



Grow Asia Steering Committee Virtual Meeting

Wednesday 6 December 2017

Meeting Summary

The Steering Committee acts as the main oversight body for the Grow Asia Secretariat and its diverse representation is invaluable in defining Grow Asia's plans and addressing differing views and approaches while identifying priority areas to help Grow Asia meet its ambitious targets. Following the in-person meeting of the Grow Asia Steering Committee 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 Steering Committee's on-going discussions.

Key Points from the Discussion

1. **Measuring and aligning success.** There is an appreciation within the Steering Committee that Grow Asia has progressed over the last twelve months. Performance numbers in terms of farmers reached, partners, working groups or value chain projects reflect growth and is supported by success stories from the Country Partnerships. Donors reflected that they are encouraged by the continued expression of interest in the Grow Asia Regional Secretariat from relevant stakeholders including private sector, ASEAN, Civil Society, and WEF, and that Grow Asia aligns with their policies and development objectives.
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.

Representatives from the private sector validated the twin-track approach as being practical, strategic, and well aligned with stakeholders' definitions of success. Donors also expressed that they are broadly in agreement.

3. **Securing Funding is a Priority.** Support from Australia and Canada will officially end by June and December 2018, respectively. A no-cost extension will be put in place. Currently, no official funding commitments for future activities of the Grow Asia Regional Secretariat has been secured from the current two donors. Nevertheless, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) indicated that Grow Asia was likely to be included in a five-year program of support to the New Vision for Agriculture, which includes Grow Africa. The Secretariat team was encouraged to map out other options, including private sector and private foundation support. Donor representatives expressed their enthusiasm for other donors to participate in the next round of funding.



4. **Importance of value addition.** There is a need to clearly articulate Grow Asia Regional Secretariat's value beyond the initial convening phase. There was a discussion on how the existence of the Grow Asia Regional Secretariat supports and empowers Country Partnerships and private sector partners to drive change. Being able to better communicate what the Regional Secretariat is doing and Grow Asia's value proposition to partners is important.
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). The Steering Committee is keen to see a maturation of Grow Asia's pipeline of projects in the second phase, as well as Grow Asia delivering at the global or regional level through cross-cutting themes in transforming the agricultural sector.

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 Steering Committee 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. **Securing Funding is a Priority.** In response to the existing donors' asks that (i) Grow Asia forges a closer partnership with ASEAN, (ii) seeks new donors, and (iii) demonstrates value-added and innovative approaches, we have (i) developed a joint program with the ASEAN Secretariat to facilitate a regional public-private consultation in 2018 to develop ASEAN Guidelines for Responsible Agricultural Investing, (ii) engaged with Swiss Development Corporation, who have committed to a cash and in-kind contribution of around US\$250,000 while also expressing interest in becoming a junior donor in the future, (iii) engaged with the Soros Foundation/Open Society, Brunei, GIZ and DFID, and we will be having future conversations with JICA and KOICA, and (iv) have leveraged the in-house expertise on innovative approaches and scaling solution such as digital solutions, agricultural finance, new learning mediums (e.g. regional webinars) and a more deliberative approach to stimulating policy dialogues. We will work with Steering Committee representatives in identifying further opportunities. In the meantime, with sensible cost control, the existing funding can continue to support Grow Asia's operations through to mid-2019. Grow Asia continues to have conversations with a number of



potential donors and has prepared a draft financial proposal, which is currently going through its second iteration.

4. **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.
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
- Ghislaine Weder, Head, Economics and International Relations, Nestlé SA
- Christine Pahlman, Assistant Director, Agriculture and Food Security Section, Private Sector, Development Finance and Agricultural Development Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia
- Tristan Armstrong, Private Sector, Development Finance and Agricultural Development Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia
- Michel Gagnon, Director of Food Security, Global Affairs Canada, Government of Canada
- Sarita Nayyar, Managing Director, World Economic Forum LLC, USA
- Pham Quang Minh, Assistant Director, Sectoral Development Directorate, Head of Food, Agriculture and Forestry Division, ASEAN Economic Community Department
- Jared Rowell, Regional Manager - South and East Asia, Mercy Corps, Thailand
- 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
- Grahame Dixie, Executive Director, Grow Asia, Singapore
- Tania Strauss, Head, New Vision for Agriculture Initiative, World Economic Forum, USA