



Highlights from Grow Asia Governance Councils Meeting Tuesday 8 February 2022 | 14:00-16:00 (UTC+08:00) | Zoom

Grow Asia's Governance Councils, comprising the Steering Committee, the Business Council, and the Civil Society Council, are invaluable in identifying priority areas to help Grow Asia meet its ambition of building more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems in Southeast Asia. The virtual meeting brought together over 50 senior leaders and decision makers from governments, global and regional private sector, civil society organizations, farmer groups, research institutions, development agencies and other key stakeholders and guests.

The meeting provided an update of Grow Asia's progress and presented Grow Asia's refreshed strategy for 2022-2025 based on a series of stakeholder consultations and strategy review workshops. Key points are summarized below, as an input to the Governance Councils' on-going discussions.

Grow Asia Program Overview 2015-2021

- Grow Asia was established by the World Economic Forum and ASEAN in response to the need for collaborative, market-based action by multi-stakeholders to transform the agri-food sector towards one that is more inclusive, resilient and sustainable.
- With Australia's DFAT and Canada as founding donors, Grow Asia has raised over US\$20 million since 2015, of which more than US\$3 million or 17% was awarded in 2021 from UK's FCDO, Canada's IDRC, Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund and in-principle approval from Korea. Grow Asia is immensely grateful for DFAT's long-standing support, whose contributions made up 59% of Grow Asia's grant receipts in the last 3 years.
- Private sector contributions remain small (3%) and regional programs are relatively underfunded e.g., Gender and Digital, program areas which are also gaining interest and momentum from both public and private sector partners. This represents an opportunity to explore how to more effectively blend private sector finance with public sector and donor funds to leverage impact.
- The Grow Asia network continues to see increases in the number of staff; partners in the network; sectoral and value chain interventions being supported in the countries; and the number of farmers being reached. The pandemic has changed the way Grow Asia runs meetings, trainings, and learning events, and the increased acceptance of webinars, virtual and hybrid events have quadrupled the number of people attending the events.
- More than 2 million smallholders are being reached through the various value chain projects and interventions being implemented, trainings conducted, digital technologies and solutions being developed by partners in the network.

- An independent analysis of case studies covering multistakeholder collaborations within Working Groups estimated an aggregated increase in net farm incomes of at least US\$81 million, or about US\$325 per farmer across 250,000 farmers. These compelling results demonstrate the potential that can be achieved through market-oriented multistakeholder collaboration via the Grow Asia network.

Consultation on Strategic Development

- Since September, Grow Asia has started to design a refreshed strategic direction that builds on the last seven years, while responding to the evolving needs of partners, and to the ongoing sustainability priorities arising from the UN Food Systems Summit, COP26, and from governments and businesses in the region.
- Partners believe in the value of Grow Asia as a network but typically see only a subset of that network. Thus, a consolidated strategy and a clear business plan is needed that leverages Grow Asia's strengths, mobilizes investment, and strengthens delivery pathways, especially in the harder to reach rural economies in Southeast Asia.
- Council members recognize Grow Asia's unique multi-stakeholder platform to provide farmers with tools and innovations, and believe that Grow Asia enables them to reach more farmers. Private sector council members want to make these technologies accessible and affordable to smallholders in a way that adds value to their commercial business model while contributing to wider socio-economic development in the region, including gender equality and inclusion. To this end, they see value in Grow Asia's networking platform that allows them to collaborate with other businesses, governments, and civil society partners, and to establish public-private partnerships.
- Grow Asia's updated purpose statement reflects a wider focus on food system transformation and the Network's unique role in brokering strategic outcomes: *"Grow Asia is a multi-stakeholder platform that builds regional and country partnerships to broker market-driven solutions for more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems in Southeast Asia"*
- Three interlinked mechanisms will be strengthened: First, at the Working Group level, by ensuring that the right mix of partners are engaging in direct interventions along a commercial value chain or within a commodity sector, with the tools they need to transfer learning into action and reach the last mile. Second, at the Country Partnerships level, which convene these working groups as well as provide a national platform for learning and best practice and for engaging with governments. Third, at the secretariat in Singapore, which acts as a trusted regional convenor and coordinating body for mobilizing both the funding and the regional leadership critical for ensuring efficiencies of scale and avoiding duplication.
- An 8-Step framework summarizes how Grow Asia works as a platform to build catalytic partnerships and deliver solutions: both vertically, by mobilizing partners along a specific commercial value chain or thematic area, and horizontally through the pre-competitive facilitation of knowledge sharing, training, and policy dialogue.

- Grow Asia has consolidated its regional programs around four new Flagships. The Flagships are designed to channel strategic investment and country level interventions into measurable outcomes that are critical to food system transformation in Southeast Asia: (i) the improvement in inclusive value chains, (ii) scale up of climate smart solutions; and (iii) the assurance of food safety and food security.
- Partners queried whether the food safety and security goals would entail a new focus on health and nutrition. The Secretariat clarified that Grow Asia’s programs will be sensitive to the region’s ongoing needs to strengthen health and nutrition outcomes, but that other organisations are better placed to lead in this area. In the context of food safety, Grow Asia will focus on removing barriers and delivering solutions with the goal of accelerating smallholders’ access to markets, especially for SMEs in countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.
- Council members commented that the revised strategic direction makes sense as the next phase of Grow Asia’s evolution and agreed that designing and measuring the outcomes will be key in evaluating success.

Flagships

- The four Flagships build upon Grow Asia’s previous regional and country programs, and reflect four areas of opportunity that will deliver the greatest impact for farmers in Southeast Asia. In general, all four Flagships resonated well with the council members present.
- The ***Agri-food Innovation*** flagship is an extension of Grow Asia’s Digital Platform and will focus on driving adoption of climate smart solutions and farmer-centric digital technologies. In this regard, “innovations” for smallholders does not necessarily mean high-tech as long as it is new for the person or the community.
- ***Women’s economic empowerment*** builds on successful pilots such as THRIVE, the GrowHer initiative and the new investment provided by the Canada’s IDRC to scale up the integration of gender-sensitive approaches.
- The ***Responsible Agricultural Investing*** flagship builds on the ASEAN RAI program that has developed a suite of guidelines, and best practice toolkits for both businesses and governments.
- A new flagship on ***Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience*** strengthens regional pathways and removes barriers impeding knowledge transfer and climate adaptation at the farm gate.
- Council members reminded the Grow Asia team to avoid silos as the flagships build out. Indeed, while each Flagship focuses on one area of work, they are meant to be complementary; any program is not exclusive to one flagship. Civil society partners shared an example of linking responsible investment and investing in women and youth.
- Partners also reiterated the need to bring the work to the ground. This points to the importance of the Country Partnerships as delivery partners.

- Representatives from financial institutions expressed their support and requested clarity on how they can engage. Grow Asia acknowledged the importance of financial institutions and almost all of the Country Partnerships have some form of agri-finance working group. At the regional level, Grow Asia has been increasing its work with banks and investors in the ASEAN RAI program. Areas of interest identified include supporting the flow of (blended) financing into agri-food innovation as well as smallholder financing.

Governance Structure

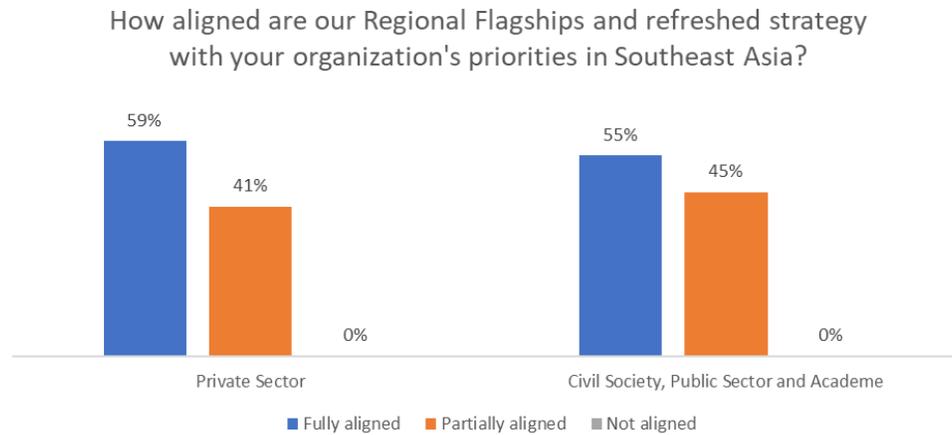
- Grow Asia sought the council's feedback on having a regional advisory council to support and guide the development of the four Flagships. Council members were mixed: Some recognize that the Flagships represent cross-cutting areas, hence would like to play a role in shaping the work or see value in identifying synergies/convergence across the various initiatives. However, some were wary of adding another layer of working group. Council members requested more details on the nature and responsibilities of a flagship council if this was developed (e.g. technical guidance vs. advisory).
- Country Partnerships can play a more visible leadership role. For example, CPSA in Cambodia is leading the delivery of IDRC's grant on women's economic empowerment. This is an opportunity for Grow Asia to diversify leadership of the regional councils by putting the country leadership on the chair seat in coordinating some of these mechanisms. In parallel, private sector representatives also expressed their plans to involve their local/country-level teams in such a council.
- Council members suggested having experts as part of the flagship council to provide a holistic view of the issues, guide the vision and help identify the right index and metrics based on the targets and timelines.
- Private sector representatives also recommended that the flagships and measurements be aligned to the SDGs. The Grow Asia team is determined not to re-invent goals, and intends to align its objectives with pre-existing SDG targets and indicators at the ASEAN-level, with a view to helping the ASEAN community deliver its goals in the region.
- Grow Asia has developed a theory of change that will guide the outputs and outcome level indicators being designed. Grow Asia will be defining the logframes of the different flagships in the coming weeks. In-house expertise and capacity will be strengthened to move beyond *output* metrics such as the number of farmers reached, number of meetings attended, etc. The focus will be on consolidating the outputs from all four flagships to deliver those at the outcome level. Measuring the *outcome* will be critical and adding an M&E expert within the team is part of near-term staffing plans.
- Civil society partners expressed their willingness to guide the development of some of the measurement, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems and logframes.
- Civil society partners suggested that the flagship councils can also serve as a multi-stakeholder body that would interface with the ASEAN Secretariat and influence the

development of ASEAN standards and guidelines. For example, CGIAR is also working with ASEAN to formulate a multi-year research-for-development program.

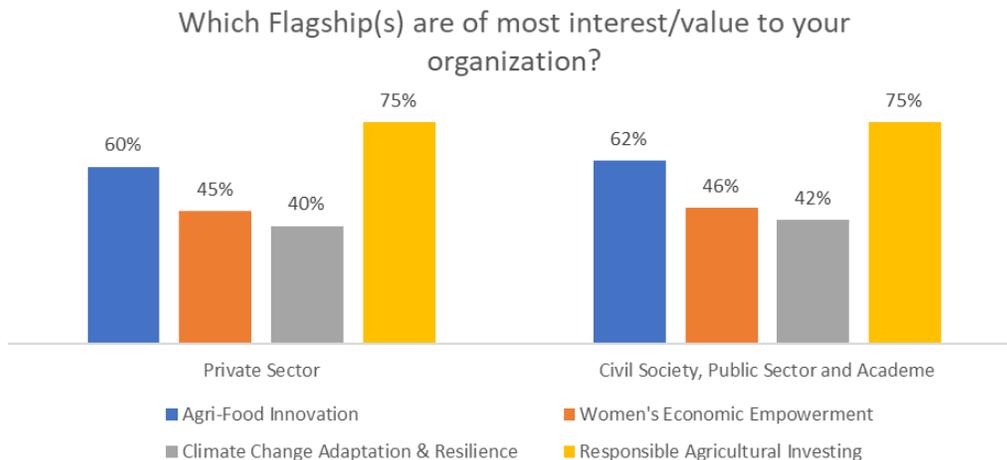
Moderated Sessions and Poll Highlights

A series of moderated sessions concluded with a suite of polls, that sought anonymous feedback from Council members on specific pre-circulated questions. The results of these polls are summarized below:

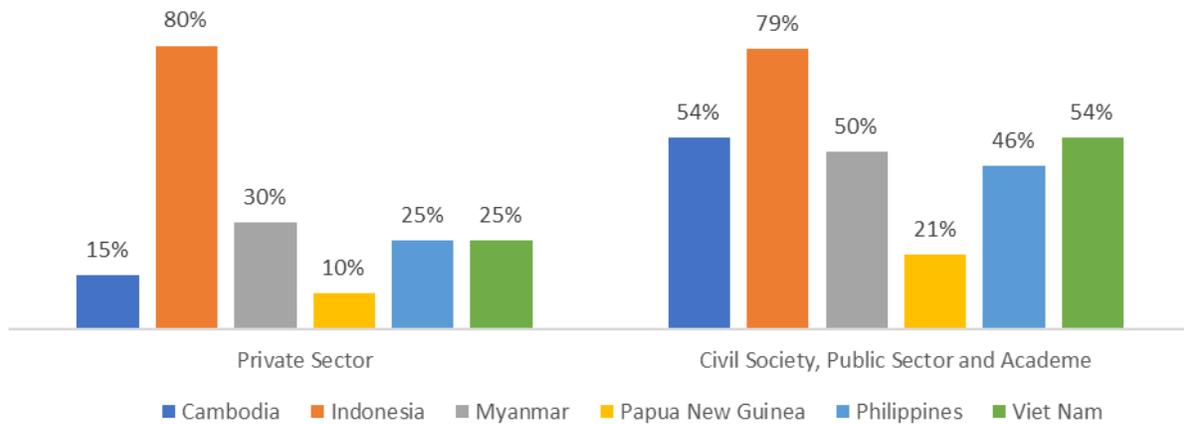
- Private sector partners indicated that Grow Asia’s Regional Flagships are well aligned with their priorities in the region. 59% responded “fully aligned” and 41% responded “partially aligned”. Civil society, public sector, academe and other partners responded that the Flagships were 55% “fully aligned” and 45% “partially aligned”.



- Based on interest, 75% of participants rated the Climate Change Adaptation & Resilience flagship as having the most interest/value to their organization. This was followed by, in order of interest, Agri-Food Innovation, Women’s Economic Empowerment, and Responsible Agricultural Investing. Indonesia was identified as being the country of greatest interest by the council members.

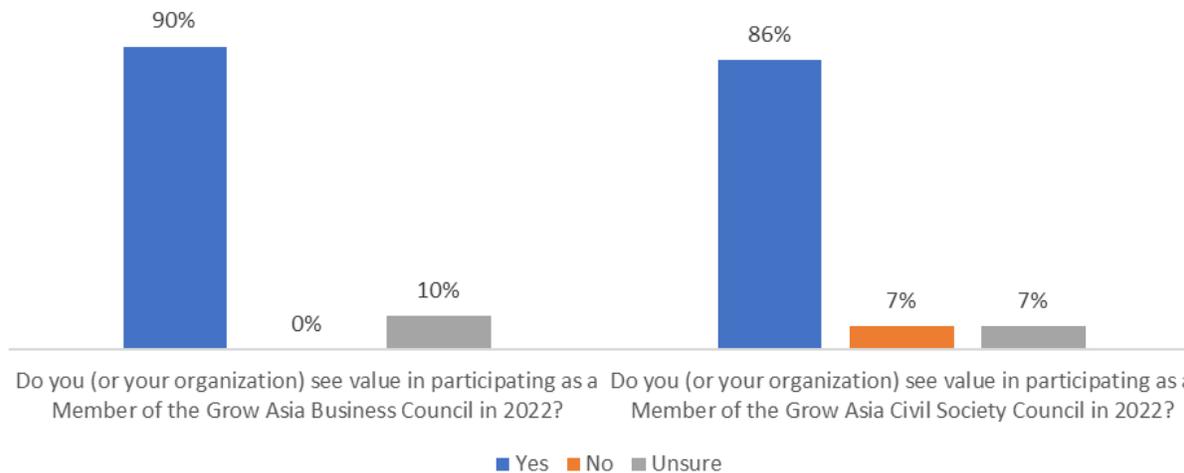


Which countries are of most interest/value to your organization?

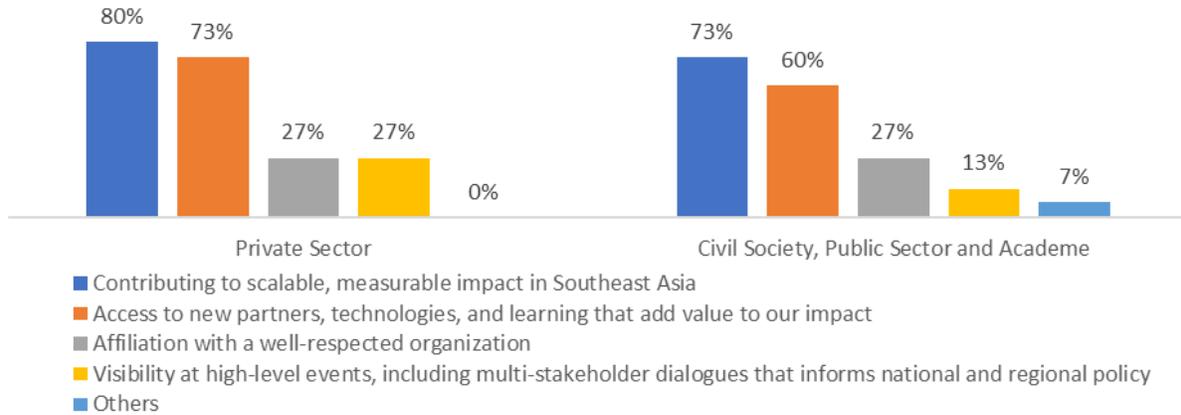


- More than 85% of participants see value in participating as a member of Grow Asia’s Business Council and Civil Society Councils. The top reason for their participation is to contribute to scalable and measurable impact in Southeast Asia. This was followed by access to new partners, technologies and learnings.

Value to Partners



What is your organization's primary reason(s) for participating in the Grow Asia Network?



Next steps

The Grow Asia team thanks all Council Members and Guests for their invaluable inputs during the meeting. Grow Asia will arrange follow-up conversations with individual partners based on their comments and flagship(s) of interest. Grow Asia will also develop more details on the governance structure and funding mechanisms for further feedback. Council members are invited to reach out directly to the Secretariat for collaboration opportunities arising from the discussions.

With Thanks to all Meeting Participants

Steering Committee

- Pham Quang Minh, ASEAN Secretariat
- Esther Penunia, Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development
- Fiona Lynn, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Chris Dale, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Cherie Tan, Bayer CropScience
- Mun Pew Khong, Bayer CropScience
- Charuk Kuntanarumitkul, Charoen Pokphand Produce
- Pote Jarupanich, Charoen Pokphand Produce
- Ade Soekadis, Mercy Corps Indonesia
- Hans Ramm, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- Sean de Cleene, World Economic Forum

Business Council

- Bremen Yong, Apical
- Colin D'Silva, Cargill
- Elizabeth Hernandez, Corteva
- Mary Ann Sayoc, East-West Seed
- Anita Neville, Golden Agri Resources
- Franky Welirang, Indofood
- Harjan Kuiper, Rabobank
- Felicia Tang, RGE
- Justin Wang, Royal DSM
- Florentine Oberman, Royal DSM
- Franky O. Widjaja, Sinar Mas Agribusiness and Food
- Joice Budisusanto, Sinar Mas Agribusiness and Food
- Harry Hanawi, Sinar Mas Agribusiness and Food
- Thomas Haller, Swiss Re
- Chris Argent, Syngenta
- Arif P. Rachmat, Triputra Group
- Sutedjo Halim, Triputra Agro Persada
- Sameer Tandon, UPL
- Devendra Gangwar, UPL

Civil Society Council

- Marlene Ramirez, Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia
- Mags Catindig, Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia
- Simon Badcock, Conservation International
- Huynh Tien Dung, IDH
- Fitriani Ardiansyah, IDH
- Zaw Win, Landesa

- Jacques-Chai Chomthongdi, Oxfam
- Peter Loach, SNV
- Prashant Rana, Swisscontact
- Nisha Onta, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & Natural Resource Management
- Denise Westerhout, WWF

Guests and Observers

- John Friedman, AgFunder/GROW Accelerator
- Alexander Jones, FAO
- Cedric Rimaud, First Degree Asia
- Anindya Chatterjee, International Development Research Centre
- Gillian Dowie, International Development Research Centre
- Jean Balie, International Rice Research Institute/CGIAR
- Adam Lyle, Padang & Co
- Sanjiv Louis, SAIL Ventures
- Emma Thompson, Spurwing Communications
- Nikki Kemp, Sustainable Development Investment Partnership
- Justin Baldauf, Sustainable Development Investment Partnership
- Hataikan Kamolsirisakul, Thai Wah
- Iris Krebber, UK Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Office
- Aine McGowan, UK Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Office
- Lesly Goh, World Bank

Grow Asia

- Bev Postma, Grow Asia
- Reginald Lee, Grow Asia
- Pranav Sethaputra, Grow Asia
- Erin Sweeney, Grow Asia
- Wei-Li Woo, Grow Asia
- Chrissa Borja, Grow Asia
- Ratha Chan, Cambodia Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture
- Ivan Simango, Grow PNG
- Ye Htut, Myanmar Agriculture Network
- Ino Syafaat, Partnership for Indonesia's Sustainable Agriculture
- Nguyen Chi Hieu, Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture in Viet Nam
- Amy Chua, Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture