



## Press Release

### **Boosting yields, raising incomes, and offering climate-smart solutions: System of Rice Intensification paves the way for farmers to emerge as more successful “agripreneurs”**

BANGKOK, November 1, 2018

Farmers from eleven mostly rainfed provinces of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam have reported higher yields and profits from paddy grown with System of Rice Intensification (SRI) management practices.

In comparison with pre-project baseline performance, SRI practices helped improve livelihoods across the Lower Mekong River Basin (LMB) by increasing average rice yields by 52%, farmers’ net economic return per hectare by 70%, labour use efficiency by 64%, and water productivity by 59%. Total energy inputs required for farming operations decreased by 34%, along with significant net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. These results were reported at a regional workshop of the SRI-LMB project held at Novotel Sukhumvit, Bangkok on November 1-2, 2018.

The results were reported from 582 research sites spread across 33 districts in eleven provinces of the four countries, all as a part of a regional project led by the Asian Institute of Technology with funding support from the European Union with a total cost of action of €3.4 million.

Approximately 75 representatives participated in the two-day workshop, including representatives from the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Oxfam America, SRI-Rice at Cornell University, the University of Reading, the University of Queensland, Olam International, the Ministries of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand, of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam, of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries of Cambodia, and of Agriculture and Forestry of Laos.

“The intensification of smallholder agriculture, with its emphasis on diversity, synergy, recycling, integration into the global economy, and social processes that value community participation and empowerment could be one of the viable options for meeting present and future food needs. More particularly, with recent developments in the climate change debate as well as the Paris Agreement and with stated policy on ASEAN food security, the relevance of SRI-like work has become more central to regional needs for sustainable development,” said Dr. Eden Woon, AIT President, while delivering the inaugural remarks.

“The SRI-LMB has facilitated the development of informal farmers’ groups in 11 provinces across all four countries by engaging 15,000 farmers in trials and adaptation of new ideas, plus (less directly) 30,000 farmers over the past five years. These groups, if strengthened further, can provide a basis for developing farmer organizations that can accelerate sustainable rice intensification and diversification along with market development for smallholders. So it is important to incentivize them in their climate-smart practices and to offer them opportunities to become ‘agripreneurs,’” says Project Manager Dr. Abha Mishra, Director, Asian Center of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture Intensification (ACISAI) at AIT.

“The European Union is committed to the achievement of the world’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, in particular to the eradication of poverty and hunger. This project is helping small-scale holders, women in particular, in the Lower Mekong Basin countries to have sustainable livelihoods. This is done by using innovative techniques to increase productivity, and generate more income and, at the same time, to reduce the impact on the environment, thus making rice cultivation more sustainable” says Mr. Jerome Pons, Head of Cooperation at the European Union Delegation to Thailand”.

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### ***Additional Information***

**About SRI:** System of Rice Intensification is an emerging alternative technology that departs from age-old cultivation techniques in several ways, using less seed and water. It relies mostly (or entirely) on organic inputs, producing more paddy from farmers' available resources through skilful management of plants, soil, water, and nutrients. It also instils a social dimension into farming as learning and evaluation are conducted on a community basis, which lays the foundation for mechanization, diversification, and market access.

**About the Project:** With support from ministries and government agencies in the four project countries, more than 15,000 farmers participated directly in farmer-led field trials and experimentation, and over 30,000 were reached indirectly through field days, workshops, and farmer congresses. Over 2,500 farmer-participatory experiments were conducted under the project at more than 1,000 research sites.

**About the Workshop:** The two-day workshop held on November 1-2, 2018 was organized by the Asian Center of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture Intensification (ACISAI) at AIT to cumulate and share results from assessing SRI's potential contribution to food security and household incomes on a larger scale, its impacts on farmers' market participation, how it can enable farmers to adapt to and mitigate climate change, and how smallholder agriculture can be modernized and made more climate-smart.

**About ACISAI:** The Regional Office for the project is located at the ACISAI Center, AIT, Thailand, with host-country offices in participating ministries in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. To learn more about ACISAI, please visit: <http://www.acisai.ait.ac.th>

**About EU:** The EU is the world's biggest development aid donor. The EU development policy seeks to foster sustainable development and build a fairer and more stable world. The EU development assistance is concentrated in priority areas such as human rights, democracy and other aspects of good governance, and inclusive and sustainable growth. The Delegation of the European Union in Thailand is mandated to promote the political and economic relations between Thailand and the EU, inform the public of the development of the EU, and support the implementation of the EU's assistance programmes.

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**URL:** <http://www.sri-lmb.ait.asia>

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