



CAMBODIA

INNOVATIONS IN AGROECOLOGY

WOMEN-LED AGRICULTURE SERVICE TEAM IN INCLUSIVE FOOD SYSTEM PROGRAMME

In Cambodia, small-scale farmers are facing the issue of low economic returns from their rice farming because of low productivity and high input costs. The system of rice intensification (SRI) allows farmers to use less inputs. In dry areas, SRI could result in an average yield of 3.6 tonnes/ha, while under similar circumstances, the yield with traditional practices is only 2.4 tonnes/ha. Another critical issue that farmers are facing is labour shortage, as the country's economic conditions continue to force many men to migrate to towns and cities for work.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INNOVATION

Oxfam, together with partner organizations, has been piloting work with groups of landless women, who are trained in agricultural techniques and skills, especially the SRI, to provide

local technical services for farming, including land levelling, land preparation, transplanting, harvesting, fertilizing, weeding, and so on. These groups are called the Women-Led Agriculture

Service (WLAS) Team. WLAS is also currently providing a diversity of technical services, including rice production, vegetable cropping, animal husbandry and aquaculture.

DESIGN AND SHARING OF THE INNOVATION

The WLAS team is initiated to service the SRI farmers in their local community. The innovation focuses on small-scale farmers who receive little or no agricultural extension support, grow rice using traditional methods, such as broadcasting seeds, and tend towards excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in their farming. This practice leads to low productivity, environmental pollution, and even toxicity in rice production, which impacts negatively on their health. Oxfam has been supporting small-scale farmers to increase yields and reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

BENEFIT FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Since its inception in 2015, WLAS has participated in reducing migration and improving livelihoods for both service team members and their clients. The teams have helped farmers to maximize the benefits of their land, and improve their own livelihoods and incomes. So far, ten teams of 257 farmers (89 percent are female) have evolved into successful businesses, especially in the production of rice. It was reported that their rice yield increased up to 50 percent.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The programme supports small-scale farmers in improving rice production, particularly with cultivation techniques applying the SRI methodology. With this innovation, the programme has been working with the group of Women-Led Agriculture Service (WLAS) to provide credible, agricultural services to small-scale farmers, and to fill the local labour shortage in the sector, while increasing women agriculture extension workers, and improving the livelihoods of the members, who are mostly poor.



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The WLAS innovation is a low-cost and sustainably innovative solution for small-scale farmers. Mass-market support would enable the programme to improve service quality and promote SRI application through education delivery, technical labour replacement, and advisory services to farmers in agricultural extension.