



# INNOVATION TO BOOST NATURE- POSITIVE PRODUCTION IN THE ASEAN REGION

## KEY MESSAGES FOR THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

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**GACSA**  
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR  
CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE







The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) marked a paradigm shift in global development at a time when the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region experienced (and continues to experience) high economic growth. Leveraging the momentum of the Food Systems Summit, 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, convened two Independent Summit Dialogues to give stakeholders from the ASEAN region an opportunity to contribute to designing climate-friendly food systems of the future, and to explore how they can work together to make the transformations happen in the coming decade.

The first dialogue held on the 15th of March 2021 brought together participants to generate innovation ideas to support nature positive sustainable food systems. Building on the innovation ideas gathered, the second dialogue held on the 18th of May 2021 gave stakeholders from the ASEAN region an opportunity to deepen and connect the innovation ideas to strengthen food systems in the region.

### **Key Questions Addressed**

The ASEAN-CRN Independent Summit Food Systems dialogues were aligned to the UNFSS Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production. To achieve nature-positive food production systems, we must adopt practices that protect, manage, and restore nature, while globally meeting the fundamental human right to healthy and nutritious food for all. Nature-positive food production systems recognize that biodiversity underpins the delivery of all ecosystem services on which humanity depends. These are critical for delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Paris Agreement.

The dialogues facilitated innovation idea generation to support nature positive sustainable food systems. Stakeholders looked at the connection of the innovation ideas to food systems and the role of ASEAN-CRN as an innovative platform for food systems transformation. Presentations and discussions addressed four key questions:

1. What is needed to catalyze public and private investment in innovation systems for R4D in the region?
2. How can we better realign and coordinate national international research efforts to facilitate innovation and ultimate achievement of the SDGs?
3. Which innovations are ready for scale up and what is needed to take these to scale?
4. How can we strengthen dialogue platforms to promote innovation and idea sharing?



To facilitate engagement guided by the values of sustainable development and informed by both science and experience, participants explored opportunities to scale up nature positive sustainable food systems under three main pillars:

1. Protect natural systems from new conversions for food production
2. Sustainably manage existing food production systems
3. Restore and rehabilitate degraded systems for sustainable food production and ecosystem services

## **Dialogue Outcomes**

### **Connecting the Food Systems and Climate Change Agenda**

Stakeholders recognized that enhancing the resilience of the food systems requires adopting an integrated approach(es) that allows for proper consideration of the linkages between human and environmental systems to simultaneously enhance human and environmental health, livelihoods and natural resource governance. ASEAN countries should take advantage of the opportunity presented by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26), UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties 15 (COP15), and the UN Food Systems Summit to catalyse action in addressing food systems related issues and climate change in an integrated manner.

### **Innovation is an imperative for sustainable food systems**

We need innovation in agriculture to solve the big challenges facing the sector, including increased demand for food, plateauing productivity and changing patterns of competition and consumption. A wide range of innovations are ready for scale, and achieving scale may be about aligning interests, partnerships, and respect. There is a need for an improved understanding of each stakeholder's needs and potential to adopt and/or scale-up climate-smart and nature-positive innovations for agriculture. More attention on the knowledge and needs of farmers and consumers in developing climate-smart and nature-positive agriculture products and markets is needed. Therefore, to contribute to future climate-friendly food systems, innovation that supports nature positive, sustainable food systems is equally about how local, old and new knowledge and technologies can be applied in new contexts or scaled-up.

## Promoting Investment in Innovation for Food Systems Transformation

Stakeholders agreed that there is a need to promote innovation as a key way to create nature-positive production systems and to catalyze food systems transformation. More specifically, scaling up innovation in technology and practices, supporting scientific and local knowledge innovations; and promoting data and digital innovations. ASEAN countries need to address the innovation gap by investing in agriculture, research and development, providing tailored solutions to address local needs, while mobilizing relevant partners to ensure societal outcomes at scale.

## Scaling up innovation for Food Systems Transformation

Stakeholders noted that technology and innovation play a critical role in building robust and resilient food systems. However, no matter how technically perfect they may be, agricultural innovations that are unused, or used only by an exclusive few, are of little to no value. To be useful, they must be available, accessible and affordable to a significant number of farmers and industry stakeholders. For widespread diffusion to occur, ASEAN countries must identify and pave appropriate pathways for effective scaling of innovations. Important to consider is creating an enabling environment for scaling and private sector engagement. Appropriate incentives, business models, and financing, as well as clear regulatory frameworks, skills, and infrastructure can all support the development and scaling of promising innovations.

## Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Food Systems Transformation

Stakeholders acknowledged the limited capacity of institutions that are supposed to be driving food systems transformation. There is need to promote institutional mechanisms that have been set up to drive food systems transformation. Stakeholders called for building greater capacity in their countries and national systems. Investment in local capacity is crucial for sustainable food systems transformation.

## The ASEAN Road to the Summit

The UN Food Systems Summit process in the ASEAN region has opened up an opportunity to think beyond just agriculture but to maximize the co-benefits of a food systems approach across the entire 2030 Agenda and meeting the challenges of climate change. The transition to sustainable food systems calls for all stakeholders to collaborate, and take action towards a better future.

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Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA)  
Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and  
Environment (OCB)  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United  
Nations (FAO)  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy  
GACSA-Facilitation-Unit@fao.org



ASEAN Secretariat, 2nd floor  
Jl Sisingamangaraja 70A  
Jakarta 12110 – Indonesia  
secretariat@asean-crn.org