



## Grow Asia Business Council Virtual Meeting

Tuesday 5 December 2017

### Meeting Summary

The Grow Asia Business Council is comprised of global and regional business leaders to serve as an anchor in shaping the Grow Asia agenda, and to demonstrate and deliver the private sector's leadership and commitment to strengthening a sustainable and inclusive agriculture sector in ASEAN. Following the in-person meeting of the Grow Asia Business Council at the Grow Asia Forum in Phnom Penh earlier this year, the virtual meeting shared updates and defined next steps on the joint action agenda to be taken through this multi-stakeholder platform. Key points are summarized below, as an input to the Business Council's on-going discussions.

### *Key Points from the Discussion*

1. **Measuring and aligning success.** There is an appreciation amongst business partners that Grow Asia has progressed over the last twelve months. Performance numbers in terms of farmers, partners, working groups or value chain projects reflect growth and is supported by success stories from the Country Partnerships such as in influencing policy dialogue. There is recognition that monitoring and reporting the progress numbers are important in galvanizing action and inspiring stakeholders to further engage.
2. **Presentation of the twin-track strategy.**
  - a. Track one: building competence of Country Partnerships to enable better delivery, and become the go-to interlocutor with government (e.g. measure results, enable multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships, effective working groups, draw in a wider range of stakeholders, etc.). The Grow Asia Singapore based Secretariat is uniquely, experienced, positioned and staffed to lift the capacity, mode of operation and effectiveness of the five individual Country Partnerships.
  - b. Track two: enabling the delivery of results at scale through a limited number of focused activities, i.e. policy engagement, innovations in agricultural finance, digital solutions, creating connections and linkages between companies and other stakeholders. Such acceleration and amplification could only be carried out by a specialist group operating regionally – like Grow Asia.

There was validation from the business/private-sector perspective that the twin-track approach makes sense as being practical, strategic, and well aligned with stakeholders' definitions of success.

3. **Importance of value addition.** The proliferation of new agricultural partnerships and alliances raises a question whether there is a gap that is not being addressed. Members agreed that a fragmented space is not ideal and would like to see Grow Asia "go deep" and demonstrate value addition and relevance
4. **Cross-learning across crops and industries.** Members of the business council expressed an appreciation for Grow Asia's role in "connecting the dots" across crops and industries, as well as its ability to facilitate partnership. They are interested in bridging models that work with other commodities, and for greater participation from players in other industries. Arenas of competition vis-à-vis arenas of collaboration could be better defined to draw in more stakeholders. Risk-



sharing is also identified as an opportunity for individual organizations to bring their competence and support in making projects work. The Business Council saw Grow Asia as having an important role in facilitating these conversations.

5. **Scaling up** is an area that needs to be tackled. There have been encouraging developments particularly from the most mature Country Partnerships of Indonesia and Vietnam (e.g. Indonesia Palm Oil, Vietnam Coffee). Partners recognize Grow Asia's role in catalysing new value chains (e.g. the start of a regional trade in Palm/Coconut Sugar), and would now like to see greater emphasis on taking projects from pilots to delivering a larger scale. There is recognition, however, that things take time: Grow Asia has been operating for 2.5 years now while most value chain projects take 5 years or longer to start delivering results at scale. What is encouraging is that there is a pipeline of projects and a continuing build-up in collective knowledge and experience amongst stakeholders, which is expected to continue to deliver a stream of increasingly positive results in the years ahead.

### ***Grow Asia's Response***

1. **Measuring and aligning success.** Grow Asia will continue to work on improving the robustness of the monitoring and evaluation and management information results with the aim of using this data to (i) better manage the network, and (ii) monitor and report its performance. Grow Asia has commissioned a study to create a deeper understanding of the capacity, effectiveness and success factors of the individual Working Groups. Currently, there is significant variation in their measured capacity and effectiveness. The work will codify emerging good practices and the lessons will be embedded into 2018's trainings at the Practitioners' Workshops and Secretariat Workshop. Next year, Grow Asia will be putting greater emphasis on 'partnership facilitation' in response to the points made by both the Business Council and Steering Committee on the importance of Grow Asia in creating new connections and helping "join the dots".
2. **Presentation of the twin-track strategy.** Grow Asia is grateful for the endorsement from the GABC for the proposed twin-track strategy going forward. This responds to stakeholders wanting effective Country Secretariats to provide an ongoing platform for the delivery of pre-competitive solutions, both at the individual value chain level and at a sectoral level. With most of the existing Country Secretariats at an early stage in their development, Track 1 aims to improve their operation, lift their capacity, and enable them to become the primary interlocutor with Government and Donors on the issues of modernizing food supply and in linking smaller scale farmers into strong, sustainable supply chains. Meanwhile, Track 2 focuses on important functions that are best undertaken at a regional level to reach scale, which are only possible through a regional Secretariat.
3. **Importance of value addition.** The twin-track strategy has been developed to help the Grow Asia network go beyond the "launch" phase to a stage where the focus is on result delivery. The Secretariat is shifting its emphasis to cross cutting roles (e.g. knowledge creation, regional learning alliances, interaction with ASEAN, and regional and global issues), and leveraging the increased in-house expertise in agriculture, project design and delivery. The program aims to build on Grow Asia's comparative advantages: (i) our experience of creating and taking country partnerships to a higher level of operation and functionality; (ii) introducing innovative solutions and global good practices, for example in digital technologies, and agricultural finance; and (iii) being able to understand, distil and disseminate successes across the region so as to amplify and accelerate the positive impact of the Grow Asia network's emerging good practices.



4. **Cross-learning across crops and industries.** Stakeholder surveys have shown a high level of satisfaction for Grow Asia's learning agenda. Much of these learnings are new and derived from the lessons from the field (i.e. the implicit knowledge that is uniquely based on experience) as well as explicit knowledge (i.e. the factual knowledge generated by studies). These lessons are disseminated at the annual Practitioners' Workshop, included in the trainings of Secretariat staff, via hard- and soft-copy reports, as well as at the Grow Asia Forum and other events. The Grow Asia Learning Alliance (GALA) was launched in May 2017 with the appointment of a Learning Alliance Manager. Looking ahead, the number of case studies will be increased, and generic lessons distilled. New methods of communication will be used including regional webinars, communities of practice, visual mediums, and personal stories. The Practitioners' Workshop will evolve to 5 in-country workshops in 2018 to better meet the Country Partnerships' needs and to increase the number of participants. An important point made by the GABC was the opportunities for the different agricultural sectors to learn from one another; this will partly be covered through the existing learning program. The Grow Asia team will consider how cross learnings and networking can be improved, and how the number and effectiveness of cross regional connections can be increased.
  
5. **Scaling up.** An important lesson from Grow Asia's analysis is that the target 10 million smallholder beneficiaries cannot be achieved through individual value chain projects alone. The stretch target figure has challenged the Grow Asia team to think creatively as to what are the interventions which offer the greatest possibility of instigating behavioural change at scale. Consequently, Grow Asia has given much greater attention to the alternative routes to reaching larger numbers of smaller scale producers via Track 2. These have included: (i) the pathways through which the initial value chain project successes can reach a greater number of farmers, (ii) working to develop the use of digital tools, and (iii) improving the access to finance, and (iv) the emerging value of policy dialogue.

### Meeting Participants

- Franky Oesman Widjaja, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sinar Mas Agribusiness & Food, Indonesia
- Dharnesh Gordhon, President Director, Nestlé Indonesia
- Khong Mun Pew, Head, Public and Government Affairs Region Asia Pacific, Bayer, Singapore
- Shweta Shukla, Sustainable Business and Communications Director, Unilever, Singapore
- Felicia Tang, Deputy Head, External Affairs, RGE, Singapore
- Yeo How, President, Apical Group, RGE, Singapore
- Devi Kusumaningtyas, ASEAN Government Affairs Lead, DowDuPont, Indonesia
- Zhang Yuan, Zonoco Group, China
- Joice Budisusanto, Director, International Corporate Affairs, Sinar Mas, Indonesia
- Harry Hanawi, Director, Corporate Affairs, Sinar Mas, Indonesia
- Wisman Djaja, Director, Sustainable Agriculture Development & Procurement, Nestlé Indonesia
- Clement Jaloux, Supply Manager, Unilever, Indonesia
- Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, Grow Asia, Singapore
- Tania Strauss, Head, New Vision for Agriculture Initiative, World Economic Forum, USA