. Considering that 2.8 billion people across the world live on less than \$2 a day and rely on agriculture for their livelihood, Anna Chilczuk, Regional Director, East Asia, Mercy Corps, Indonesia, echoed the need for partnership with shared value, interdependency and equal representation. To date, she said, public-private partnerships such as PISAgro have helped facilitate richer connections – better linkages between farmers and the private sector and access to tailored financial services. Nandu Nandkishore, Executive Vice-President, Asia, Oceania, Africa and Middle East, Nestlé, Switzerland, reminded participants that ASEAN farmers tend to have smallholdings and are the most vulnerable to climate change and market fluctuation. More integrated supply lines and deepened engagement with smallholder farmers will result in more efficient supply chains, higher productivity and yields, and higher incomes. As Co-Chair of the Grow Asia Business Council, Nandkishore called for other countries across the region to grow agriculture in a systematic way to meet future global demand.

Partnerships and Opportunities in ASEAN Countries

During the Grow Asia Agriculture Forum, ASEAN agriculture ministers and other key country leaders led interactive dialogues on agriculture sector-specific partnership opportunities in their countries, sharing their national visions and priorities for food security and sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth. Discussions focused on comparing challenges faced on the ground and identifying opportunities for collaboration on new and existing initiatives to advance their country's vision for agriculture.

Agriculture has become a strategic sector in Indonesia in the past decade,

01: Proceso J Alcala, Secretary of Agriculture of the Philippines



contributing 14% of national GDP and employing over 118 million workers. As the country defines its 2015-2019 development agenda, agriculture will play a central role to achieve food security, economic growth and environmental stewardship.

Formed in 2011, the **Partnership for Indonesia's Sustainable Agriculture (PISAgro)** engages over 30 organizations together with four government ministries, supported by the World Economic Forum's New Vision for Agriculture initiative. The partnership focuses on 10 value chains, complemented by an agri-finance group, to advance Indonesia's national vision for agriculture, improving environmentally sustainable production of targeted commodities, strengthening smallholder livelihoods and increasing food security. The PISAgro secretariat is an established non-profit, independent, self-sustaining entity.

Participants agreed on specific recommendations to support PISAgro, including targeted investments in commodity value chains with a focus on inputs, mechanization and R&D, and special attention to reducing food losses through post-harvest technologies, storage and transport infrastructure. Leaders addressed the need to scale pilot efforts to a national and regional level. They also emphasized the need to develop agri-finance toolkits, including credit and insurance products, financial management training for smallholder farmer cooperatives, as well as ICT solutions to improve market access and information exchange.

Vietnam has experienced tremendous progress in harnessing agricultural

“
I'm excited to see how we can take these pilots, how we can leverage them, not in terms of tens or even hundreds of thousands, but millions, and how you make that sustainable.
”

Anna Chilczuk, Regional Director, East Asia, Mercy Corps, Indonesia

growth to power economic expansion and poverty reduction. The agriculture sector provides 60% of employment and 22% of GDP. The government has placed a high priority on industrialization and modernization of rural agriculture, setting a target of 3.5% annual growth in the sector until 2020; private-sector investment is seen as key to achieving that target.

Vietnam's Public Private Task Force on Sustainable Agriculture, formed in 2010 and led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, brings together over 30 organizations, supported by the New Vision for Agriculture, and works with five strategic commodity value chains (coffee, tea, vegetables, corn and fisheries) to improve farmer productivity, profitability, quality and competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Stakeholders brainstormed on new opportunities to expand pilot efforts to national and cross-border value chains (in particular with Laos). This included leveraging the public-private partnership approach on key value chains such as livestock, rubber and others. Another important idea raised was to leverage Grow Asia's regional scope to highlight opportunities in improving the rice value chain. Given importance of the crop, Vietnam expressed the desire to engage ASEAN public and private sector leadership on integrated rice sector reform.

Vietnam continues to be a leader in developing a climate change resilience agenda, including farmer capacity development and encouraging green investment through a national agro-forestry fund. The Ministry of Agriculture

and Rural Development of Vietnam invited leaders to bring expertise and partnership to this important agenda, and expressed its commitment to share experiences and best practices through the Grow Asia platform.

Benefitting from rising investment propelled by improved business confidence, commodity exports, buoyant tourism and credit growth, and complemented by the government's ambitious structural reform programme, Myanmar's economy is quickly transforming into an investment destination. As the backbone of the economy, the agriculture sector employs over half the population and is positioned to return to its historic role as Asia's "rice bowl".

The **Myanmar Agriculture Network** engages over 40 organizations including the Government of Myanmar, the global and local private sector, civil society, international and donor organizations, and farmers associations, supported by the New Vision for Agriculture, to serve as a platform for enabling stakeholder cooperation to accelerate partnership opportunities and investment towards sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth in Myanmar.

The message from leaders from Myanmar was clear: the private sector has a major role to play in the agriculture sector. The country's Minister of Commerce, together with other government representatives, including from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, shared the importance of science, technology and innovation to accelerate Myanmar's agriculture trajectory. Participants explored partnership opportunities to support the country's priority areas for agriculture-sector investment such as high-value agro-processing and post-harvest logistics support for strategic crops such as horticulture, rice, cereals, pulses and oilseeds. Participants agreed on the need for a coordination entity, such as the Myanmar Agriculture Network, to develop inclusive and effective representation that can deliver scalable impact for the long term.

Agriculture employs over 10 million people in the **Philippines** and accounts for 30% of the labour force. The country faces high poverty in rural areas, which has further suffered from climate-related disasters. The Government of the



01: Special remarks by Rusman Heriawan, Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia, during the Indonesia breakout session

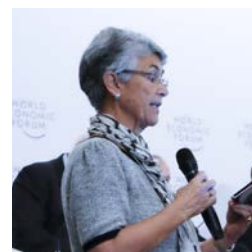
02: Participants discussing opportunities during the Philippines breakout session



Philippines is committed to working with all stakeholders to support Filipino farmers to build their livelihoods and resilience. At the Grow Asia Agriculture Forum, government representatives shared several opportunities for collaboration to advance farmer productivity, competitiveness, and innovation and technology-driven investments as agriculture-sector priorities. Other areas of focus include the sharing of benchmarks studies, financing methods, and standards for food safety and certification.

Participants defined next steps to respond to the invitation from the Government of the Philippines to develop a new public-private partnership for sustainable agricultural growth through market-led strategies, including end-to-end value chain initiatives on key crops such as coconut, corn, rice, cacao and coffee, as well as creating working groups to address issue areas such as climate adaptation, market access, credit guarantees, R&D and diversification.

Building on examples learned from Indonesia (PISAgro) and other countries supported by the Forum's New Vision for Agriculture initiative, the Philippines proposed establishing a neutral coordinating platform to deliver action-oriented initiatives towards advancing the country's vision for food security and sustainable agriculture.



“The planet is now in a situation where it must find a way to produce more food in the next forty years than it has produced in the last 8,000 years. We must be innovative about using natural resources sustainably, while leaving enough for the generations to come.”

Yolanda Kakabadse, President of WWF International and Co-Chair of the 2014 World Economic Forum on East Asia

Solutions to Advance Agricultural Transformation

During the meeting, participants defined recommendations for the Grow Asia strategy and approach to be taken forward in 2014:

Raising farm productivity

At the heart of agriculture development and food security lies the need to increase the productivity of small farms. This session highlighted the need to ensure that farmers have access to inputs and technology and receive training and information to enable higher and more sustainable yields. The opportunity to leverage mobile technology in this regard was also a focus of discussion.

- *Disseminate existing knowledge.* Existing technology and information need to be shared and made more accessible, in order to create a “learning culture” to motivate farmers and improve their productivity.
- *Leverage mobile services to reach scale.* Mobile phones can provide smallholder farmers with information on weather, pest, disease, prices, and enable better decision-making. The solutions they offer are affordable and accessible, and appeal to young farmers.
- *Elevate status of the farmer.* Farmers must be treated with dignity and recognized as a central contributor in the agriculture system as a producer of goods and an equal voice at the table.

Applying innovative financing models

Farmers are unable to invest in better practices and technology as they do not have the capital required, nor does

their cash flow enable investment. Often farmers lack financial literacy to track their performance or gain access to finance. Building their capacity and also helping them manage their saving and cash flow better will go a long way to improve their profitability. Provision of credit at affordable rates and acceptable terms is also essential. Given the uncertainty of markets, weather disruption, pests and disease, farming is a risky proposition. To mitigate this risk, the importance of insurance provision was clearly recognized. Aggregation is the key to financial inclusion; integrated ICT solutions also help in applying innovative financing models.

- *Farmer aggregation.* To expand reach to farmers and reduce transaction costs, it will help to organize farmers. Examples of professional farmers’ associations or companies acting as aggregators has demonstrated positive progress. An innovative tripartite financing model creates value chain linkages where companies receive financing and in turn provide it directly to farmers.
- *Risk mitigation.* Insurance can reduce the credit risk of banks and farmers making credit more affordable. Organizing farmers into groups can enable such risk mitigation products, while leveraging technologies to cover cost of distribution and loss adjustment and ultimately bringing down the price to make credit more affordable.
- *Financial training.* Developing comprehensive farmer training programmes that bundle financial knowledge with agro-extension services helps farmers better manage their cash flows.

Scaling and replicating country partnerships

Ongoing partnerships in Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar provide a strong base and invaluable learning and experience for Grow Asia. These partnerships work across a range of food and cash crops, linking value chain partners and addressing such issues as technology dissemination, farmer financing and environmental sustainability. Grow Asia will focus on further strengthening and scaling these efforts while also aiming to replicate the models in other ASEAN countries, starting with the Philippines, which hosted an initial consultation at the Grow Asia Agriculture Forum.

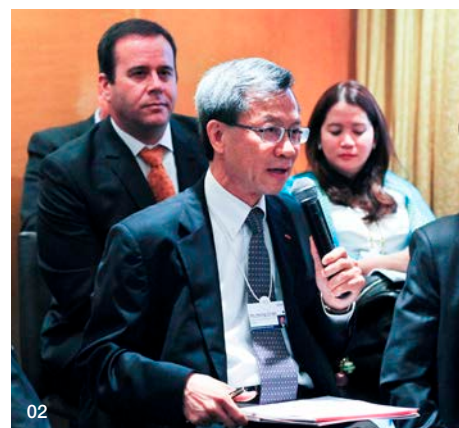
The participation of senior government representation from Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore in the Grow Asia Agriculture Forum provided a unique opportunity for companies and other stakeholders to learn about their national priorities for food security and the specific opportunities for investment and agriculture development. There was strong interest by all stakeholders to develop country-based partnerships in many of these countries, and a clear recognition for the need to align regional efforts with the ASEAN Food Security Framework.

Increasing efficiency in food value chains

Focus needs to extend beyond the farm to the full value chain, particularly to reduce the food loss in the system and ensure food safety. Investment in infrastructure, including storage, roads and ports, is a critical and essential part

01: Leaders discuss progress and challenges during the Vietnam breakout session

02: Ho Hsing-Chan, Group Managing Director, ASEAN, DuPont Company, Singapore leading the breakout session on Myanmar



of the chain, but is underdeveloped in the ASEAN region where food loss can be as high as 60%. Investment is also needed in processing closer to the farm in rural areas to increase rural incomes, as well as reduce loss and waste. Certification and standards are needed to ensure quality and sustainability of production.

- *Take holistic approach to logistics in supply chains.* Beyond investment in physical infrastructure, attention needs to be paid to the development of supportive regulation and institutions and the enforcement of these regulations. In the Philippines, for example, it is more expensive to transport goods within the country than to ship to Singapore.
- *Set regional standards.* There is a need to harmonize regulations in the region, but this is hampered by lack of incentives for small farmers, varying degrees of development and readiness of countries, and the problem of aligning regional standards with global standards. Possible solutions include providing increased incentives and implementing a “stepping stone” programme to allow less developed countries more time to comply.
- *Find integrated solutions in “midstream”.* Solutions need to be specifically defined for the middle of the value chain (processing, storage and logistics), which is often obstructed by a fragmented supply base and lack of capital. These could include farmer aggregation, development of government clusters, specialized modern wholesalers and support to cluster SMEs that dominate production.

Developing climate-smart agriculture

Weather volatility is impacting agriculture in many parts of the region, which is particularly susceptible to climate change. For long-term sustainability and growth of agriculture, improved water and soil management technologies and practices will need to be adopted, more R&D will be needed to develop crops that are more resilient to climate change, and natural resources, especially forests, will need greater protection. There is also a need to work closely with farmers to share technologies and build trust to encourage their adoption. There was a call to prioritize action and awareness, and recognition of the opportunity for ASEAN to lead the way on this issue. Partnerships underway in ASEAN, such as in Vietnam, are making early progress through innovations such as a multistakeholder steering committee to address climate-smart agriculture, robust environmental metrics and studies, promotion of new technologies, and efforts to raise awareness about climate impacts.

- *Develop climate smart technologies.* Increased investment in R&D and building a pipeline for technologies to develop crop varieties, inputs and farming practices that mitigate environmental impacts and benefits the farmers will build resilience to climate change.
- *Include water and soil management in policy and investment frameworks.* In the context of the food-water-energy nexus, there is an imperative for greater care and efficiency in the use of natural resources. Targets set through policy frameworks and investment plans can unlock more streamlined approaches.

- *Reduce deforestation.* A critical ecosystem, forests need better protection through innovative tools such as common maps created by surveillance systems and through certification. Reclaiming degraded land as a source of farming has been a new approach in many regions.

Strengthening the enabling environment

Aligning regional efforts to the ASEAN Food Security Framework and with the ASEAN Economic Community vision will ensure that partnership efforts deliver against regional priorities. Food security in the region will require regional trade and common standards. Supportive regulatory measures for R&D in agriculture are also needed. Most critical for farmers is the recognition of their land rights.

- *Research for development.* It is important to engage farmers and stakeholders across the value chain to co-define farmer needs and co-create the R&D framework; and not just focus on products, but also services and keep in mind the end goals of profitability, rural development and sustainability
- *Recognize land rights.* To support farmers in gaining land rights, land use plans need to be clearly developed and monitored via mapping and resource inventory. Land rights also need to be institutionalized through legal contracts and collectivisation needs to be allowed.
- *Create a vision for regional food security.* Align efforts under a common vision for the region and ensure that public-private partnerships gain support through regulation as well as operational country-based partnerships.

01: Breakout discussion on Applying Innovative Financing Models





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We must recognize the critical role of rural development and act collectively to make it sustainable.

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Nandu Nandkishore, Executive Vice-President, Asia, Oceania, Africa and Middle East, Nestlé, Switzerland

01: Ivo Menzinger, Managing Director, Global Partnerships, and Head, Asia and Emerging Markets Strategy, Swiss Reinsurance Company, Singapore, leading a breakout group discussion on farmer insurance

02: Thomas Reardon, Professor, Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, USA, leading the discussion on value-chain efficiency

Managing water resources

Agriculture accounts for about 70% of all freshwater. Managing this critical resource, especially in times of changing weather patterns and frequent droughts and floods, is urgent. More R&D is needed in crops that are more water efficient, are able to withstand droughts and floods, and can grow in saline water. Adoption of water management techniques is also needed, including use of drip irrigation and implementation of conservation agriculture practices such as mulching.

In Vietnam, the coffee commodity working group under the Vietnam Taskforce has achieved increase in agricultural productivity of 11% and farmer income of 14%, while reducing water usage by 14% and carbon emissions by 54%. Vietnam is also developing water management solutions in response to the impact of climate change e.g. drought in the uplands and rising sea levels in the Mekong delta.

Improving financial access through farmer aggregation

With almost 100 million smallholder farmers in ASEAN, one of the greatest challenges in agriculture development in the region is the disaggregation of farmers. This makes it difficult as well as expensive to reach them at an individual level to provide access to services and markets, including distribution of inputs, dissemination of information, financial inclusion and links to market. Farmer aggregation has specifically been called out in the provision of financial services, including credit and insurance, as it will significantly reduce transaction cost and risk, making the services more affordable to farmers.

There are different models that have been tested to aggregate farmers. For example, in Indonesia, to help independent smallholders receive financing to replant their aging palm oil trees and increase their productivity, Sinar Mas is contracting with 400 farmers and ensuring that they adopt good agriculture practices and increase their yield without further expansion of land at the cost of forests. In Vietnam, Nestle, Yara and Syngenta are working with coffee smallholder farmers to help them increase their yield through better access to inputs, knowledge and training, and are supporting the development of farmer groups that enables farmers to access finance.

“

Farmers know very well that young generation don't like to farm anymore, but if governments partner with companies and others to modernize farming that would help infuse more logistical and technology capacity into future agricultural processes, making farming more profitable and attractive.

”

Rosalie M. Ellasus, Board of Directors, Chairman Emeritus, PhilMaize, Philippines





“

This new type of partnership approach will require a lot of innovation, which will need transparency, trust, commitment and a willingness to fail.

”

Robert S. Zeigler, Director General,
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI),
Philippines

01: Left to Right: Robert S. Zeigler, Director-General, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines; Peter Ter Kulve, President, ASEAN and Australasia, Unilever Asia, Singapore; Tobias Marchand, Head, Asia-Pacific, Bayer (South East Asia) Pte Ltd, Singapore; Stephen P. Groff, Vice-President for Operations in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank, Philippines; Hla Kyaw, Director-General, Department of Agricultural Planning, Ministry of

Agriculture and Irrigation of Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Francis N. Pangilinan, Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization, Office of the President of the Philippines; Ty Sokhun, Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Cambodia; Phouangparisak Pravongviengkham, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR

The Future of Food Security and Agriculture in ASEAN

During a high-level panel, leaders defined an agenda to support ASEAN's food security and sustainable agricultural growth. Key highlights from the discussion are summarized as follows:

- The efforts to improve food security and agriculture need to focus on farmers, recognize their contribution and include them in designing initiatives and solutions.
- Innovative and multistakeholder-led collaboration is essential and an effective model to address agricultural development in ASEAN.
- Given that food production is one of the key economic sectors dependent on healthy ecosystems, strategies for integrating the environment into the value chain will help foster a climate-smart future.
- Integrated solutions, more tightly linked supply chains and greater access to financing and technology for farmers, should be incorporated into future agricultural development plans.
- An increasingly urbanized Asia will require strategies to incentivize young farmers and attract them back into agriculture.
- Investing in sustainable infrastructure and enabling policy for a strong business climate will not only help to establish food security in the region, but also impact the global food security equation.

Collaborative, multistakeholder models involving the private sector,

government and civil society – such as the successful public-private partnerships underway in Indonesia and Vietnam – were seen as models that could be replicated at the country and at the region-wide level, despite acknowledged challenges with scalability. Cross-border value chains, such as those currently being discussed between Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, were also highlighted as one area that warranted more attention.

Acknowledging problems such as land ownership issues, Hla Kyaw, Director-General, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Myanmar, said the Grow Asia vision would improve economic opportunities and market-based solutions in Myanmar. In a country emerging from decades of isolation under authoritarian rule, one Myanmar farmer called for freedom of association to be guaranteed so that farmers and the government can grow together.

Leaders from Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia also recommended harmonization and synergy of all actors to create balanced governance and actionable outcomes, including increased private sector investment and a business friendly ecosystem to accelerate agricultural growth in ASEAN. The importance of focusing on farmers, especially women and youth, was recognized.

Francis Pangilinan, Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization, Office of the President of the Philippines, noted that the average age of farmers in the Philippines is 57 and they on average farm 1.5 hectares, earning an average income of less than \$50 per month.

Participants agreed that farmers should not only be better acknowledged, but should also have more of a voice. Avenues for increased dialogue and action should see farmers playing a more active role in policy and decision-making as well as engagement in technological developments. Better protections for farmers in terms of land rights and climate change must also be strengthened if a sustainable, equitable vision of agriculture is to be achieved.



Agriculture in the World Economic Forum on East Asia Official Programme

Thursday 22 May

Agricultural Transformation in East Asia
In the face of rising demand and volatile weather patterns, how can sustainable food and agriculture systems be created in the region?

In a region deeply vulnerable to the vagaries of natural disasters, climate change and food security – and where on average half of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods – participants in a session on agricultural transformation at the World Economic Forum on East Asia pledged their commitment to an innovative new regional solution.

Government and business leaders, alongside farmers and scientists, called for improved collaboration, linkages and technology transfers under the regional umbrella initiative, Grow Asia, as the best way to ensure food security in the region. Grow Asia, developed in tandem with the ASEAN Secretariat, is designed to advance food security and promote sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth as well as facilitate more active links across the entire value chain.

“We have more than 300 million smallholders in Asia and they are the most vulnerable,” said Franky Oesman Widjaja, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sinar Mas Agribusiness & Food, Indonesia. “Sustainable agriculture is the only way forward.”

Noting that the challenge lies not only in producing more sustainable food amid an expanding global population, Estrella Penunia, Secretary-General, Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), Philippines, spoke of the need for tighter links from rice fields up. “The challenge for small farmers is how to link to services, how to organize ourselves as a group so we can better access services and negotiate better with private companies,” she said.

Acknowledging the complexities of attaining food security in the future, Ho Hsing-Chan, Group Managing Director, ASEAN, DuPont, Singapore, pointed to migratory trends that see more people in cities and the reluctance of young people to enter the farming sector. “We are struggling to get young people to come into the farming sector,” he said.

The children of farmers are reluctant to be farmers themselves. However, Robert S. Ziegler, Director-General, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines, said the future holds tremendous challenges and opportunities. He spoke of the “biological revolution”, how the development of resilient, higher-yield crops will help to ensure food security. “We know that climate change will throw at us major challenges,” he said. “But we have at our disposal a tremendous array of new tools. Our understanding of biology, molecular genetics, this whole biological revolution, will allow us to develop crops that will withstand the onslaught of climate change.”

In Vietnam, a country forecast to be among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, pilot programmes over recent years have shown how science can mitigate the risks, said Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam. He said that multistakeholder, market-based initiatives had seen farmers boost their yields and income, while at the same time significantly reducing waste and emissions. He also emphasized a collaborative response. “The best response will come from everyone, not only the government,” he said.

Lisa Dreier, Senior Director, Head of Food Security and Development Initiatives, World Economic Forum USA, agreed with the need for new approaches and partnerships in the region. “The ASEAN region has significant potential to be a leader in environmentally and socially sustainable food production to further food security in the region,” she noted. “Realizing that potential will require innovative new approaches, including partnerships.”

Selected Grow Asia Media Coverage

- [Press release](#)
- [Nestlé op ed](#) and [Sinar Mas op ed](#)
- [Asian Development Bank blog](#) and [Forum blog](#)
- [Department of Agriculture of the Philippines at Grow Asia](#)



01: Left to Right: Teymoor Nabili, Executive Editor and Presenter, Channel News Asia, Singapore; Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam; Estrella Penunia, Secretary-General, Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), Philippines; Franky Oesman Widjaja, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sinar

Mas Agribusiness & Food, Indonesia; Ho Hsing-Chan, Ho Hsing-Chan, Group Managing Director, ASEAN, DuPont Company, Singapore; Robert S. Ziegler, Director-General, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines

List of Participants

Rohit Aggarwal	Chief Executive Officer, Asia Region	Louis Dreyfus Commodities Asia Pte Ltd	Singapore
Tofail Ahmed	Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh		
Proceso J. Alcala	Secretary of Agriculture of the Philippines		
Yolando Arban	Country Presence Officer, IFAD country office	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Philippines
Raul Socrates Banzuela	National Coordinator	Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka	Philippines
Simon Badcock	Sustainable Landscapes Partnership - Chief of Party	Conservation International	Indonesia
Paz J. Benavidez II	Assistant Secretary for Regulations	Department of Agriculture of the Philippines	Philippines
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