

# AMEA GLOBAL CONVENING REPORT 2021

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Over 4 days 78 people from the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia gathered for AMEA’s first virtual Global Convening. We looked externally, internally, shared learning and enabled connections to be made or strengthened.

However, it was not what we did that impressed me – it was how we did it.

We brought energy and ideas to the sessions that enabled us to have a clear understanding of what you want to work on with the AMEA Network. This has motivated our AMEA team, as without our members and partners’ commitment we cannot deliver results. It has clearly been a challenging year for all of us but I am definitely feeling optimistic about what we can achieve.

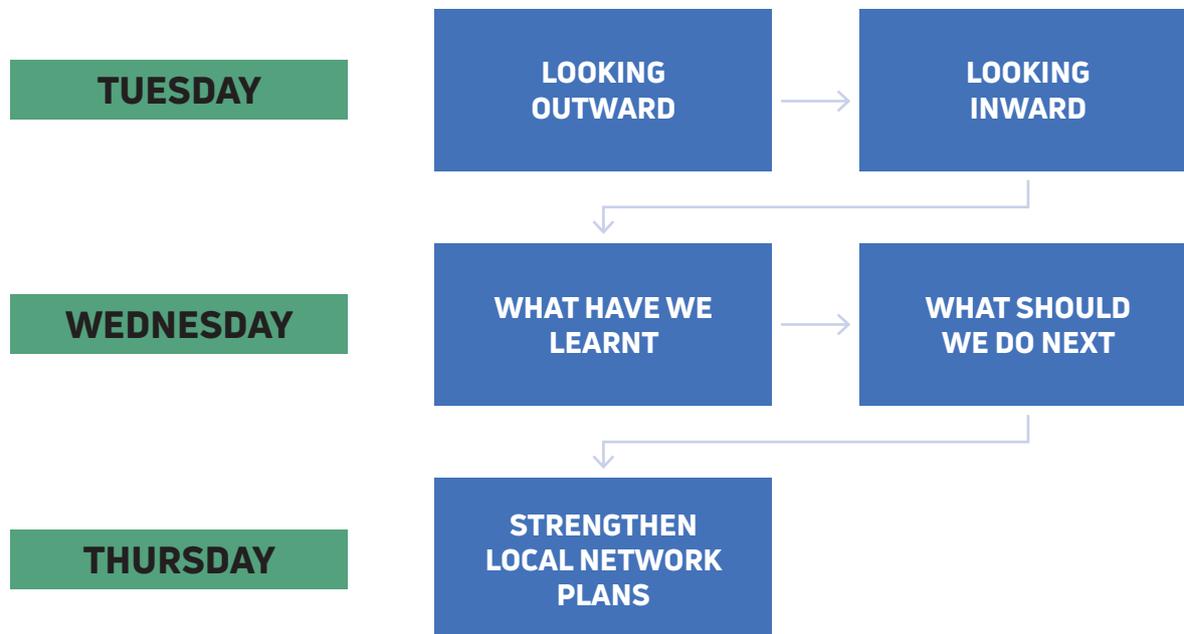
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Mark Blackett  
AMEA Network Director



# THE AMEA GLOBAL CONVENING 2021

The 2021 AMEA Convening aimed to bring together members and partners to contribute and commit to the future direction of the Network. We also wanted to provide opportunities for networking, learning and partnerships. The 2021 Convening was therefore designed as shown below:



We arranged the final day into Regional Forums (East Africa, West Africa, Latin America and Asia) to consider the outcome from the Global Convening and translate this into strategic priorities for each region, including how we expand into new countries. The regional format also enabled Local Networks to exchange learning and plans with each other.

Throughout the Convening we designed the sessions to be highly interactive, which many of you appreciated. If you want to explore the tools we used you can find them here ([Mentimeter](#) and [Miro](#)).

## ONBOARDING

Before we started the Convening, we organised a session to refresh members' knowledge of AMEA, encourage them to get to know each other and onboard new members to the format of AMEA Convenings (which is different from many other conferences).

An ['AMEA Refresh' presentation](#) allowed new members to:

- Learn about the 5 years of AMEA
- Understand the transition of AMEA to a Network and the meaning of a network
- Understand the purpose of the annual Convenings and what happened in the previous one
- Form break-out groups to discuss what they have learned from the presentation and to get to know each other better

## STRATEGY DIRECTION

### LOOKING OUTWARD

The Strategy Day was marked by the contributions of four strategic partners. These thought leaders were invited to describe how they see the future system for accelerating Farmer Organizations development and to help AMEA members think through what AMEA's role should be.

The panellists and their themes, with links to their presentations, were as follows:



**Mark Lundy**

CIAT

[Partnering and Learning for Systemic Change in Food Systems](#)



**Lloyd Le Page**

Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

[The Role of Government](#)



**Hedwig Siewertsen**

AGRA

[Agribusiness Innovation Mechanism \(AIM\)](#)



**Kafui Adjogatse**

IDH Farmfit

[Partnering with the Private Sector](#)

The session was designed to allow members to consider opportunities from the perspectives of both self-interest and shared-interest. As Network Theory informs us, it is critical for there to be both self-interest and shared interest for [Networks to succeed](#). As the panellists finished their presentations, we went into self-selecting break-out groups to discuss the opportunities for our own organizations and opportunities for AMEA as a Network.

We then brought our ideas into the plenary using a Word Cloud exercise which was used later to consider

AMEA's strategic direction. One significant theme of this feedback was how members felt there was a HUGE opportunity for collaboration and AMEA's role in supporting that collaboration. The AGRA AIM investments were specifically highlighted. However, there were also important observations that with so many competing initiatives it was difficult to see how system change could be supported. Moreover, AMEA needs to strengthen its work with Farmer Organisation and Cooperative representative organisations. AMEA may also benefit from targeting sub-national governments and emerging leaders.

### LOOKING INWARDS

We then looked at AMEA's Network health where four AMEA members provided their own perspectives:



**Sabrina Amburgey**

ACDI/VOCA and Global Guidelines Working Group (GGWG) Lead

A view from a Working Group Lead and Board Member



**Casey Harrison**

Nuru International and Ag-Tech Working Group Lead

AMEA Membership – Building trust in partnerships & collaborating for increased impact



**Harrison Kaziro**

NAAC and AMEA Regional Network Facilitator in East Africa

A view from an Established Local Network



**Napoleón Molina**

Rikolto, and Honduras Local Network Lead

A view from AMEA Honduras (a relatively new Local Network)

The [presentations](#) aimed at encouraging honest discussions about the challenges AMEA faces, the opportunities AMEA should be exploring and the actions that AMEA should prioritise in 2021. An interactive session followed with four break-out groups to present insightful results of the value of AMEA, challenges, and opportunities.

There also seems to be a lot of opportunities outside of the formal mechanisms, such as Working Groups and Local Networks. Examples include improving your own tools by understanding the AMEA tools; and using the same service provider – finding synergies that save you money and enable partnerships to be developed.

## VALUE FROM AMEA:

- A network of recognized leaders in development
- Opportunity to collaborate, partner and create shared value
- Access to tools and opportunity to learn and contribute to tool improvements
- Leveraging complementary areas of expertise and putting the pieces together to make the complete puzzle
- Local Networks as spaces for potential collaboration
- IWA29 as a coherent approach to capacity building
- Enables engagement with stakeholders and partners

**Challenges and opportunities** were analysed with inputs from the Looking Outward session and 9 themes were identified. These themes were ranked by participants using Mentimeter as follows:

- 1 Sustainable service delivery:** Developing and learning from sustainable service delivery initiatives, including collaboration with Access to Finance programs.
- 2 Donor engagement:** Generating donor interest and engagement. AMEA to be able to break through into larger programs including Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).
- 3 Data sharing and analysis:** Deepening learning on what does and what does not work, and improving evidence/data collected and shared by members.
- 4 Learning into practice:** Demonstrating learning is leading to change in practice.
- 5 New partners/stakeholders:** Bringing in a wider set of partners and stakeholders.
- 6 Members engagement in Local Networks:** Encouraging members to be more strategic and committed in Local Network engagement.
- 7 AgTech in Local Networks:** Strengthening AgTech work at Local Network level.
- 8 Open-source initiatives:** Exploring the scope for open-source initiatives within AMEA.
- 9 IWA29 Core Team:** Expanding use of IWA29 Core Team approach to promote, test, and validate the IWA29 in different countries.

Arguably the top 3 priorities respond to the key question raised in this Convening: How can we move from a project to a systemic approach? In order to move beyond projects AMEA must persuade people higher up our Inclusive Agribusiness Development food chain i.e. Governments, Donors, etc; and AMEA will have a more persuasive argument if we can share data in ways that other initiatives cannot.

We also noted that although some ideas were not prioritized. That does not mean that we will not pursue them. For example the IWA29 Core Team initiative will be essential to promote and test the IWA29, which will hopefully lead to a full International Standard. However we have to acknowledge that this initiative is likely to be of interest to a few, committed members.

# LEARNING AND PARTNERSHIPS

This day was marked by:

The launch of the first [AMEA Annual Learning Report](#), which synthesises the learning from the three case studies (below) and identifies future learning opportunities.

The launch of the updated [AMEA Toolbox Guide \(2021\)](#).

The release of three Case Studies on the use and implementation of AMEA tools.

The promotion of a free of charge service for AMEA members: [IWA 29 Mapping Service](#).

[Blended learning using AMEA tools](#)

[AMEA West Africa – Experience of Private Sector-Led Programmes in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon](#)

[IFC-Heineken in Ethiopia – Strengthening Local Malt Barley Supply Chains in Ethiopia](#)

We invite you to browse through the new resources and get in touch with us for more information.

The link to the sessions presentations can be [found here](#).

## THE DAY RESULTED IN A LEARNING AGENDA FOR AMEA IN 2021, WHICH WILL PRIORITISE:

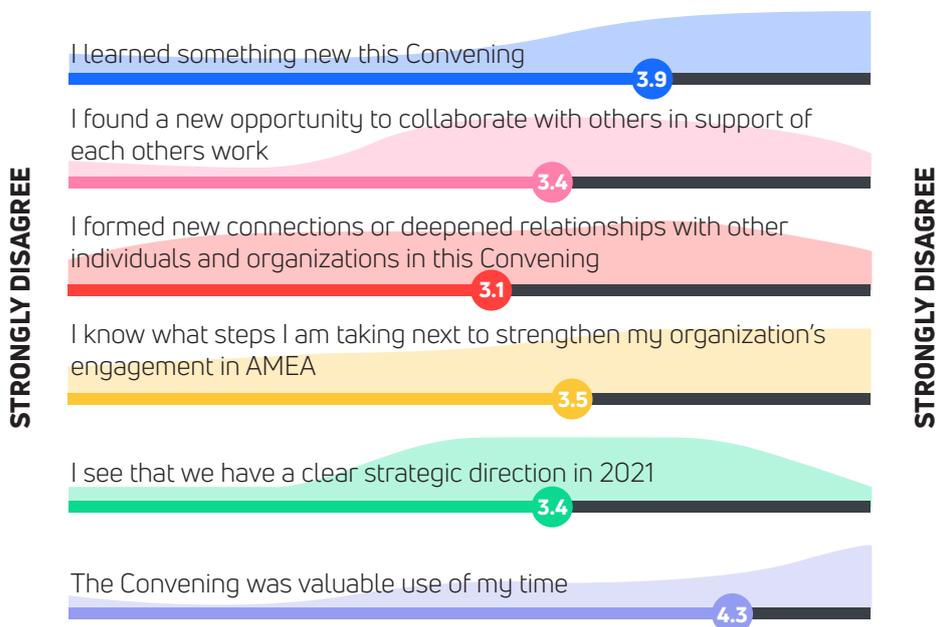
- 1 Sustainable TA delivery models, bundling by SMEs/FIs, and tool expansion business plans.
- 2 Demonstrating the impact on farmers and wider community of FO professionalization
- 3 Comparing different approaches/tools and their effectiveness on MSME and FO graduation
- 4 Approaches/tools that are effective for weaker FOs and lower return crops
- 5 Approaches for blended delivery of TA
- 6 Collaborating to evaluate the potential of digital/agtech

## RAPID COORDINATION

We then ran an old favourite of AMEA Convenings– the Rapid Coordination exercise. This is an opportunity for members and partners to ask for ideas or support. Certainly this is not the easiest exercise to do virtually but we did support some connections and if you want to follow up then you can find the [list of Participants and Emails here](#). We would also encourage you to join us on [Slack](#).

## HOW DID WE DO?

We thank you for the feedback at the end of the Convening. Overall, we have received very positive feedback on the format, content and process for the Convening (which can be seen in the results below). There is however some work still to be done on enabling networking which can lead to collaboration; and some work on finding the value points for each AMEA member. This is perhaps one of the more significant limitations of a virtual Convening.



AMEA will continue to be proactive in reaching out to each member to support networking, collaboration and value creation. However, we would like to emphasise that members also need to work with their teams on agreeing on specific initiatives to engage within AMEA. A starting point for this is to look at the opportunities in each Local Network and Region.

## REGIONAL FORUMS

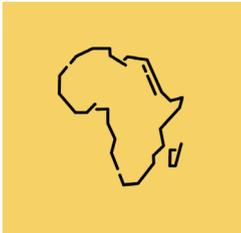
The Regional Forums were run one after the other in order to enable members and partners to participate in as many as they wanted to. At the start of each session the outcome from the Global Convening was presented. The Regional Network Facilitators then led discussions in plenary and break-outs with the topics depending on the interest of the participants. The key takeaways from these sessions are presented below



### ASIA

As expected, the discussion primarily focused on how to explore opportunities for AMEA. The following was agreed:

- **India** – AMEA will fund a scoping report in collaboration with IFC (Alan) to be completed this quarter. Tanager are also potential collaborators.
- **Vietnam** – AMEA will work with IFC (Alan) and Helvetas (Dominic) to hold in-person discussions with members and potential partners during this quarter.
- **Nepal** – AMEA will work with Corus (Kiran) and ICCO/Cordaid (Arnelo) to identify the potential value of a local network. This might be an opportunity to bring in Agriterria who work with Corus in Nepal.
- **Lebanon** – AMEA will work with Corus (Kiran and Garrett) on a potential case study regarding the use of SCOPEinsight tools for MSMEs. Lessons could be generated by May/June.
- **Myanmar** – Recent developments might change this but AMEA will explore the potential with ACDI/VOCA, ACT Alliance, ICCO/Cordaid, IDH, IFC and World Vegetable Centre. ICCO/Cordaid (Arnelo) will be the starting point as they consider Myanmar and Cambodia as having the most potential.
- **Indonesia** – AMEA will discuss the potential with Corus (Kiran) and Rikolto (Josephine) as they are working on the same crops (coffee, cacao).



## EAST AFRICA

There was reasonable attendance with 25 participants however attendance from the Local Networks was generally lower than expected. [Please see here](#) for the East Africa Regional Forum presentation. The following provides a summary of the discussions:

- AMEA will work with Rikolto (David), RUDI (Lameck) and World Vegetable Centre (Dan) to assess the potential for a Tanzania Local Network.
- AMEA will work with ICCO (Patrick) and CNFA (Margaret) on the potential for a Rwanda Local Network.
- AMEA will reflect on Local Network evolution and integrate the learning into its guidelines for aspiring Local Networks.
- AMEA will try again to engage USAID and look for potential use of IWA29/tools in USAID funded programs.
- AMEA will work closely with members to develop a learning agenda which reflects both self and shared interest.
- RNFs need to identify key government personnel to engage more frequently so that network progress is not curtailed by bureaucracy
- AMEA will focus more on connecting members for joint activities to improve participation.
- AMEA should promote a value-chain approach to bring all actors into the discussions so that engagement goes beyond members.

The above actions will be pursued but the priority remains to develop clear value propositions for each local network member and partner. It was agreed that this will need more robust engagement from both AMEA and member/partner, bringing in HQ/Region where it helps with the discussion. The outcome needs to be 2021 plans that have commitment from members/partners.

AMEA LNs will engage with more members to provide the IWA 29 Mapping Service, delivering feedback on AMEA members' tools and indicating complementarity within the AMEA Toolbox.



## WEST AFRICA

There was good participation with 20 people contributing to the following ideas which will be pursued in 2021:

- AMEA will work with Rikolto (Josephine) to move forward the ideas for AMEA Ghana. The presentation to the Sector WG appears a key moment and may benefit from advanced discussions with IFAD and AGRA.
- AMEA will explore opportunities in Senegal with RTI (Jean-Michel) and Nigeria with CNFA (Dara) and Nuru. The Sector WG approach which Josephine is using in Ghana may also be useful and it was also suggested that a target could be the use of AMEA approach in a Public-Private Partnership.
- AMEA will work with Yves (Oikocredit) to expose investment staff to AMEA tools.
- AMEA will explore the potential for supporting the Regional Rice Value Chain Programme to use the AMEA approach. Sierra Leone has reached out to AMEA.

The Ivory Coast Local Network has the same challenges regarding member commitment as the East Africa Local Networks; and therefore a priority remains the recruitment of a West Africa Regional Network Facilitator and the moving forward of plans already developed.



## LATIN AMERICA

There was reasonable attendance with 19 participants. The meeting started with Napoleon (Rikolto - Honduras) and Mariela (Rikolto - Peru) [providing an update](#) on their progress within AMEA, with a highlight being the acceptance of IWA 29 guidelines by OHN (Honduras) as well as INACAL (Peru). The Network Health survey, with 6 responses, also showed that Honduras members were generally happy with the progression (4 out of 5 score on average). However, Napoleon cautioned us that this perhaps was too optimistic and there was still significant work to deliver value for members.

An outline of the AMEA LAC Plan 2021 was presented which is expected to be finalised this quarter. Participants provided the following input:

- There is an opportunity to build on the success of IWA 29 adoption. It was agreed public events will be held in Honduras and Peru to disseminate and engage a broader platform of stakeholders. AMEA needs to find strategic partners and members who want to test and learn from using IWA29 and AMEA tools. This includes buy in from key Government departments, which would address some of the challenges. A PPP model with investment in BDS approaches would be the ideal vehicle such as the one ACIDI/VOCA is engaged in. The JDE project design is another opportunity.
- Specific learning activities for each country need to be developed (Knowledge and Experience sharing). Fausto suggested drawing on experience from the Learning Alliance.
- The development of a trainers/coaches platform will need to be reviewed and the Yellow Pages idea from West Africa evaluated.
- AMEA will work with Honduras members (ACIDI/VOCA, Rikolto, TNS) to explore expansion into Guatemala and Nicaragua.
- AMEA will explore expansion into Ecuador (Rikolto) and Colombia (IFC, Cacao sector).
- Next Local Network meetings will have to prioritize a thorough review of the Plan.

## WE WILL MEET AGAIN...

In one week we had just over 10 hours of time with each other to debate AMEA's strategic direction and provide input into the priorities for 2021. Our normal in-person meetings run for 2 days and provide opportunities for participants to informally network. This was obviously very different.

Despite the challenges, and it was difficult to provide sufficient networking opportunities, this week provided a wealth of inputs from long term members, new members, prospective members and strategic partners. We definitely feel we have a clear message from you on where AMEA should go in 2021 and we look forward to working with you on this.

I hope we have opportunities to meet in person during 2021 and look forward to shaking hands, hugs, etc. Good luck, stay safe and let's aim high for those system change opportunities!