



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Agriculture Leaders Call for ASEAN Food Systems to Embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution to Benefit Smallholder Farmers**

- Over 170 leaders participated in the 2018 Grow Asia Forum to strengthen investment, partnerships and innovation in ASEAN's agriculture sector
- Leaders call for digital innovations in agriculture and partnerships to help Grow Asia scale its impact
- The Grow Asia partnership has now reached over 690,000 smallholder farmers in five countries and projects are helping farmers increase incomes by up to 80%

**Ha Noi, Vietnam, 11 September 2018** – Today, over 170 senior leaders and decision-makers in the agriculture industry gathered at the Grow Asia Forum 2018, co-hosted by the Grow Asia Partnership and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. The event took place alongside the World Economic Forum on ASEAN. Leaders defined strategies for agriculture in the region and shared a common goal of encouraging modernized agriculture sectors and food systems, which have smallholder farmers at the core of profitable, sustainable and growing supply chains.

Around 500 million smallholder farmers produce 80% of the food consumed in the developing world. There is a pressing need to ensure these farmers are equipped with the appropriate technologies, knowledge and skills to meet the increasing global demand for sustainable food.

"We hold enormous hope for digitization to transform the way smallholder farmers learn, communicate, and trade with agribusinesses" said **Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, Grow Asia**. "The past year has seen a real change in how our partners view digital technologies. At the Grow Asia Forum, we heard from large agribusinesses and start-ups alike, including Bayer, AgriMedia and Impact Terra, about how they are delivering greater profitability and sustainability to the sector."

Grow Asia is a multi-stakeholder partnership platform which promotes the cross-regional sharing of knowledge and innovative solutions to improve the productivity, profitability and environmental sustainability of smaller-scale farmers. Its five country-led partnerships now operate 37 value chain projects, which are increasing smallholder farmers' incomes by up to 80%. Over 480 partners are now involved, including governments, companies, farmers' associations, civil society, international organizations and research institutes, and the network is reaching over 690,000 smallholder farmers.

**H.E. Mr. Nguyen Xuan Cuong, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vietnam** said: "With Grow Asia's support, we are very proud of the progress we have made in enhancing Vietnam's agriculture sector and equipping smallholders with the tools and knowledge they need. We believe that digital solutions can address some of the key challenges faced by farmers in Vietnam, from creating safer farm produce to boosting exports and improving farmers' living standards. We encourage partners to join our efforts in applying high-tech, smart agriculture for our farmers."

There is a growing global interest in multi-stakeholder partnerships to instigate change. "Grow Asia provides businesses with a unique pre-competitive space where problems can be solved collectively," said **Olivier M. Schwab, Managing Director, Head of Business Engagement, World Economic Forum**. "By embracing the positive changes being shaped by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and encouraging inclusivity in agriculture supply chains, the Grow Asia network is tackling the issue of environmental sustainability while modernizing global food systems and improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in ASEAN."

In 2018, Grow Asia initiated its Digital Learning Series to act as a launch pad to encourage the testing, dissemination, and wide-spread uptake of digital tools. Grow Asia is producing resources to help its partners



adopt a digital mindset, including a [Digital Credit Scoring Guide](#), and facilitating action through events such as a Hackathon where participants ideated digital solutions which could be applied on small palm oil farms. The winner was formally announced at the Grow Asia Forum. Four major companies are now providing financing to test these ideas in the field.

Leaders at the Grow Asia Forum also explored the World Economic Forum’s [Innovation with a Purpose](#) report and emerging technological innovations that have the potential to drive rapid progress in the sustainability, inclusivity, efficiency, and health impacts of food systems. Grow Asia debuted a Knowledge Marketplace which provided participants with case studies of agricultural innovations, creative solutions and resources.

Grow Asia was established by the World Economic Forum in cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat. For more information, see [www.growasia.org](http://www.growasia.org).

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**Media Contacts**

<b>Spurwing Communications</b>
Emma Thompson / Jessica Bridges / Clarinda Ng
<b>T:</b> +65 6340 7287
<b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:growasia@spurwingcomms.com">growasia@spurwingcomms.com</a>

**The Grow Asia Partnership**

Grow Asia is a multi-stakeholder partnership platform that aims to reach 10 million smallholder farmers by 2020, helping them access knowledge, technology, finance, and markets to increase their productivity, profitability, and environmental sustainability by 20%. Grow Asia brings together South East Asia’s smallholders, governments, companies, NGOs, and other stakeholders, to develop inclusive and sustainable value chains that benefit farmers. It launches and supports locally-driven Country Partnerships, helping them define their strategy, engage new partners and develop innovative solutions.

Grow Asia enables stakeholders from different disciplines to leverage one another’s expertise, share insights and learn from regional experiences. Today Grow Asia collaborates with over 480 partners across five Country Partnerships, reaching nearly 700,000 smallholder farmers.

Grow Asia was established by the World Economic Forum, in collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat, to convene, facilitate, and help scale action-focused partnerships. Grow Asia builds on the experience and success of the Forum’s New Vision for Agriculture (NVA) initiative, which facilitates multi-stakeholder partnerships across the world focused on agriculture development to deliver food security, environmental sustainability, and economic opportunity.

**The Grow Asia Forum**

The Grow Asia Forum is a high-level event bringing together more than 170 senior leaders from ASEAN governments, global and regional private sector, international civil society, farmers’ organizations and other key stakeholders to engage in a highly interactive program. This is the fifth annual Grow Asia Forum; previously, the event has taken place in Cambodia (2017), Malaysia (2016) Indonesia (2015) and the Philippines (2014).



Organized by Grow Asia, a multi-stakeholder platform for inclusive and sustainable agriculture in South East Asia, the Grow Asia Forum 2018 took place alongside the World Economic Forum ASEAN Summit 2018.

This year's event focused on the role of innovation and new technology in accelerating farming and food systems transformation within the ASEAN region, based on the recent World Economic Forum's "Innovation with a Purpose" report. The Grow Asia Secretariat also presented its 2018 Report on Progress. The Grow Asia Knowledge Marketplace made its debut, and curated presenters shared stories of innovation, creative solutions, impact, and effectiveness across the Grow Asia network.