



**Joint Meeting of the Grow Asia Governance Councils
Minutes of the Meeting - 29 May 2024 10.00 AM (GMT+7)**

Time and Place

The Joint Meeting of the Grow Asia Business Council and Partners’ Advisory Council was held on Monday, 29 May 2024, at 10:00 AM, at the Jamjuree Room of the Banyan Tree, Bangkok, 21/100 S Sathon Rd, Khwaeng Thung Maha Mek, Khet Sathon, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon 10120, Thailand.

The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Patsian Low, Vice President - Inclusive Impact & Sustainability - Asia Pacific, Visa, representing the Grow Asia Business Council; and Dr. Kanchana Wanichkorn, Director - Sectoral Development Directorate, ASEAN Secretariat, representing the Grow Asia Partners’ Advisory Council.

Attendance: 56 participants

Business Council Members	
Organization	Representative
Bain & Company	Aadarsh Baijal
Bain & Company	Jilyn Yeow
Bain & Company	David Loo
Bayer Crop Science	Paranee Adulyapichet
Bayer Crop Science	Mun Pew Khong
Beanstalk Agtech	Justin Ahmed
Cargill	Dr. Colin D'Silva
Olam Agri	Paul Nicholson
Olam Agri	Julie Greene
Partnership for Indonesia Sustainable Agriculture	Harry Hanawi
Partnership for Indonesia Sustainable Agriculture	Insan Syafaat
Syngenta	Emma Hernández Montero

Business Council Members	
Organization	Representative
Thai Wah	Ho Ren Hua
Thai Wah	Hataikan Kamolsirisakul
Visa	Patsian Low
Wavemaker Impact	Marie Cheong
World Economic Forum	Tania Strauss
Apologies	
Organization	Representative
Acre	Greg Brittian
East-West Seed	Mary Ann Sayoc
Khmer Enterprise	Vanmunin Chhieng
Mars	Fay Fay Choo
Singapore Economic Development Board	Jacqueline Poh

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Partners' Advisory Council Members	
Organization	Representative
ASEAN Secretariat	Dr. Kanchana Wanichkorn
Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development	Lany Rebagay
Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas	Cezar Belangel
GIZ	Napaporn Rattanamettha
IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative	Bui Duc Hao
International Development Research Centre	Ishita Sachdeva
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Liliana Miro Quesada
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Reehana Raza
Save the Children	Guillaume Rachou
Save the Children	Phinyada Atchatavivan
Viet Nam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Hanh Hong Pham

Partners' Advisory Council Members	
Apologies	
Organization	Representative
Agriterra	Le Anh Tuan
Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Fiona Lynn
International Finance Corporation	Marta Bogdanic
Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund Management Team	Naoki Minamiguchi
Mercy Corps	Ade Soekadis
Oxfam	Bernadette Victorio
Rainforest Alliance	Chandra Panjiwibowo
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Marylaure Crettaz
Swisscontact	Prashant Rana
Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management	Nisha Onta

Guests	
Agrig8	Vi Nguyen
Lighthouse Ag	Aaron Hutchinson
OCP Group	Vincent Sauton
Olam Food Ingredients	Janhavi Naidu
Rize	Siem Schreurs

Guests	
Terrascope	Felipe Daguila
Unilever	Ira Noviarti
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	Ignacio Blanco
University of Technology Sydney	Will Owen Scott-Kemmis
United States Agency of International Development	Suphasuk Pradubsuk

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Standard Chartered Bank	Natalie Marko
Temasek	Ralph Graichen

United States Agency of International Development	Ratchada Arpornsilp
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Secretariat Staff	
Beverley Postma	Grow Asia
Pranav Rastogi	Grow Asia
Rob Gardner	Grow Asia
Amy Chua	Grow Asia
Fanny Perdu	Grow Asia
Chrissa Borja	Grow Asia
Ken Maharani	Grow Asia

Secretariat Staff (cont.)	
Tripti Bhadauriya	Grow Asia
Norhidayah Omar	Grow Asia
Paul Voutier	Grow Asia
Angel Bautista	PPSA Philippines
Kimna Leav	CPSA Cambodia
Boreth Sun	CPSA Cambodia
Thuy Cam Nguyen	PSAV Vietnam

1. Call to Order

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 amendments.

3. Approval of minutes from previous meetings

- A motion to approve the [Minutes of the Business Council Meeting](#) held on 22nd of January 2024 was proposed by Cargill, seconded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) in Vietnam, and was approved by the all the members present.
- A motion to approve the [Minutes of the Partners’ Advisory Council Meeting](#) held on 29th of January 2024 was proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), seconded by the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRRRA), and was approved by all the members present.

4. Executive Director’s Report

Grow Asia’s Executive Director, Beverley Postma, presented an overview of developments and activities since the last meetings and shared updates on governance, membership, progress on the Impact Funds, and program priorities for the rest of year.

Governance and Membership

The Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) was welcomed as the newest member of the Partners’ Advisory Council.

Regional and Country Activities

- **Cambodia:** Grow Asia's country chapter in Cambodia, the Cambodia Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (CPSA), recently signed a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cambodia. The focus is on agricultural development, supporting SMEs, and encouraging agricultural cooperatives to adopt more sustainable practices.
- **Viet Nam:** Grow Asia has scaled up its support for the Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture in Vietnam (PSAV) Task Forces with ongoing activities for multiple value chains. A Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable was co-hosted with MARD and the World Bank to mark the operationalization of the 1 Million Hectare High Quality Low-Emissions Rice Project. Additionally, Grow Asia supported the launch of the Food Innovation Network in Viet Nam, which is part of the World Economic Forum's Food Innovation Hubs.
- **Philippines:** Grow Asia is partnering with its country chapter in the Philippines, the Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (PPSA) to co-lead the delivery of several multi-country, multi-year grant projects and continuously expand the network of local partners. PPSA successfully convened a Key Partners Meeting, with strong support from public and private sector partners.
- **Indonesia:** Grow Asia and Partnership for Indonesia Sustainable Agriculture (PISAgro) are leading the regional and national implementation of the GrowHer: Kakao program, supported by GIZ, Mars, and other local partners in Indonesia, which aims to empower and upskill 4,000 women in South Sulawesi.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Grow Asia and GrowPNG continue their partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) to build the capacities of farmers and facilitate the growth of the Markham and Ramu Valley corridor.

Impact Monitoring

- Grow Asia reported that, in partnership with its global network, the Network has reached 3.4M farmers (one-third of whom are women), provided more than 633,000 smallholders with access to technology and finance, and engaged 775 partners.
- Grow Asia is strengthening its monitoring and evaluation activities and has appointed a full time Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Manager to support the development of impact measurement tools and frameworks, shifting focus from outputs to outcomes.

5. Updates from the World Economic Forum: Food Action Alliance, First Movers' Coalition

The Councils received an update from Tania Strauss, Head of Food and Water of the World Economic Forum (WEF). WEF thanked Grow Asia for the role it is playing as a regional delivery partner. The Forum is advancing its efforts to incentivize technology, particularly green technology and low emissions rice. There are significant opportunities for further multi-stakeholder partnerships globally to drive innovations and transform food systems, alongside growing interest from the financial sector in agriculture and food. With blended finance mechanisms being tested, there is an increasing development of investible portfolio profiles and the creation of tailored approaches for each geography.

6. Progress Report on Grow Asia's Public-Private Impact Funds and Programs

Grow Asia's Impact funds complement other investment streams, by blending public and private funds to enable the delivery of scalable solutions, provision of technical assistance, access to finance, and promotion of successful inclusive business models. The following are key highlights from each of the four regional programs:

GrowHer: Women's Economic Empowerment

The GrowHer program has designed projects to strengthen the business case for women's economic empowerment within agri-food systems. These projects focus on scaling actions, practices, and enabling policies that accelerate diversity and inclusion across the sector.

- **ASEAN Green Recovery for Equity and Empowerment (AGREE):** Funded by the International Development Research Center (IDRC), the AGREE project is being implemented in the Philippines, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. This initiative focuses on enhancing women's skills, championing climate-smart practices, and improving access to markets.

Dr. Ishita Sachdeva, Senior Program Officer of IDRC, highlighted their ongoing commitment to invest in research for locally-based solutions, supporting ASEAN's COVID-19 recovery, and exploring green job opportunities for women. IDRC's GLOW Programme, which encompasses the AGREE project, aims to build local evidence to address the barriers women face and provide opportunities for the private sector to be involved in policy dialogues.

- **GrowHer: Kakao:** Funded by GIZ and delivered by a consortium including Grow Asia, Mars, Save the Children, and PISAgr, this initiative aims to empower 4,000 women farmers in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The focus is on providing capacity building activities and promoting financial literacy and gender equality.

The floor was opened for sharing from the Council members and guests.

- **Olam Food Ingredients** reported on their trade activities in cocoa, dairy, spices, and nuts, promoting gender inclusion and reducing human rights risks.
- **Standard Chartered Bank** shared their commitment to lending 1\$ billion to women SMEs and expressed interest in exploring partnership opportunities with GrowHer.
- **Save the Children** emphasized their advocacy efforts impacting children's development, the increasing competition for development funds, and expressed support for Grow Asia's convening efforts.
- The **ASEAN Secretariat** highlighted the growing interest in exploring social enterprise models and the continuous need for private sector support towards transforming farmers into enterprises.

GrowRight: Responsible Investing

Dr. Colin D'Silva of Cargill shared insights on the ASEAN Academy on Responsible Investing/ Supported by the ASEAN Secretariat, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), and Nanyang Technology University in Singapore (NTU), the ASEAN Academy has empowered its graduates to initiate the creation of guidelines for responsible investment practices within their respective organizations.

GrowVentures: Agri-Food Innovation

- The Smallholder Economic Empowerment through Digital Solutions (SEEDS) Project launched in October 2023. This multi-country initiative is funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs of the Government of Korea and is delivered by Grow Asia and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in partnership with AsiaDHRRA.

- GrowVentures promotes digital inclusion using a multi-stakeholder approach to expand both existing and new digital solutions in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Philippines. Reehana Raza, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific at IFAD, conveyed her satisfaction with partnering with Grow Asia for the SEEDS project and reaffirmed IFAD's commitment to supporting these initiatives to ensure the project's success.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), supported by PSAV, is rallying various stakeholders to operationalize the 1-Million Hectare Low Emissions Rice Program across 12 provinces in the Mekong River Delta. MARD emphasized the importance of raising awareness among farmers and the critical need for education and training.
- Beanstalk AgTech presented the Grow Asia Innovation Challenge, which focuses on harnessing digital inclusion through a demand-driven initiative. This challenge aims to encourage innovative solutions that address key agricultural issues by leveraging digital tools and technologies. Grow Asia Governance Council members are provided with advance opportunities to partner or submit solutions for the Grow Asia Innovation Challenge, hoping to facilitate learning from the Members and their existing deployed technologies.

GrowBeyond: Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation

Aadarsh Bajjal of Bain & Company detailed the design of GrowBeyond, a regional fund for catalytic capital aimed at setting up multiple closed-loop finance facilities for local value chains and markets, and facilitating public-private partnerships. The GrowBeyond Fund seeks to leverage \$1 billion to reach 200,000 MSMEs by 2030. It aims to deliver a 20-30% improvement in household incomes and a 10-30% reduction in carbon footprint per farm through regenerative agriculture, carbon sequestration and nature-based solution models. Grow Asia is building on the expertise of Bain & Company and its internal human resource to manage GrowBeyond and establish the two value chain pilots in Viet Nam and Indonesia.

7. Update from ASEAN Secretariat

The Councils received an update from Dr. Kanchana Wanichkorn, Director of Sectoral Development at the ASEAN Secretariat:

- The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) will be held in Malaysia from August 6-8. Additionally, the Ministerial Meeting will take place online from October 22-25 and will be chaired by Myanmar.
- Two key priorities under the Lao PDR Chairmanship were highlighted:
 - Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture: This includes the endorsed ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality, which identifies three sectors for pilot initiatives: food and agriculture, energy, and transport.
 - ASEAN Guideline on Reduction of Crop Burning: This guideline is linked to the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and focuses on advancing skills and knowledge, promoting research and development, and exploring new market opportunities.
- The ASEAN Secretariat is implementing several projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of nature-based solutions, exploring bioeconomy opportunities, and improving soil health. It is also running a project on crop insurance, which could be utilized for GrowBeyond to address gaps in value chains and identify necessary mechanisms
- A study on climate risk financing, funded by GIZ, will propose sustainability standards for agriculture and drive total value chain transformation. ASEC will continue to lead the policy agenda in this area.
- ASEAN is finalizing new plans for the next cycle, including a 2045 vision and a 10-year strategic plan, which will be launched next year under Malaysia's chairmanship.

The presentation from the ASEAN Secretariat invited insights from the Council Members. The discussion points among the members are summarized as follows:

- Emphasis was placed on taking a broad view, inspired by Indonesia's chairmanship. ASEAN's collective Gross Domestic Product ranks it as the 5th largest economy in the world and ASEAN is projected to become the 4th largest economy in the world within 20 years. Key points included macro planning, sustainability, and connectivity, with the ASEAN Power Grid featured as part of the 20-year vision.
- There is a need for more efficient systems, a more inclusive and responsible agricultural food transition, and greater engagement of youth in agriculture to meet food security demands.
- Suggestions were made to explore trends in urban agriculture and aggregate models, decarbonize the supply chain, and create networks to reduce transaction costs.
- The future of family farmers was highlighted as a fundamental concern. An ongoing study was mentioned, noting that while large-scale agriculture raises climate concerns, small-scale farmers offer diverse production systems and agroecological approaches. The need for aggregation, organization, and inclusion of more women and youth was emphasized.

8. Open Round Discussion

Pranav Rastogi, Head of Communications at Grow Asia, led an interactive discussion aimed at identifying Grow Asia programs that align with the priorities and the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) commitments in Southeast Asia of member organizations. Council members were invited to share insights and reflections, which included the following:

- Several overlapping initiatives were noted, particularly regarding engagement with the private sector and the potential for exploring collaborative opportunities.
- There is a need to assess the impact on farmers' livelihood and establish success measures at the outset of every project.
- Blending public, private, and philanthropic funds can achieve impact at scale, but the effective mechanisms for this integration are still lacking.
- The discussion highlighted the importance of aligning Grow Asia's programs with the specific needs and interests of organizations in Southeast Asia, including geographic focus, technical assistance, and funding strategies.

9. Events Calendar – and upcoming meetings

Grow Asia presented the calendar for the rest of 2024, which included the next Governance Council meetings on October 15 and the annual Grow Asia Investment Forum in Singapore.

10. Close

There being no other business, the Co-Chairs thanked the Members for their time and declared the meeting closed at 14:30 PM.