ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

National Review and Planning Workshop in Thailand was organized from 28-29 April 2015 at the AIT Conference Center, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Pathumthani, Thailand. Approximately, 25 persons attended the workshop those included representatives from local ministries from the two project provinces, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) Thailand, national universities, development partners, FAO and selected Smart Farmers along with the staffs of the Local Management Unit/local office of the project. The purpose of the National Review and Planning Workshop was to share, review and corroborate the key trends of results obtained from FPAR wet season 2014, also, to develop work plan for the wet season 2015 using the learning from the first year of project implementation in two selected provinces of Thailand, i.e., Uttaradit and Surin.

Venue: AIT Conference Center
Pathumthani, Thailand
Date: 28-29 April 2015

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

- Share key learnings from SRI-LMB project’s work from Surin and Uttaradit;
- Review the information, results and feedback from project’s provincial teams in light of the project objectives and log-frame;
- Review the process of FPAR and farmer’s training and identify and establish strength and weaknesses; and
- Summarize and formulate the suggested changes for the next cycle of FPARs and other planned outputs.
The Workshop was conducted in two broader sessions:

a) **Review session**, to share learning from the various project activities centered around farmers participatory action research (FPAR) conducted in wet season 2014; and

b) **Planning session**, to develop a work plan for the year 2015 utilizing the first FPAR’s learning.

**OVERVIEW OF THE SRI-LMB PROJECT**

In opening speech Dr. Abha Mishra, Team leader of the SRI-LMB project, welcomed all participants and provided a broader overview of the purpose and objectives of the SRI-LMB project. Further, she dwelled on the structure and coordination between different projects partners from local to global and emphasized on strengthening the multi institutional, multi-stakeholder network of local to regional level through effective dialogue and communication for innovation and adaptation of SRI. She briefly shared some of the key trends emerged out from wet season 2014 work from Cambodia and Thailand (Fig.1).

**OVERVIEW OF THE SRI-LMB PROJECT IN THAILAND**

Followed to that, Dr. Prabhat Kumar, the regional and national coordinator of the SRI-LMB shared an overview of FPAR results of wet season 2014 for both the provinces and the list of activities completed during 2014 (Fig.2). Further, he shared broader outlook of the work plan for the year 2015 to be discussed and developed in detail by the provincial teams. He also emphasized on the idea of expansion of the project in collaboration with potential counterparts through various means such as sharing research studies and technologies. The idea of collaboration with Big Plot project of MoAC also featured in his presentation for which background is being prepared by PMU and local MoAC counterpart in Surin, i.e., Surin Rice Seed Center.

In conclusion, he emphasized that SRI management practices and principles are well amenable to the big and small farmers raising rice crops by direct seedling / machine seeding or transplanting to increase the yield and net return under rainfed system of rice cultivation in Thailand.

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**Figure 1: Average yield (tons/ ha) for Baseline, SRI-Modified and SRI-Demo combining Thailand and Cambodia field experiments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From SRI</td>
<td>US$ 536/ha</td>
<td>US$ 2121/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From conventional</td>
<td>US$ 295/ha</td>
<td>US$ 1234/ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
- SRI full demonstration (n = 38)
- SRI-modified (n = 152)
- Baseline (n = 159)
Mr. Warit Mingmolee, MoAC, Thailand discussed about the agriculture intensification and climate change adaptation in the context of existing agriculture policies in Thailand. He added that MoAC has done several research on rice farming including SRI technique. He emphasized that adaptation is very important so as to produce economically and remain profitable.

SRI DEMONSTRATION EXPERIENCE FROM SURIN

The opportunity was also used to reward and appreciate the work of the farmer from Surin province who got the highest yield using SRI technique. Mr. Banpot Sanosiang, who received the highest yield award for the wet season 2014. He expressed gratitude to the project and expressed enthusiasm to follow and spread the knowledge of SRI technique to other farmers of his village. In his short speech, he described how local farmers turned from critic to admirer of the SRI and it was only possible when they participated and observed enormous yield difference between conventional and SRI technique of rice production.

MEL STUDY RESULT AND GUEST LECTURE

The overall MEL research finding on the adaptation pattern of SRI practices at FPAR, Non-FPAR and Control farmers group were presented by Dr. Phassakorn Nuntapanich, Assistant Professor and MEL researcher of the SRI-LMB, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Thailand. His results corroborated the increased yield and net profit by FPAR farmers in both provinces. Considering the demand side of high quality rice, he recommended promoting "Organic SRI" or "GAP-SRI" by linking project activities with similar government initiatives, in NE Thailand, particularly in Surin, such as Big Plot project.
Table 1: Yield and Net return from demonstration field in Surin province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surin Province</th>
<th>Yield (Tons / Ha)</th>
<th>Net Return (US $/ Ha)</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Sold as a seed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chumpol Buri</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>3,214</td>
<td>3,717</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srikoraphum</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>2,858</td>
<td>3,372</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SRI EXPERIENCES FROM UTTARADIT PROVINCE

SRI experience from Uttaradit was shared by Mr. Kanungnit Namwong, VTDC Staff, Uttaradit. The farmers at Uttaradit observed increase in yield and net income using SRI. The mountainous and rainfed region of Ban Khok showed very promising results and scope for growing rice using SRI (Fig. 3). While comparing the less input use and reduction in total cost of production, the smart farmers concluded that it was made possible due to:

- Reduce seed rate (from 40 Kg in conventional to 02-03 Kg/Rai in SRI)
- Less use of chemical pesticide (about 1000 Baht/Rai less in SRI)
- Less Water (from 5-6 cycles as to 2-3 cycles, irrigated districts)
- High quality produce in SRI fetches a higher price as seed

![Figure 3: Average yield (tons/ha) and Net Return ($/ha) for Ban Khok, Tron and Pichai Districts of Uttaradit province](image)

PLANNING ACTIVITIES WET SEASON 2015

On the second day of the workshop, the planning process was undertaken in provincial group, i.e., Surin group and Uttaradit group led by their respective provincial coordinators. The group planned key activities and sub-activities along with resource and time management. Further, the outputs and responsibilities were set and shared among partners.
MAJOR ACTIVITIES PLANNED BY SURIN AND UTTARADIT

The major field activities were prioritized and finalized considering the local planting schedule of farmers for all districts. Major activities in both provinces for the year 2015 included a selection of farmers and land, pre planting workshop, FPARs, field days and a year-end LMU workshop to share, evaluate and corroborate the learnings at provincial level. Additionally, the technical backstopping schedule was developed for FPARs and agreed by all project partners.

A. Work plan 2015 for Surin province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity in Surin</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer Selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Group &amp; Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre planting workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanting/Broadcasting/direct seeding</td>
<td>18-23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting at tillering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting at flowering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting at harvesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28-31</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

B. Work plan 2015 for Uttaradit province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity in Uttaradit</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Nov</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer Selection</td>
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<td>Field selection</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre planting workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanting/Broadcasting/direct seeding</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting at tillering</td>
<td></td>
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<td>28-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting at flowering</td>
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<td>28-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting at harvesting</td>
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<td>01-03</td>
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</table>

RECOMMENDATIONS BY LOCAL PARTNERS AND FARMERS

The Smart farmers from Surin suggested that they would need a timely and need-based backstopping support in the upcoming FPAR cycle. Further, they showed keen interest in labor saving techniques in tandem with SRI principles to increase net return and address scarcity of agriculture laborers in their areas. To this, the project agreed to support with one set of drum-seeder and hand-held weeder to both provinces to be tested on a pilot basis as a part of experimentation.

For Uttaradit, VTDC Director suggested to change the previous districts of Uttaradit to bring in more small-scale farmers and benefit them through the project intervention realizing that the main objective of the SRI-LMB is to benefit smallholder farmers. The VTDC director Mr. Ars Phonhet proposed three new districts for extending the field activity in 2015. They are: Nam Pat, Fak Tha and Thong Saen Khan for upcoming wet season FPAR 2015.

It was agreed that PMU along with the local partners from ministry in both provinces would ensure a pre-agreed schedule of the backstopping support coinciding with the planting, tillering, flowering and at harvest stage of crop. In addition, need-based backstopping would be ensured from PMU. For this, farmers could directly contact PMU staffs through telephone or through LMU offices.
CONCLUDING REMARKS
All the participants were agreed on the key trends and results discussed during the workshop. The results clearly provided field-based evidence that SRI principles are highly amenable to the various farming conditions in Thailand and provides higher yield and net return. The use of younger and healthy one-two seedlings along with wider spacing lead to better yield was the major learning during the wet season 2014. The SRI technique uses less water, less chemical, less seed and produce more, with higher quality. The majority of the farmers showed continued interest to further refine the SRI-based local technology by adapting it to the local needs in the coming season. Also, most of them would like to try to raise experiment with full set of SRI principles at a minimum of one rai land area.

WAY FORWARD
With the excellent results and in-depth analysis of the results of the FPAR cycle in the year 2014, the smart farmers and provincial ministerial teams are ready to start the second cycle of the FPAR commencing in Wet season 2015. More FPARs, more participation of farmers, more collaboration and outreach with low cost, low input use will be the guiding principle for Thai team. Project would expand and reach out to the farmers of Big Plot Project in Sisaket province to help them to adapt the SRI principle in their given local condition.