

INTER-REGIONAL MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE

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GROW ASIA, FAA, AGRA, IICA

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Ha Noi, 25 April 2023 – Ministers responsible for food and agriculture from Viet Nam, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Philippines, Rwanda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines met at a specially convened inter-regional ministerial roundtable today to advance sustainable investment, innovation, digitalization, and gender mainstreaming opportunities in food systems through enhanced South-South cooperation.

The event was co-hosted by Viet Nam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in collaboration with [Grow Asia](#) and the [Food Action Alliance \(FAA\)](#) on the side lines of the 4th Global Conference of the One Planet Network's Sustainable Food Systems Programme.

The high-level dialogue was designed and coordinated by leaders from [AGRA](#) and the [Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture \(IICA\)](#) and involved the participation of more than forty other senior officials from the global south. The roundtable underscored the need for countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas to establish a visionary framework for South-South Cooperation to drive food systems transformation.

"In order to transform our food systems to make them more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, we must collaborate across regions, in mobilising resources and other means of implementation, measurement, research and innovation. AGRA is committed to leveraging partnerships such as these to help our food systems overcome existing and future crises", said **Dr. Agnes Kalibata**, AGRA President and Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit.

Some specific topics covered at the ministerial roundtable included experiences of successful strategies for driving agricultural digitalization in Viet Nam; and the role of regional guidelines and multi-country interventions in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), which are vital for unlocking catalytic and sustainable investments from the private sector. The convening also discussed progress made in advancing national development frameworks through mainstreaming food systems strategies and business cases in Africa. The meeting heard how such interventions are already improving incomes and livelihoods of small businesses and rural communities, while ensuring food and nutrition security in the context of climate change.

"South-South Cooperation represents a significant opportunity to promote sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food systems across the developing world. By working together, and sharing best practice across three continents, we can scale up solutions to common challenges and empower small rural businesses to play a leading role in climate mitigation. We look forward to ongoing collaborations with our partners in FAA, AGRA and IICA to further amplify our shared vision and values for global food systems transformation." said **Beverley Postma**, Executive Director, Grow Asia.

Recognizing the significant opportunity that a framework for enhanced South-South Cooperation presents for countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the organizers agreed to use their collective leadership to drive progress on food system transformation on the pathway towards major events that will shape the global food system agenda. This includes

the UN Food Systems Stocktake Moment in July 2023, the Africa Food Systems Summit in September 2023, the COP28 in November 2023 and other key milestone moments regionally and globally.

“Every country in the world has considerable room for improvement in their food systems in order to achieve their overall goals for people, planet, and prosperity. Just like we saw during the UN Food Systems Summit, it’s great that developing countries from Africa, Asia, and the Americas continue to play a leading role in embracing a food systems transformation agenda and accelerating progress by deliberately learning from and supporting each other through South South Cooperation.” said **Adam Gerstenmier**, Executive Director, Food Action Alliance

“The deeper the crisis, with this confluence of climate change, the long-lasting economic and social effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and increases in energy, food and fertilizer price due to the war in Eastern Europe, the more cooperation we need. It is a cooperation among equals and that is what we are. That is the essence of South-South Cooperation, in which we strongly believe, because it means building bridges so we can use our potential together, in all areas. That is the reason we prioritize this intercontinental dialogue.” said **Dr Manuel Otero**, Director General, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

To further enhance South-South solidarity, the organizers highlighted the importance of September 12th, the UN’s Day for South-South Cooperation. To mark the occasion, which will coincide with the annual flagship Grow Asia Investment Forum in Singapore, all partners stressed the need to use their substantive reach, partnerships, and connections to continue exploring knowledge sharing opportunities and to scale the impact of their most successful projects through targeted commitments on South-South Cooperation.

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About Grow Asia

Grow Asia is a multi-stakeholder platform established in 2015 by the World Economic Forum and the ASEAN Secretariat to cultivate more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems in Southeast Asia. Grow Asia does this by brokering commercial and non-profit partnerships between the global and regional public, private, civil society, academic, and farmer organizations that make up the Grow Asia Network, creating an ecosystem that supports knowledge sharing, collaboration, innovation, and policy change.

Grow Asia comprises the regional Grow Asia Secretariat in Singapore; 6 Country Chapters; and 44 Working Groups, organized around specific cross-cutting issues (e.g., agritech) or value chains (e.g., corn). Today, Grow Asia engages over 640+ partner organizations through its Country Chapters in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, and Viet Nam, reaching 2.5 million smallholder farmers.

In 2020, Grow Asia was accredited as an Entity Associated with ASEAN due to the important role Grow Asia plays in the region, particularly in facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable agriculture development.

Learn more at www.growasia.org

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About Food Action Alliance

The Food Action Alliance is a multi-stakeholder platform with a shared vision of achieving sustainable food systems that deliver better, faster, and at scale on food security and nutrition, inclusive growth and decent jobs, environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Achieving this vision will require a movement and action by actors everywhere, including countries, cities, communities, companies, civil society, consumers, producers, and workers all around the world.

The mission of the Food Action Alliance is to serve as the leading multi-stakeholder platform for scaling food systems innovation and impact, by mobilizing collective action, partnerships, and investments in leading national food systems strategies and flagship initiatives that demonstrate the best of what is possible in food systems transformation.

Learn more at www.foodactionalliance.org/home

About AGRA

Established in 2006, AGRA is an African-led and Africa-based institution that puts smallholder farmers at the center of the continent's growing economy by transforming agriculture from a solitary struggle to survive into farming as a business that thrives. Together with our partners, we are working to sustainably grow Africa's food systems.

AGRA strengthens seed systems, develops, and promotes sustainable farming practices, helps unlock trade and markets, and supports governments who lead their countries' development. We work with farmers to adapt to climate change, increase soil health, and protect the environment. AGRA believes deeply in the urgency of reducing the inequality that women face in agriculture, and to unlocking the power and innovation of youth.

More information: www.agra.org

About Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is the specialized agency for agriculture of the Inter-American System that supports the efforts of Member States to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being.

The Institute provides cooperation services through close and permanent work with its 34 Member States, addressing their needs in a timely manner. Without a doubt, IICA's most valuable asset is the close relationship it maintains with the beneficiaries of its work. We have broad experience in areas such as technology and innovation for agriculture, agricultural health, food safety and quality, international agricultural trade, family farming, rural development, natural resource management and the bioeconomy.

More information: www.iica.int/en