

**Joint Meeting of the Grow Asia Governance Councils  
Minutes of the Meeting - 31 May 2023 11.00AM (UTC+7)**

**Time and Place**

The Joint Meeting of the Grow Asia Business Council and Partners' Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, 31 May 2023, at 11:13 hrs, at the Jamjuree Room, Banyan Tree Bangkok, 21/100 S Sathon Rd, Khwaeng Thung Maha Mek, Khet Sathon, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon 10120, Thailand

**Attendance**

Business Council Members	
Organization	Representative
Thai Wah (Co-chair)	Ho Ren Hua
Bayer Crop Science	Cherie Tan
Bayer Crop Science (observer)	S.P. Kamath
Beanstalk AgTech	Justin Ahmed
Cargill	Colin D'Silva
Cargill (observer)	Dipanwita Chakraborty
Corteva Agriscience	Gurpreet Bhathal
East-West Seed	Michel Devarrewaere
East-West Seed (observer)	Hoa Piyaka
GROW	Rebecca Sharpe
Mars Wrigley	Fay Fay Choo
PISAgro	Joice Budisusanto
Syngenta	Chris Argent
Thai Wah (observer)	Hataikan Kamolsirisakul
Trendlines Agrifood Innovation Centre	Keith Loo
World Economic Forum / Food Action Alliance	Adam Gerstenmier

Apologies	
Organization	Representative
CP Produce	Sumeth Pinyosnit
Deloitte	Yvonne Zhang
Visa	Tareq Muhmood

Guests	
Asian Trade Centre	Deborah Elms
Bain & Company	Aadarsh Baijal
Bain & Company	Prateik Pothuneedi
Better than Cash Alliance – UNCDF	Isvary Sivalingam
Jiva	Ramanarayanan Mahadevan
Olam	Johahn Bhurrit
Terrascope	Jason Gregory

Partners' Advisory Council Members	
Organization	Representative
AsiaDHRRA (Co-chair)	Marlene Ramirez
CGIAR	Benedict Pamatmat
CGIAR (observer)	Peter Wamicwe
GIZ	Pouchamarn Wongsanga
IDH	Hyunh Tien Dung
IFAD	Liliana Miro Quesada
MARD	Pham Hong Hanh

Apologies	
Organization	Representative
ASEAN Secretariat	Satvinder Singh
Australia DFAT	Fiona Lynn
FCDO UK	Pete Howson
IDRC	Lacina Diarra
IFC	Marta Bogdanic
Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund	Naoki Minamiguchi
Mercy Corps	Ade Soekadis

NTU	William Chen
Oxfam	Jacques-Chai Chomthongdi
Save the Children	Mei-Ing Cheok
Swisscontact	Ross Jaax

SNV	Rik Overmars
SDC	Mary Laure Crettaz
WOCAN	Nisha Onta
WWF	Kristina Anguelova

Secretariat Staff	
Beverley Postma	Grow Asia
Erin Sweeney	Grow Asia
Reginald Lee	Grow Asia
Chrissa Borja	Grow Asia
Ken Maharani	Grow Asia
Misha Rabat	Grow Asia
Fanny Perdu	Grow Asia

Secretariat Staff (cont.)	
Paul Voutier	Grow Asia
Amy Chua	PPSA Philippines
Jade Herrera	PPSA Philippines
Insan Syafaat	PISAgro Indonesia
Boreth Sun	CPSA Cambodia
Nguyen Cam Thuy	PSAV Viet Nam
John Simango	Grow PNG

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Ho Ren Hua, CEO, Thai Wah – representing the Grow Asia Business Council; and Ms Marlene Ramirez, Secretary General, AsiaDHRRA – representing the Grow Asia Partners’ Advisory Council.

#### 1. Call to Order and Competition Law Statement

The Co-Chairs opened the meeting, introduced themselves and welcomed all members, and declared a quorum was present.

The Co-Chairs reminded all participants of Grow Asia’s Anti-trust policy and read aloud the Competition Law Statement:

*“All meetings of the Grow Asia Business Council, including this one, shall be conducted in accordance with the relevant competition and antitrust laws. Members shall not enter any discussion, activity or conduct that may infringe any applicable law.”*

#### 2. Approval of agenda

The agenda was duly approved with no further amendment. Ms Ramirez recommended that the Secretariat work with the Co-Chairs to identify specific actions arising from the key discussions. This was duly noted as a valuable suggestion.

#### 3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

A motion to approve the Minutes of the last meeting of the Grow Asia Partners’ Advisory Council held on 8 February 2023 was proposed by Save the Children, seconded by Beanstalk, and carried by a show of hands by all members present

A motion to approve the Minutes of the last meeting of the Grow Asia Business Council, also held on Wednesday, 8 February 2023 was proposed by East-West Seed, seconded by Trendlines, and carried by a show of hands by all members present.

#### 4. Executive Director’s Report

Grow Asia’s Executive Director, Beverley Postma was invited to provide an overview of Grow Asia’s progress since the last meeting.

- **Membership and Governance**

Members received an update on the status of Membership of Grow Asia’s Councils, which according to Grow Asia’s [Constitution](#), is capped at 25 entities per Council. Grow Asia has received several

requests to join its two Advisory Councils, and members were urged to advise the Grow Asia Secretariat of organizations that might still wish to fill the remaining seats.

**ACTION:** Members will make recommendations and introductions to entities who may bring value to the Councils.

**ACTION:** The Secretariat will follow up with the Co-Chairs of the Partners' Advisory Council to explore how to engage more Farmers' Associations in the Council.

- **Operations and Fundraising**

The most notable highlight from last year's Grow Asia Forum was the unveiling of Grow Asia's four public-private impact funds. Grow Asia has received positive responses to these [public-private funds](#) for technical assistance and is grateful to donors and partners who have already contributed to these blended finance mechanisms. Grow Asia has successfully launched GrowHer and GrowRight, and is preparing to launch GrowVentures with support from Korea and IFAD. GrowBeyond has generated significant interest from partners and will kick off with a Climate Finance sprint in collaboration with Bain, supported by the Stockholm Environment Institute.

As an Entity Associated with ASEAN, Grow Asia has been invited to join the ASEAN Business Advisory Council's Working Group for Food Security, led by the Indonesia Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Grow Asia also participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> Forum of Entities, including a roundtable on "Charting a Sustainable Future for ASEAN."

Grow Asia has been formally appointed as one of four regional delivery hubs of the World Economic Forum's [Food Action Alliance \(FAA\)](#). This recognition paves the way for Grow Asia to scale its partnership programs—from global commitments to regional policymaking, into country-level action and South-South impact. An Inter-Regional Ministerial Roundtable was co-hosted by Grow Asia and the FAA on 25 April 2023, bringing together more than 26 countries who share a common interest in food system transformation. Grow Asia was honored to lead a delegation of ministers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America at a meeting with the Prime Minister of Viet Nam, H.E. Pham Minh Chinh.

## 5. World Economic Forum updates – Global Food Systems Priorities

The Councils received an update from Adam Gerstenmier, Executive Director of the Food Action Alliance (FAA):

With a new three-year strategy for 2023-2025, the FAA looks to accelerate collaborative, on-the-ground action and measurable impact at country and regional level in alignment with and contribution to the UNFSS 2030 Agenda. By 2025, midpoint of the Decade of Action, the FAA seeks to deliver on the following outcomes: 15-20 leading countries demonstrating measurable progress on multi-faceted outcomes towards a food systems transition; 100+ partner-driven flagship initiatives exploring the frontiers of food systems transformation; smarter and increased investment totaling more than US\$1 billion; and a growing movement for food systems transformation.

With 24 flagships and several emerging focus countries, the FAA will strengthen its portfolio with flagships that demonstrate alignment to its flagship criteria, thematic entry points, and leading countries' food systems priorities. Grow Asia has been working with partners in the FAA to scale up mutual programs and support ASEAN governments in the delivery of their national pathways that were initiated at the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. In Viet Nam for example, partner-led flagship initiatives include the PSAV's Rice PPP Task Force, and the Viet Nam Landscapes Initiative in Central Highlands. FAA's portfolio of flagships highlights the role of financial incentives and the need for PPP country coordination

platforms. FAA looks to adopt a similar approach across ASEAN in partnership with Grow Asia chapters such as PISAgr in Indonesia.

Major food system events to leverage in 2023 include the UN Food Systems Summit Stock Take (Rome, July); Grow Asia Investment Forum (Singapore, September); UN General Assembly and SDG Summit (New York, September), and COP28 (Dubai, November). FAA will play a global leadership role in the food systems pillar work for COP28, including integrating Food targets in NDCs and NAPs, with a group of high ambition countries leading the way by developing or enhancing National Food System Transformation Plans.

**ACTION:** Grow Asia will continue to support the delivery of FAA Regional Flagships in Southeast Asia and will seek additional project suggestions from Council members in the run up to the UNFSS Stock Take and COP28

## 6. Update on Grow Asia Flagships and Impact Funds

The following are key highlights from each of the four regional Flagships.

### **GrowRight – Responsible Investing**

Grow Asia launched the [ASEAN Academy on Responsible Investing](#) on 20 April with funding from the Government of Japan and Cargill. The program aims to equip professionals with the skills to design and implement more responsible and sustainable investments. The course is hosted by the Singapore Agri-Food Innovation Lab (SAIL) at the Nanyang Business School – a collaboration between NTU Singapore and Enterprise Singapore. The first 43 professional learners graduated from the Academy on 29 May 2023. Grow Asia plans to announce Cohort 2 by 2024. Grow Asia has produced [10 case studies](#) to drive agribusiness adoption of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture & Forestry.

In Cambodia, with support from Heineken, CPSA has delivered training to five agricultural cooperatives in Kampong Chhnang and Kampong Speu, training a total of 472 farmers (63% women farmers) to date. Grow Asia also joined a Land Governance workshop hosted by MRLG with 100+ partners in the Mekong Region to discuss strategic direction to secure smallholder farmers' tenure rights. Grow Asia addressed the financing issues facing the food and agriculture sector and shared examples of how agribusinesses are driving more responsible investment practices in Southeast Asia.

### **GrowHer – Women's Economic Empowerment**

The ongoing ASEAN Green Recovery through Equity and Empowerment (AGREE) Project, supported by Grow Asia's longstanding relationship with the government of Canada through IDRC, delivered gender and climate studies in vegetables, rice, and corn value chains in Cambodia, Viet Nam, and the Philippines. The Project will be building use cases of good practice in climate-smart gender-inclusive value chains, and testing solutions in the field in H2.

The Train Her to promote Resilient, Inclusive Value chains and Economic empowerment (THRIVE) Project continues to develop the business case for an inclusive maize value chain in partnership with Corteva Indonesia and PISAgr, building on success from the 2021 – 2022 pilot. THRIVE will be launching with Corteva Philippines and PPSA in H2.

**GrowHer:Kakao** was the winner of GIZ's Feminist and Fair Global Competition for sustainable and inclusive agricultural supply chains. The Project will deliver gender-responsive, climate-smart training and access to market to 4,000 women farmers and SMEs in South Sulawesi. GrowHer:Kakao will foster resilience to climate change while building a business case for sustainable, inclusive cacao production. Grow Asia thanks GIZ and Mars for their contributions, and to the partnership with Save the Children.

### **GrowVentures – Agri-Food Innovation**

Grow Asia held a Ministerial Roundtable for Ministers and Officials from 26 Countries across ASEAN, Africa and Latin-America, co-hosted by Viet Nam’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in collaboration with the FAA, AGRA and IICA. The Roundtable featured high-level discussions on food system transformation through digitalization and responsible investing, and national progress on the global food system agenda in the run-up to COP28. Read the [Joint-Statement by Grow Asia, FAA, AGRA, IICA](#).

The Smallholder Economic Empowerment through Digital Solutions (SEEDS) Project is kicking off in Viet Nam with support from the Korean government, in partnership with IFAD. The Project will focus on advancing digitalization and agri-food innovation to support the establishment of ASEAN’s first Food Innovation Hub and World Economic Forum. From 2024, the Project will expand to the Philippines and Cambodia. Next steps include Innovation Sprints and Pilots to solve challenges in Rice and Coffee/Pepper Value Chains.

### **GrowBeyond – Climate Change Resilience and Adaption**

On 29 May, Grow Asia and Bain & Co convened an investor roundtable to seek insights on our proposed public-private partnership (PPP) inclusive climate finance model for agri-MSMEs. The sprint focused on high-impact value chains with a significant contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increased revenue for MSMEs, and where there is capacity to scale. Grow Asia is working to launch the GrowBeyond Impact Fund at the Grow Asia Investment Forum.

## **7. Outcomes from the “Mind the Gap” Roundtable**

The Climate Finance Sprint held on Monday 29 May identified four main barriers that are hindering efforts to unlock financing for agriculture MSMEs: (i) Challenging commercial attractiveness of agri financing (especially for long-term credit); (ii) Siloed stakeholder efforts that make broad-based collaboration challenging; (iii) Lack of adequate enablers (e.g., land titles, traceability, credit evaluation); and (iv) Lack of scalable financing models that integrate into food system value chains. Bain facilitated a discussion around a public-private blended financing model to drive food system transition. The PPP concept was illustrated using 2 prioritized value chains: palm oil in Indonesia and livestock in Viet Nam.

The Roundtable discussed value propositions for key stakeholders and revealed strong incentives for successful collaboration. In parallel, the team noted a few specific design principles to be kept in mind in preparation for a pilot: Bridge language gap and expectations across stakeholders; Supplement loans with risk management products; Clearly define roles within the partnership; Amplify farmer’s share of voice in ongoing discussions; Capitalize on off-takers’ unique position to drive sustainability (by creating necessary demand signals); Improve farmer “bankability” through targeted technical assistance; Deploy traceability & impact measurement tools; and Make farmer allied intermediaries part of solution and build their capabilities (e.g., improving farmer co-operative governance).

## **8. Country Priorities of the Grow Asia Network**

Two parallel breakout groups reviewed priority projects that can be scaled by Grow Asia to deliver the greatest return on investment for livelihoods and climate adaptation, identifying common criteria for success and the biggest barriers hampering the scale of these projects. The following are key highlights from the breakout groups:

**Indonesia & Papua New Guinea:** PISAgro shared their “closed loop system” which brings together stakeholders such as off-takers, input companies, farmers, and financial institutions in an integrated model through the value chain. The role of the off-taker is critical in the model, providing the necessary demand pull to bring in other actors who can provide seeds, fertilizers, training on good agricultural

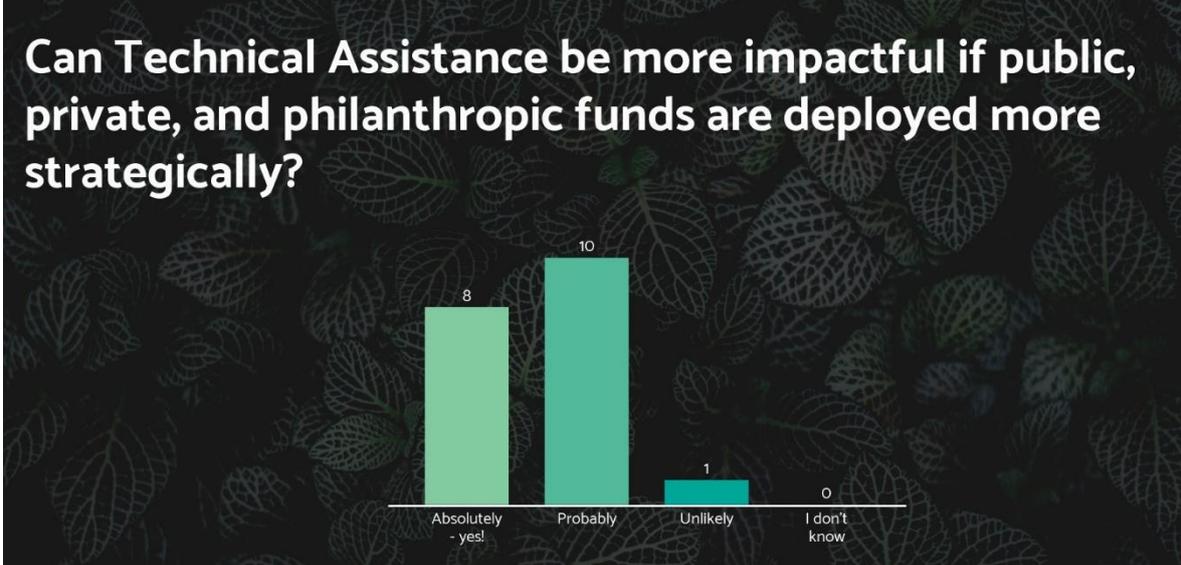
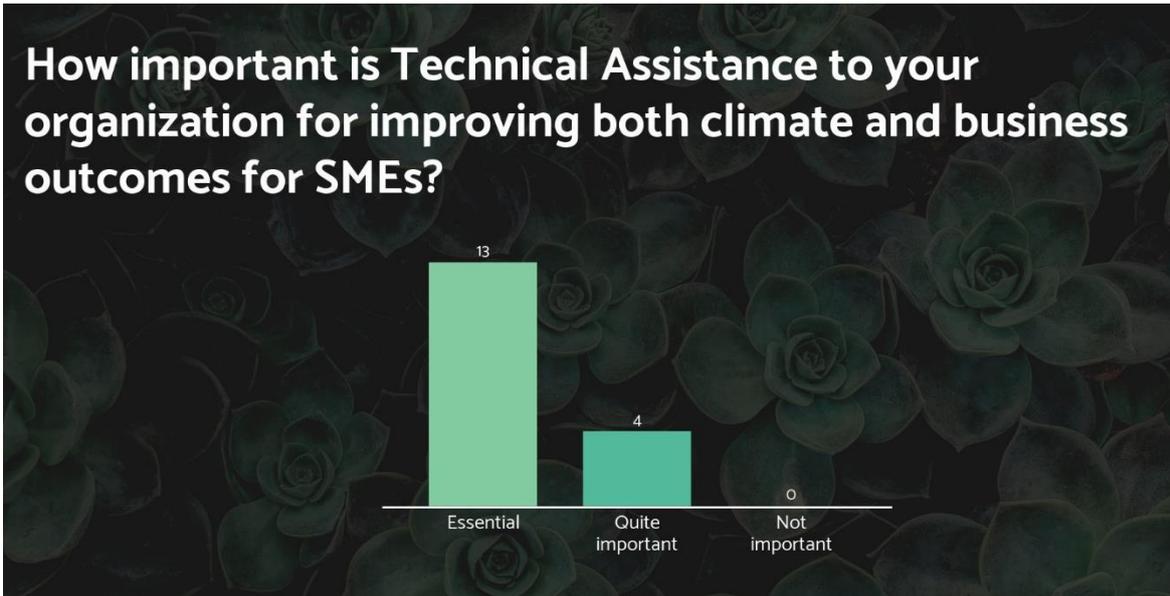
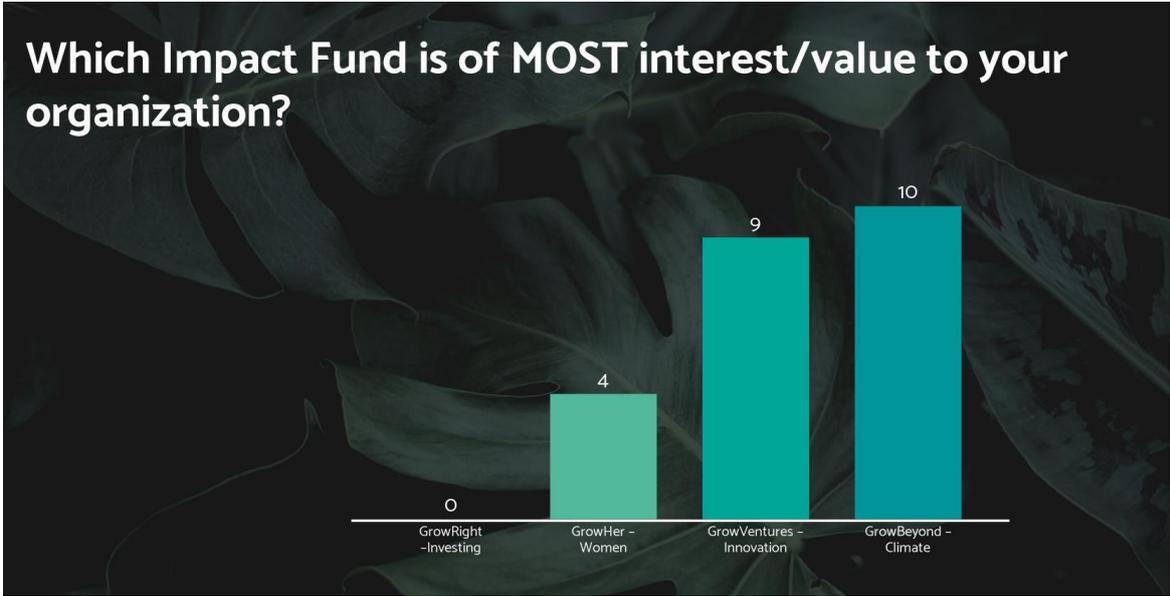
practices, and working capital/funding. Meanwhile, Grow PNG focused on unlocking land as over 97% of land in PNG is under customary ownership. A “[Land Access Guide](#)” has been developed to assist landowners and agribusinesses in forging and maintaining mutually beneficial arrangements in commercial agricultural development. Awareness training and capacity-building opportunities have been conducted by Grow PNG as follow-ups to the rollout of the Guide.

**Philippines, Cambodia & Viet Nam:** PPSA shared how they convened players from different sectors for knowledge exchange as well as network circles where farmers speak about their current situation and share ideas. For example, PPSA’s partner, Jollibee Foundation, has a farmer entrepreneurship program clustering farmers into 17 groups in 6 cities and delivered 9 million kilos of vegetables. PSAV highlighted the work of its Spices PPP Taskforce, which engaged with the Vietnam Pepper Association, domestic producers, IDH, and the European spices association. The project aims to help 25,000 farmers comply with EU market regulations and increase incomes by 50%. Finally, CPSA shared their Enterprise Agriculture Cooperative Incubation Program (EACIP) with the government to attract Cambodian youths into farming. The initiative was launched last year with 15 graduates to-date who have already worked with more than 12,000 agricultural cooperative members.

**9. Feedback Session and Recommendations**

The Secretariat polled Council Members with the following questions and results:

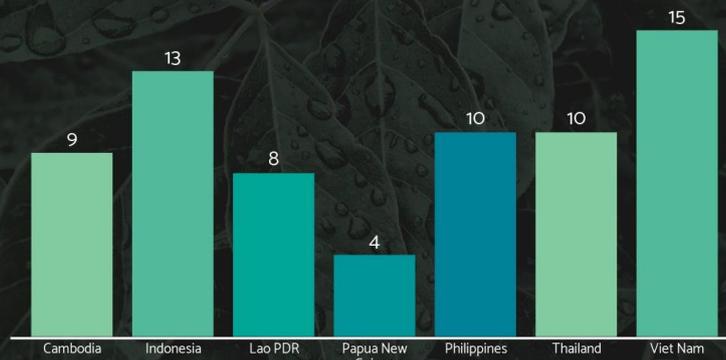




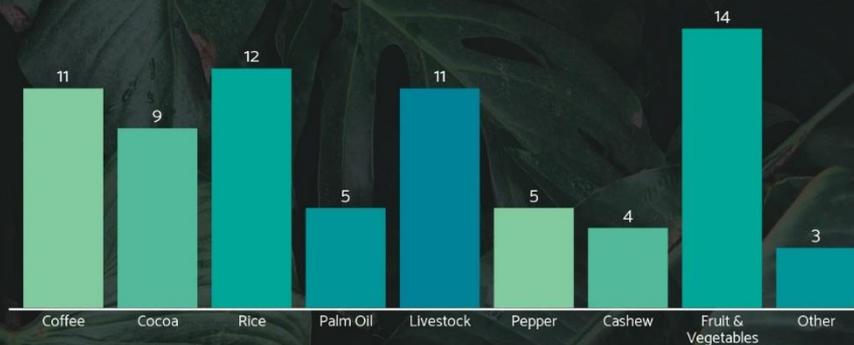
## When deploying Grow Asia's blended funds, which TA activities will yield greatest impact in Southeast Asia?



## Which countries are of interest to your organization?



## Which crops/commodities are of interest to your organization?



## **10. Navigating the Aid-Trade Nexus in the Indo-Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges**

Grow Asia Executive Director led a conversation with Dr Deborah Elms, Founder and Executive Director of the Asian Trade Centre.

The last decade has seen increasing global interest in the Indo-Pacific region, both as an opportunity for trade and investment and a destination for international development aid. Key multilateral agreements in the region include the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), RCEP (the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and CPTPP (the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership). This presents opportunities for businesses, governments, and non-profit organizations thanks to the potential influx of trade investment helping to accelerate development. However, it also comes with its challenges, including navigating an increasingly complex trading environment and engaging with donors' agendas for the region.

In recent years, several governments have also merged their standalone development departments into their foreign affairs departments – blending Aid budgets with Trade agendas. In addition, trade agreements such as the CPTPP include more diverse commitments, such as on environmental protection, labor standards, and cooperation on gender, that go beyond traditional trade matters. The increasing blurring of aid and trade agendas present opportunities for promoting sustainable food systems transformation by driving up standards. However, they bring additional complexity to negotiating and can risk the delivery of the agreement and the core aim of liberalizing trade.

## **11. Upcoming Events & Meetings**

The Grow Asia Investment Forum will take place on 12 September at the Shangri-la Rasa Sentosa, Singapore. The Secretariat is in discussion with potential sponsors for the event, and invites Members to reach out and inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

As in previous years, Grow Asia will hold the next meetings of the Councils on 11 September. Members were invited to consider whether to hold the next meeting as a joint meeting of the two Advisory Councils, or to have separate morning sessions for the individual Councils before converging in the afternoon. An informal poll by show of hands indicated the group's preference for another joint meeting of the two Advisory Councils.

## **12. Other Business**

Members shared their takeaways from the day's proceedings, with many expressing optimism for further opportunities for collaboration. Members acknowledged Grow Asia's role in facilitating public-private sector partnerships by helping stakeholders "speak a new language", serving as a bridge between research and field, and educating players about scaling considerations and reaching the last mile.

## **13. Close**

There being no other business, the Co-chairs thanked Members for their time and declared the meeting closed at 17:16 hrs.