

Independent Regional Food Systems Dialogue

“Innovation to boost climate-smart nature-positive food production in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region”

Regional Dialogue Series 2 of 3

On 18 May 2021, ASEAN-CRN in partnership with the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) and UN FAO Regional Asia Pacific Office (FAO RAP), convened the second series of a three-part Independent Summit Dialogue under the UN Food Systems Summit dialogue process entitled, *Innovation to boost climate-smart nature-positive food production in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Region*. The dialogue brought together 70 participants from all over the world representing the private sector, civil society organizations, academe, research institutions, and government officials from SEA.

Building on the first dialogue series, this second dialogue instalment built on key outcomes to take a deep dive to connect the innovation ideas gathered to support nature positive sustainable food systems.

Aligned to Action Track 3: “boost nature-positive production”, the dialogue aimed to provide a platform for stakeholders to explore various existing and emerging approaches that have the potential to deliver nature-positive solutions at scale and encourage collaborative action in the ASEAN region and beyond and to directly inform the United Nations Food Systems Summit process.

The dialogue featured food systems experts, farmers, private sector and policy leaders for a lively and constructive discussion on how to make the food system in the ASEAN region safer, stronger, and more equitable. The event opened with keynote messages from Ms. Marlene Ramirez of Asia DHRRA representing farmer stakeholders and Mr. Siang Hee Tan of CropLife Asia representing the agri-business groups, who talked about *Innovations that boost nature positive production at sufficient scale*.



The Dialogue included three breakaway sessions with a diverse array of perspectives. The primary topics of discussion were:

- (1) Protecting natural systems from new conversions for food production,
- (2) Sustainably manage existing food production system, and
- (3) Restoring and rehabilitating degraded systems for sustainable food production and ecosystem services.

Participants agreed on a number of ways that the food system in the ASEAN region can be strengthened. These included the following:

- Leveraging of public funds is needed in scaling up innovations. Projects for scaling up should be localized and the solutions should be driven by the farmers themselves, and that partnerships should include the private, public, producers and the people (5P's).
- The public sector's role in enabling policy environment is very crucial. The public sector referred here include the civil society organizations, research institutions, and the academe.
- The academe serves an important role in empowering and educating the farmers. It was also learned that some ASEAN Member States have already pioneered some programs and innovations like the Philippines' rice network and Thailand's plant-based food hub, jackfruit as meat alternative, and the seed hub.
- To sustainably manage existing food production systems particularly for local farmers, investment in irrigation systems and water harvesting technologies as primary solutions to address water scarcity or depletion due to long droughts brought by climate change is crucial.
- There is need for strong on policies and strategies to mitigate land conversion, patent-free innovations, strong state regulations, management of land-uses, innovative financial systems, and inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement processes.
- There is need for the adoption of digital technology, circular economy, social forestry, and farm to table concepts in order to support smallholder farmers. While digital technology is common now, there is a strong need to ensure that digital technology links with the value chains more closely. This will help the farmers and consumers and the production to consumers in terms of using resources and in allocating resources.
- There is need to strengthen virtual innovation platforms in areas or in countries where communication infrastructure is not yet well established like in the Philippines.

The ASEAN-Climate Resilience Network (ASEAN-CRN), in partnership with the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) and UN FAO Regional Asia Pacific Office will now submit the outcomes of the Dialogue to the organizers of the UN Food Systems Summit. The information will be used by organizers to feed into the Summit's five priority Action Tracks, as well as the preparatory work of its Scientific and Advisory Groups, Champions Network, and other Summit support structures.

"Innovations are not necessarily something totally new. Innovation is equally about how local, old and new knowledge and technologies can be applied in new contexts or scaled-up. With this basis understanding there are a wide range of innovations ready for scale. Achieving scale may be about aligning interests - takes us back to partnership and respect," says Mr. Beau Damen, FAO RAP.

"We as a collective can drive sustainable food systems, however we should always remember to be inclusive and have a farmer focused approach", Mr. Simon Leiva, Coordinator of GACSA.

To learn more about the Dialogue, watch the webinar recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwPScosK7cc&t=597s>

About the UN Food Systems Summit: In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres will convene a Food Systems Summit that will launch bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems. The Summit will awaken the world to the fact that we all must work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food. It is a summit for everyone everywhere – a people's summit. It is also a solutions summit that will require everyone to take action to transform the world's food systems. Independent Summit Dialogues are both an important avenue for citizen engagement and a key part of the Summit process. For more information, visit <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>