

PRESS RELEASE

Responsible Investment Key for Meeting Food Needs in Southeast Asia, New Guidelines Say

Bangkok, Thailand, 29 March 2019 – A new set of regional guidelines aim to help governments in the ASEAN region avoid negative consequences of private investment in food, agriculture and forestry.

The ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry launched this week at the Responsible Business Forum on Food & Agriculture, as well as at the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty in Washington, D.C.

The guidelines were adopted last October by ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry, and were prepared with support from the ASEAN Secretariat, Grow Asia, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and a World Bank trust fund.

The guidelines include recommended actions for national and regional policy makers, given the important role of private investment for the region's future potential. Recommended actions for the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders are also proposed.

The guidelines note that investment has a vital role in creating jobs and improving food safety and nutrition security, but that investment can also come with risks if not pursued responsibly. For instance, the guidelines note that these investments, when done badly, can have severely damaging implications for local communities, as well as indigenous peoples, ranging from diverting land use toward export-oriented or non-food crops to the occurrence of land disputes.

"ASEAN is a unique region, and this is reflected in the guidelines," said **Sarah Brewin, an international law advisor at IISD** who helped develop the guidelines. "There is greater emphasis on technology, climate change, and the role of host states, which is important given that there is a lot of intra-regional investment in ASEAN."

The success of these guidelines will rely on their uptake in ASEAN countries. Moving from recommendations to action will be key, particularly as individual member states grapple with increasing populations, rapid urbanization, and other economic and demographic changes.

"The guidelines reflect that achieving responsible investment in agriculture requires a multi-stakeholder approach," said **Grahame Dixie, Executive Director of Grow Asia**. "While governments are in a position to take the lead, all players have a critical role to play, according to their size, ability and level of potential impact."

Ends

Notes for Editors

- Ensuring responsible private investment in food, agriculture, and forestry is vital for countries in Southeast Asia to meet their growing food demands and development priorities over the coming years.
- More than 82 million people in South-eastern and Eastern Asia are experiencing severe food insecurity, and that the number is increasing, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- There are ten guidelines in total, focusing on food and nutrition security and safety; sustainable economic development and poverty eradication; engaging and empowering women, young



people and indigenous peoples; respecting tenure rights over land, fisheries and forests, and water access; natural resource management; technology; and the rule of law.

- The guidelines are based on the [Committee for World Food Security's Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture](#), but have been customized to the specific needs and priorities of the ASEAN region.
- ASEAN is a 10-country group that includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

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About Grow Asia

Grow Asia is a multi-stakeholder partnership platform that aims to reach 10 million smallholder farmers, helping them access knowledge, technology, finance, and markets to increase their productivity, profitability, and environmental sustainability by 20 percent. 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 1.2 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.

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