

Bridging the Global Urban-Rural Divide: the Greenport Horticultural

Cluster2Cluster Model

Abstract for REFAB 2018 by Tiffany Tsui

With the rapid urbanization around the world, the topic of “feeding the cities” is fast becoming one of the most important issues facing the emerging economies in Asia, Latin America and Africa. However, despite the large amount of ambitions and interests in topics such as urban/vertical/smart farming, there lacks a global ‘language’ or understanding regarding fundamental issues such as: What defines ‘urban’ vs. ‘rural’ in different economies? Of the hundreds/thousands of (mega) cities all around the world, what are their characteristics, differences and socio-economic drivers? Other than technological systems and knowledge, what kind of social-economic systems, innovations and knowledge are needed?

Worldwide, horticulture is traditionally categorized as a sub-set under agriculture. In classical economic definition, agriculture is a primary sector. Especially for developing countries, this implies land/resource dependency, low capital/technology input, low economic added value and low rural status. However, as illustrated by the article of National Geographic (September 2017) titled ‘This Small Country Feeds the World’, there exists some fundamental differences between the Dutch agriculture vs. the traditionally defined agriculture: “... the Netherlands is bereft of almost every resource long thought to be necessary for large-scale agriculture. Yet it’s the globe’s number two exporter of food as measured by value, second only to the United States, which has 270 times its landmass.”

The Dutch horticulture sector contributes significant part of the export value and productivity of the overall agricultural sector and is uniquely defined by: land-independency, high technology input and high value products, export orientation/international competitiveness. The land-independent characteristic and continuous technology development mean the horticulture sector can bridge the urban-rural divide and overcome resource limitations. Therefore, the Dutch model of horticulture is especially relevant for developing countries with large-growing- urbanizing population and limited arable land championed by China and India, not just for ‘feeding the cities’, but also for the dynamic economic and technological developments. Given the potential international impact by the horticulture sector, there lies immense opportunity for a worldwide movement to define and set standards for the future horticulture development as a new economic form.

This presentation will illustrate the ‘Greenport Horticultural Cluster2Cluster Model’ developed by Tiffany Tsui with the support of Municipality Westland, which is a strategic approach to develop knowledge platform and structural connection between governments, education & research institutions, and companies with focus on horticultural cluster/ecosystem development around the world and to develop innovative value propositions.