

## Remarks by Erin Sweeny, Grow Asia

### **Thank you CFS Secretary, FAO Director General, and the Honourable Chair, Representatives, and Distinguished guests for the opportunity to speak at the FAO Regional Conference.**

I'm honored to be here to share an example of CFS Principles applied at the regional level here in ASEAN. I was thrilled that Speaker CFS Chair from Thailand point out just now that we cannot have Guidelines sitting on a shelf. That's what we are aiming to change.

First I'd like to share the need for transformation of our production systems over the next ten years: food demand in Asia-Pacific is exploding, and spending will double from 2019 to 2030. And we know our region will *require* another USD \$800 billion investment to produce enough food to meet that demand.

Here at Grow Asia we ask the question -- how can we ensure nutritious food is produced in a way that sustains farmer livelihoods, promotes inclusive business models, mitigates impact of climate change, and has capacity scale up to meet the growing demand of the region? We believe we can work toward answering the question through multistakeholder initiatives.

As an Entity Accredited with ASEAN, Grow Asia has the pleasure of working with ASEAN Secretariat to understand how we can address structural challenges which may prevent or discourage investment, and then ensure that future investments are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable and inclusive.

We are doing this by implementing the ASEAN Guidelines for Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry, otherwise known as the ASEAN-RAI.

These guidelines were adapted from the CFS-Principles for Responsible Investment in Food Systems. The CFS-RAI set forth an international benchmark from which ASEAN worked to develop the regional Guidelines through multistakeholder consultation.

The ASEAN Guidelines have specific focus on mitigating climate change, harnessing the role of technology, and ensuring regional coordination. The ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry adopted these Guidelines officially in 2018.

I would like to acknowledge Grow Asia's gratitude to the Committee on World Food Security's vision and innovation in relevant Guidelines, which has supported Grow Asia to develop a strong monitoring and evaluation framework in our own work. Further, the ASEAN Guidelines are directly adapted from the CFS-RAI and VGGT.

In April, the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry put out a statement on their commitment to ensure food safety, security and nutrition during the pandemic. In the statement, they referenced the ASEAN Guidelines as a key strategy for increasing regional resilience in the face of climate change and natural disasters – to ensure the region has access to healthy safe food.

With this endorsement and link between responsible investment and ensuring food security during the pandemic, Grow Asia and our partners are advancing the Action Plan for implementing the ASEAN Guidelines for Responsible Investment. Led by the ASEAN Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry, the partners have developed and approved a 10-year plan that aims to improve quality and quantity of investments in ASEAN.

To this end, ASEAN and Grow Asia have worked together with the UN FAO and International Institute for Sustainable Development with support from the Swiss government, a Japanese-funded World Bank Trust Fund and the FAO.

The Action plan for the ASEAN Guidelines takes a two-pronged approach. We will support ASEAN Member States to integrate the Guidelines into national legislation, but based upon their specific interest and demand. At the same time, we will offer tools and trainings to private investors, CSOs and community members to translate the 10 Guidelines to action on the ground. The project aims to

ensure due diligence and community consultation processes are followed, land tenure rights respected, natural resources protected, and women and youth engaged.

Further, Grow Asia worked with ASEAN to host an ASEAN Food Systems Roundtable on COVID-19 with 100+ private public and CSO sector attendees. From that roundtable, four working groups were formed, which focused on primary areas of impact: improving rural logistics to ensure products get to market, advancing mobile money for unbanked rural households, designing digital marketing platforms such as e-commerce to improve returns, and the digital and policy enabling environments. The Working Groups have made specific recommendations for private sector-AMS collaboration, which will be published via a report later this month. The recommendations require a value chain approach, starting from demand from consumers for healthy, safe food.

Thank you for the opportunity to share how Grow Asia and ASEAN Secretariat have implemented a regional adaptation of the CFS-RAI and how we link our efforts to the COVID-19 response to nutrition and food security.