



Supporting Vegetable Seed Production at the Khbal Koh Vegetable Research Station

Background

The agriculture sector in Cambodia constitutes 27 percent of its gross domestic product, with the staple, rice, as the most cultivated crop. A growing economy has resulted in higher demand for other agricultural products such as vegetables. It is estimated that Cambodia will need a vegetable supply of up to 490 000 tonnes per year just to meet the national demand for vegetables, while currently 70 percent of the demand is met through imports. This represents both a drain on foreign exchange resources and a missed income opportunity for Cambodian farmers.

To enable and increase vegetable production in the country, quality seeds are required. Currently, 90 percent of the vegetable seeds used in Cambodia are imported. Seeds are usually bred to produce the most adapted strain of crops for the soil and the climate of a region, and therefore for optimal productivity in the specific context. When seeds are imported, they often do not match the environmental conditions in the country. This causes lower productivity and quality, and increases pre-production costs. Relying so much on imports also makes Cambodia's circulation of seeds vulnerable to market shocks,

with unreliable prices and supplies.

To realize the potential of vegetable production, a reliable access to quality seeds adapted to the conditions of Cambodia is a necessity, and therefore developing the local capacity for vegetable research for seed production is a priority. A well-working research station has the potential to increase the domestic production of vegetables and enhance food and nutrition security at the local level. An improved vegetable production will have positive impacts on both nutrition and income, as vegetables are typically more nutritious and have a higher market price than rice.



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The Khbal Koh Vegetable Research Station was created in 1985 by the Department of Agronomy with this exact aim: to produce seeds and conduct research about vegetable production. However the station has been suffering from insufficient capacity to use laboratory equipment and lacks quality control of the produced seeds.

Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

Started in October 2014, FAO is implementing a project in close collaboration with the General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The project entitled “Support to Vegetable Seed Production at the Khbal Koh Vegetable Research Station” is carried out with funding from FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) for a total value of USD 209 000.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the staff of the Khbal Koh Vegetable Research Station as well as the staff of the Department of Horticulture and Subsidiary Crops of the GDA. At present, fifteen staff members with a background in agronomy are employed at the research station, but the work of the station requires that they acquire more expertise in seeds production and seed breeding.

Indirect beneficiaries are farmers involved in vegetable

production.

A more efficient Vegetable Research Station means vegetable seeds of higher quality adapted to growing conditions in Cambodia, therefore productivity and quality of farmers’ production will increase.

Project Outputs and Outcomes

The TCP project will build on the experiences from the project on “Vegetable seed production for emergency food assistance in Cambodia” supported by the Asian Development Bank. That project provided relevant vegetable research equipment to the facility, but the staff requires further capacity training for the station to reach its full potential.

FAO will deliver a comprehensive, tailored training programme to maximize the efficiency of the intervention, and build the capacity of the researchers at the vegetable station in operating the facility. A curriculum will be developed, together with technical training materials, such as guides and manuals, as well as training courses, with study trips to a regional vegetable research centre. International seed production and seed breeding experts recruited by FAO will conduct the training on site.

FAO will supply complementary but essential agricultural equipment so as to ensure the nurseries and seed storage facilities are fully outfitted and enabled to fulfil their purpose. By the end of the interventions, three standard model nurseries for the station will be operational.



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