



“90% of Cambodia's cropped area is covered with rice. To Cambodians 'rice' is more than just a grain; it is the basis of many cultural practices, belief about the organisation of the universe, and self-identification. National rice self-sufficiency goals are not just national economic goals, but also a statement about the socio-cultural importance of rice production.”



The need for IPM in Cambodia

Cambodia is a special case within the Community IPM program due to its post-conflict circumstances. More than three decades of conflict have devastated infrastructure, both social and physical. The gender balance and age structure of the population has also been severely distorted: the population is skewed towards women (52.6%) and younger age groups (44% under 15 years). The government has little capacity to provide adequate health and education services. And while 85% of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, it is classed as 'low productivity' as a result of poor soils, dependence on rain and lack of infrastructure. Agricultural extension services have been limited or absent.

Cambodia is inundated by pesticides from its neighbours Vietnam and Thailand. Most of the pesticides that eventually get into the hands of farmers are categorised by WHO as Ia. These are extremely hazardous to human health. Folidol is one of the most popular pesticides on the market even though it is formally banned in Cambodia and contains the extremely toxic chemical *methyl parathion*, which kills a wide range of organisms, not just pests. These pesticides are:

- Poisoning farmers and their families
- Adversely affecting the bio-diversity of an otherwise healthy agro-ecosystem
- Creating pest resurgence
- Creating a dependency on external inputs

In light of these of these problems, the Royal Government of Cambodia, with help from the FAO,

initiated an IPM programme in 1993. This programme now has the capacity to implement a large number of IPM Farmer Field School (FFSs), funded by a range of donors like DANIDA, World Bank, UNDP, AusAID, EU and other NGOs. The national IPM Programme of the MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) has been coordinating these activities. The results have been very successful

- 30,000 farmers have attended rice IPM FFSs, of which, over 10,000 have been female farmers
- In at least 6 provinces, IPM farmers have grouped together to carry out field studies and experiments to further improve their understanding of production constraints
- 330 IPM farmers have also completed additional training as trainers themselves (farmer trainers), and are now organising FFSs in their own areas

Many of the participants of FFSs are young farmers and a significant proportion - up to 50% in some areas, but more usually 20-30% - are women. The formation of farmers' groups in many locations is an indication that these farmers consider the benefits of IPM to be tangible and worth building upon.

Vegetable IPM

While the initial emphasis of the IPM programme in Cambodia has been rice, IPM is relevant to all crops. IPM training activities and FFSs have started for vegetable farmers, and it is hoped that other crops, like fruit, will be included in the programme in the future. Vegetable Field Schools are now a part of the National IPM Programme.

- 2500 farmers (half have been female) have been trained
- 250 trainers have attended vegetable IPM trainer courses

There was also a great urgency to do Vegetable IPM, as increasing evidence has emerged of widespread uninformed use of highly toxic pesticides in vegetable production. The high frequency of spraying - up to 20 times a season in some cases - has serious implications for farmers' health and the environment. Consumers are also at risk as in some cases vegetables are sprayed just before harvesting, thus reaching the marketplace soaked with chemicals.

Disadvantaged Groups and IPM

IPM in Cambodia is also developing training approaches and activities for farmers who are often neglected in development programs.

Women: Among the farming population, over 65% are women. Women play essential roles in crop cultivation and decision-making as a result of the civil war leaving many households headed by women. The severely depleted agricultural labour force has left many women with the responsibility of farming as well as household management.