

WFP's Building Back Better: Organic Agriculture for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Cambodia Project

Task Team Leader:
Leading Producer's Organization:
Cambodia Agriculture
Cooperative Corporation (CACC)

Approval date:
09/12/2022
Project effective date: 01/02/2023
Date of 1st disbursement:
12/12/2022

Grant amount:
USD 1,790,000

Co-financing:
USD 1,100,000

Food and Nutrition Security Context

Mondulkiri lags far behind the rest of Cambodia on socio-economic and gender equity indicators and has one of the country's highest malnutrition rates. Nearly half of Mondulkiri's people are indigenous, relying largely on traditional rainfed agriculture and non-timber forest products for their livelihoods. Gender norms impede women's participation in value chains across Cambodia, with particular barriers faced by indigenous women.

While WFP's country-level Fill the Nutrient Gap Analysis (2023) underscores that 16% of households cannot afford healthy diets, in Mondulkiri, over a third (36%) of households are unable to afford even the lowest-cost nutritious diet. Yet as the economy grows, people are consuming more ultra-processed, high fat/salt/sugar snacks and drinks that displace increase risk of health problems.

The Solution

During the pandemic, the Cambodia Agriculture Cooperative Corporation (CACC), a Public-Private-Producer Partnership joint venture that links 36 Agricultural Cooperatives (ACs) and the private sector in Cambodia, recognized a noticeable increase in the demand for organic products from the US and European markets. CACC is replicating and scaling the "smallholders as shareholders" business model it had successfully supported in other provinces in Cambodia. As low-input farming is still commonly practiced in Mondulkiri, Koh Nhek district was identified as having potential for organic rice production, and enabling smallholders to quickly benefit – and build back better – from the market premium associated with organic rice.



The Solution

The project is focused on: 1) Improving livelihoods and resilience of smallholder farmers by strengthening and developing profitable organic value chains, by increasing productivity, organic certifications, and marketing of products and 2) Enhancing dietary outcomes through social and behaviour change (SBC).

Key activities include:

- Formation of new ACs & expanding AC membership – focusing on representation of women and indigenous people
- Training smallholder farmers on good agricultural practices, organic agriculture, and post-harvest management, including climate smart agriculture practices
- Conducting financial and digital literacy and business trainings to AC members and leaders, particularly women and indigenous people
- Constructing post-harvest processing and storage facilities, and providing biochar-production equipment for making compost to ACs
- Marketing organic rice from Koh Nhek, Mondulkiri to high value export markets; and establishing traceability systems and organic certifications
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment; targeting and tailoring trainings to female AC members; and supporting branding efforts for women, including Indigenous women.
- Development and roll-out of a tailored SBC strategy
- Coordination/support to existing government initiatives that promote good maternal and infant nutrition practices and healthy lifestyles

What makes this project stand out is the Public-Private-Producer Partnership joint venture and the social and behaviour change approaches coming together – and drawing on a rigorous evidence-base – to intentionally address barriers to women and indigenous people benefiting from the project.

Key Achievements

- Although the project was only made effective in early 2023, over **500 farmers** have been trained, while a warehouse has been constructed, with a second warehouse and drying facility under construction. Additionally surveys and studies are informing the project approach and strategy going forward.
- **555 farmers** were identified and trained on organic rice standards, seed application, nutrient & pest management, water management, including Climate-Smart Agriculture.
- First warehouse construction funded by the project completed, while 2nd warehouse & drying facility is under construction and expected to be completed by the end of this year.
- Conducted baseline survey with existing AC members, which identified substantial difference in livelihoods, income and diets between Khmer and indigenous respondents.
- Gender and inclusion study completed – results used to inform SBC strategy development, and identify barriers/entry points for indigenous women's participation in organic rice value chains.
- Nutrition Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices studies completed - results used to inform SBC strategy development.
- SBC implementation strategy/approach is under development and expected to commence activities by 3rd quarter of 2024.



Next Steps & Outlook

- Accelerate construction of warehouse, drying, and milling facilities, to increase AC membership, particularly indigenous groups and women, and increase the number of organic-certified producers.
- Improve coordination with emphasis on strengthening collaboration with value chain actors, including local authorities and government agencies.
- Develop marketing strategy and traceability systems for organic value chains.
- Support women and indigenous peoples to overcome barriers to their inclusion in ACs.
- Design a rigorous SBC approach to address barriers to accessing healthy diets and leverage income improvements from value chain activities.