



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **New landmark for Grow Asia: almost half a million smallholder farmers gain access to investment and training across South-East Asia**

- 150 ASEAN leaders join the Grow Asia Forum 2016 to develop the South-East Asian agricultural sector
- Grow Asia, an initiative which facilitates multistakeholder collaboration for the benefit of smallholder farmers, works with five ASEAN countries, reaching 471,200 farmers
- Since its launch in 2015, Grow Asia has helped build partnerships in the Philippines and Cambodia and strengthened existing partnerships in Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam
- Grow Asia to work with farmer organisations; pilot digital solutions; explore financial innovation; and institutionalize country partnerships as agreed next steps

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 31 May 2016** – More than 150 leaders from across South-East Asia, from government, farmer organizations, business and civil society, came together today to share and evaluate experiences from the first year of Grow Asia, an initiative to provide access to capital and knowledge for small farmers. The debate focused on what is needed for agriculture to ensure a food-secure future for the region and how to build a more resilient agricultural sector across South-East Asia.

Grow Asia's goal is to reach 10 million smallholder farmers by 2020 to improve farm productivity, profitability and environmental sustainability by 20%. The initiative was established by the World Economic Forum in cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat. It is a unique platform that enables locally led, value chain initiatives to focus on smallholder farmers and environmental sustainability through a high-level, multistakeholder approach.

Since its launch in 2015, Grow Asia has supported country-level partnerships in Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar and launched new partnerships in the Philippines and Cambodia. In the past year, 34 new value chain initiatives were launched across all five countries. Grow Asia now engages over 260 partners, an increase from 194 in 2015. The number of smallholder farmers reached rose fivefold to 471,200. Additionally, the Grow Asia Secretariat was established in Singapore to accelerate innovation and the sharing of best practice via a broad regional network. These achievements were reported in Grow Asia's first [Report on Progress](#), launched today at the 2016 Grow Asia Forum.

*"Agriculture is a priority sector for Cambodia and its development will determine progress to prosperity. We are delighted that Grow Asia has supported us to launch the Cambodia Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture and is helping to convene partners to work with us in meeting farmer needs for access to markets, knowledge, technology and finance. We are committed to playing our part in making this partnership a success,"* noted **Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**, who will be participating in the World Economic Forum on ASEAN in Kuala Lumpur taking place on 1 June 2016.

*"Grow Asia's ability to bring together various stakeholders in the agriculture ecosystem is commendable. And the result is proven by its many achievements in countries that it has a footprint. Farmers' income is increased, yields are boosted and at the same time environmental sustainability is ensured. My deepest congratulations to Grow Asia,"* said **Malaysian Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, Ahmad Shabery Bin Cheek**, during the Opening Plenary.



*“Our progress to date demonstrates the effectiveness of Grow Asia’s unique multistakeholder model in bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to collaborate and drive action on the ground to improve smallholder farming. The commitment of high-level leaders to collective action empowers farmers and instigates innovation and economic prosperity, making a significant contribution to national and regional food security,”* said **Kavita Prakash-Mani**, Executive Director, Grow Asia.

At today’s Grow Asia Forum 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, leaders discussed future plans to scale up Grow Asia’s five country partnerships. Priority areas for future development include the need to scale innovative financing approaches for smallholder farmers and piloting an open-source digital platform to link farmers with partners and service providers directly. **Sascha Israel**, Head of Crop Science Asia Pacific, Bayer, commented: *“With the agricultural industry facing tremendous changes amidst a tough market environment, industry players from both the public and private sectors must collaborate to explore and pilot innovative solutions, including mobile technology and inclusive financing options, to enable farmers to improve their yields and incomes by being connected to the value chain.”*

Remarking on the benefits of working with Grow Asia for companies, **Biswaranjan Sen**, Vice President, Global Procurement, Unilever, noted: *“We believe there is an urgent need for companies to collaborate with governments and civil society to co-create solutions to address the social and environmental challenges confronting the world today. Grow Asia provides a unique platform to collaborate in a pre-competitive framework to design inclusive solutions that enable sustainable economic growth for small holder farmers.”*

**Adi Pramudyo**, a young farmer from Indonesia who participated in the Grow Asia Forum, said: *“Grow Asia stands apart in its efforts to put the farmer at the heart of the solutions it seeks to find through partnerships. Greater empowerment, innovation and economic prosperity will attract the next generation of farmers and help sustain agriculture.”*

For more information on Grow Asia, see [www.growasia.org](http://www.growasia.org).

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**Media contacts:**

<b>Spurwing Communications</b>
Emma Thompson / Stephanie Tan / Oliver Haynes / Eoin Ee
<b>T:</b> +65 9171 2862
<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 and focus, bring on-board 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 261 partners across five Country Partnerships, reaching nearly half a million smallholder farmers.

The Grow Asia Secretariat 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. The Grow Asia Secretariat 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.