



PRESS RELEASE

Leaders Call for Innovation and Partnership to Strengthen ASEAN Food Systems

- More than 120 leaders participated in the 2017 Grow Asia Forum to strengthen investment, partnerships and innovation in ASEAN's agriculture sector
- The Grow Asia partnership has reached over 500,000 smallholder farmers in five countries
- Innovative solutions such as digital platforms to empower smallholder farmers, catalytic finance, smart policies and partnership platforms can help scale impact to provide opportunities for farmers
- For more information, visit www.growasia.org and ASEAN

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 12 May 2017 – Rapid innovation is needed to meet a 40% increase in food demand expected in the ASEAN region by 2050, according to leaders gathered at the World Economic Forum on ASEAN and the associated Grow Asia Forum.

At the annual Grow Asia Forum, business and government leaders emphasized the need to develop sustainable approaches to meet growing demand, to reduce the impact on environmental resources, including land, water and ecosystems affected by climate volatility. "Farmers are stewards of the land and can partner with business and government to use sustainable approaches," said **Estrella Penunia, Secretary-General of the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development**.

Grow Asia is an innovative partnership which aims to improve the productivity, profitability and environmental sustainability of ASEAN's agriculture sector through multi-stakeholder partnerships and innovative approaches. It has established national partnership platforms in five countries which have initiated 46 value-chain projects, raising farmer income by an average 30%. As reported at the annual Grow Asia Forum, over 300 organizations are now involved, including governments, companies, farmers' associations, civil society, international organizations and research institutes. Over 120 leaders from this network gathered at the event to discuss progress to date and define strategies for scaling up to reach 10 million smallholder farmers by 2020.

"With Grow Asia's support, we launched the Cambodia Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture to provide opportunities to farmers through sustainable value chains. We are proud of the progress achieved to date focused on six crops and encourage additional partners to join the effort," said **Veng Sakhon, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Cambodia**.

Engaging young farmers and entrepreneurs is also key to the future of the sector, given that half of the ASEAN population is under 30 while the average farmer's age is rapidly rising. "Harnessing technology to come up with innovative solutions can help reduce resources while attracting young people to engage in agriculture," said **Jens Hartmann, Head of Asia-Pacific, Bayer**. "In partnership with Grow Asia, we are working with communities to roll out new solutions, such as in the area of digital, to increase productivity and sustainability."

The future implications of these trends are significant. In a session titled, The Future of Food Systems in ASEAN, leaders discussed scenarios presented in a recent World Economic Forum report ([Shaping the Future of Global Food Systems: A Scenarios Analysis](#)). "These scenarios show the very different ways the global food system could evolve in coming years," said **Sarita Nayyar, Managing Director, World Economic Forum**. "Ensuring a sustainable future will require stakeholders to intensify their efforts through collaborative platforms like Grow Asia. The Forum is delighted to work with the ASEAN Secretariat and many partners in supporting this innovative approach."



Grow Asia is working to advance innovation through initiatives such as the recently launched [Grow Asia Counter](#), an online tool for calculating and monitoring the greenhouse gas emissions of value-chain projects, and the [Grow Asia Exchange](#), a knowledge repository and learning hub. New initiatives will include the Learning Partners' Network, to aggregate existing research expertise and provide a key link between the private sector and academia, and the development of a free, mobile platform to provide farmers with agronomy and market information.

“These and other innovative approaches on the ground will help scale up our efforts to achieve broader impact and provide sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmers,” said **Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, Grow Asia**.

The Grow Asia initiative 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.

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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 300 partners across five Country Partnerships, reaching over half a million 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 over 120 senior leaders from ASEAN governments, global and regional private sectors, international civil society, farmers' organizations and other key stakeholders to explore solutions to the challenges facing the future of food.

Organized by Grow Asia, a multi-stakeholder platform for inclusive and sustainable agriculture in South East Asia, the Grow Asia Forum 2017 took place alongside the World Economic Forum ASEAN Summit 2017.

This year's event focused on pathways to scaling agricultural value chain projects. Participants explored scenarios for the future of agriculture in the region, based on the recent World Economic Forum's Future of Food Scenarios report, and decisions that can be made today to ensure the future sustainability of food systems. The Grow Asia Secretariat also presented its 2016-2017 Report on Progress.