

SMART FARMERS WITH SMART PRACTICES BOOSTING YIELD AND INCOME: SYSTEM OF RICE INTENSIFICATION IN ACTION IN LOWER MEKONG RIVER BASIN

Farmers from eleven provinces of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam have reported higher profit, almost double, for paddy grown with the System of Rice Intensification management practices. This was due to the higher yield coupled with reduced cost of seed, seedlings, and pesticides, and also due to the higher quality of the grain produced, commanding a higher market price. This was reported from 172 action research sites spread over 33 districts of eleven provinces, 3 in Cambodia: Kampot, Kampong Speu and Takeo, and 3 in Thailand, Uttaradit, Sisaket and Surin, 2 in Vietnam, Bac Giang and Ha Tinh, and 3 in Laos, Khammouan, Savanakheth and Vientiane, all as a part of regional collaborative project led by the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand with funding support from the European Union. The total cost of Action is 3.4 million Euro.

The project is being implemented in rainfed areas of Lower Mekong River Basin involving smallholder farmers and in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Oxfam America, SRI-Rice, Cornell University in USA, and University of Queensland in Australia along with lead government ministries and national universities. The project aims to work in tandem with the policies of the government ministries to support intensification of rice production in food insecure provinces using System of Rice Intensification (SRI) principle.

System of Rice Intensification (SRI) is an emerging alternative technology to conventional rice cultivation techniques that instills a social dimension to farming to produce healthy and profitable crops using less water and less seed, and through skillful management of plants, soils, water and nutrients.

As a part of the action-research, more than 405 sets of field experiments have been carried out involving approximately 7000 farmers. The experiments ranged from integration of SRI principles with farmers' local practices to full demonstrations and assessments of SRI methodology. The initial calculation of yields across the region has showed an average paddy yield of 4.7 t/ha which is 66 % more than the regional baseline yield. And this was achieved using 30 percent less energy. This was reported at the Regional Review and Planning Workshop of the project held on 24-25 June 2015 at Hanoi, Vietnam.

The workshop was organized by the Asian Center of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture Intensification, AIT and hosted by the Plant Protection Department(PPD), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Vietnam with an objective to share the learning, jointly review the project activities undertaken since 2013, and to collect feedback from various stakeholders and feed into the next cycle of action research to strengthen the project actions. Approximately 60 persons participated that included representation from PPD, MARD Vietnam; General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA), Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Cambodia; Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperative (DAEC), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Lao PDR; Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC), Thailand; representation from national universities, along with the representatives of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Oxfam America, SRI-Rice Cornell University, University of Reading, UK, University of Queensland, Australia, Olam International, representative of Sustainable Rice Platform UNEP/IRRI, Rapid Asia, Thailand and Mekong Institute Thailand.

“Boosting sustainable agriculture using SRI-like idea, especially among small-scale farmers, cannot only overcome hunger and poverty but can also address other challenges from climate change” says Project Manager, **Dr. Abha Mishra**, Director, Asian Center of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture Intensification (ACISAI), Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand. It is high time to realize the importance of such alternative approach that connects us to nature and to people who are poor and food-insecure and who have potential to feed themselves and the rest of the world without further detracting from the environment. Our SMART farmers are putting their best, generating many innovative ideas and providing workable solution to the world for making rainfed agriculture efficient and smart.

“The European Union is committed to the achievement of SDG's and the eradication of extreme poverty and in particular to SDG 2: end hunger, achieve food security, improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture that can change people's lives. This project is helping small scale holders, women in particular, in Lower Mekong Basin countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam to have sustainable livelihoods by being trained in using innovative techniques which will allow rice farmers to increase their productivity and generate more income for their households. So, we are very proud to be the part of this project” says **H.E. Jesús Miguel SANZ ESCORIHUELA**, the Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to Thailand.

For more information visit: <http://www.sri-lmb.ait.asia/>

For workshop presentation you can click here: [Workshop Presentations](#)

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