

as Simple as Green

AN E-MAGAZINE ON
RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Issue_01 January 2019



Inspiring story

"HOM MALI" RICE FARMERS
IN NORTHEASTERN THAILAND ENJOY
SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

What we do

INTRODUCE 10 PROJECTS ABOUT
FARMERS SUSTAINABILITY.





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FROM THE EDITOR

We are Living in a Time of Change

Every New Year is a new beginning, and for a new point of departure for 2019

The year 2018, now history, ends with such good news. One of our female farmers from the Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) project, Duangjan Wichalin, has won national award for the yummiest non-glutinous rice at the 2018 Thai Rice Festival in Bangkok. More than 1.2 tonnes of her hom mali rice packages that were put up for sale at the festival were sold out. That made it a double celebration.

Of course, our efforts and partnership to make the farmers smile more often will not stop there. Our team members - past and present - have strived to remain determined, balanced and honest. Speaking as one of the team's leaders, I can say that's a tradition I hope will continue in the years to come.

Inside this first e-magazine, you'll find a mixture of news and features on a wide range of agriculture-and-food-related topics.

This brand-new year, a plenty of exciting activities from our newly -launched projects - climate-friendly palm oil, coffee and rice- lays ahead of us. Most of our activities deal with the climate change, the issue Thailand and the global community have long talked about how soon it could wreck than what we think.

Already society is feeling the impact.

It affects me.

And yes, it affects you.

But don't forget that we can reduce the impact, fight it right and make the world a better place.

Our wish is to publish meaningful articles in an intelligible and simple way. We hope our e-magazine will prompt you into preparing for the future and urging you to become part of it.

Enjoy reading our first issue! Do let us know if there are any topics you'd like to see covered in the future!

Suriyan Vichitlekarn (Tor),

Deputy Cluster Coordinator for Agriculture and Food at GIZ Thailand

**Food and Agriculture Cluster
GIZ Nana Office**

39/1 Sukhumvit Soi 13 Yak 1-1, Sukhumvit Road, Klongteoy Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110 Thailand

Tel: +66 2 255 4202 / Fax: +66 2 255 4203

www.asean-agrifood.org

INSPIRING STORY

“Before I joined the programme, I made no profit from my rice plantation and could not break free from the debt trap,” said **Ms. Boonterm Luandee**, a participating farmer of the second phase of the **Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA)** project or **BRIA II**.

Ms. Boonterm has long overused inorganic farm inputs on her Hom Mali rice paddy field and never realized a small change in her cultivating method would put an end to her struggle to make ends meet.

“The quality of rice was not good and I could not shake my debt off,” she said.

The unsatisfactory production led **Ms. Boonterm** to try out new farming technique in 2015.

After undergoing a training conducted by rice farming experts from BRIA II and applying new knowledge to her 11 rai of Hom Mali rice, she earned 30,000 - 45,000 baht (800 - 1,200 EUR), up from 10,000 - 20,000 baht (200 - 500 EUR) in previous harvesting seasons.

‘Hom Mali’ rice farmers in Northeastern Thailand enjoy sweet smell of success

Story and Photos by **Prangthong Jitcharoenkul, GIZ Thailand**

Standing in a field of Hom Mali rice in Nayer district of Ubon Ratchathani, Boonterm Luandee happily looked at her improved rice production which brought her higher income in recent years.

The 50-year-old farmer, who has grown rice for more than two decades, shared her feelings of getting the opportunity to learn about the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standard.



Boonterm Luandee, a farmer from Ubon Ratchathani, successfully betters her rice farmland based on the Sustainable Rice Practices (SRP).



Boonterm Luandee, a farmer from Ubon Ratchathani, stands next to her beloved three-year-old buffalo in her rice field.



Duangchan Watchalin points at unburnt rice straw in her field in Ubon Ratchathani's Nayer district as she is now well aware the air could turn toxic and greenhouse gases will be sent in the atmosphere.



Since then, **Ms. Boonterm** decided to rely on less pesticide and more biological plant protection products.

“Cost of rice production was slashed by half after I reduced use of fertilizer and pesticide. I was able to repay debt to the bank and save more money for my family.”

In 2017, an external audit verified that most of the participating farmers who took part in first phase of BRIA were complying with the SRP standard. They received an average score at 84 percent, meaning they are **“working toward a sustainability”**.

Duangjan Wichalin, who joined the project early this year, echoed the same tune as **Ms. Boonterm**, saying after she understood the benefits of the sustainable rice, she no longer used pesticide and preferred effective microorganisms (EM) and pig manure.

Her yields have been up by 58 percent since she adopted the sustainable rice practices.

The 55-year-old farmer said her rice yield is now 570 kilograms per rai, increased from 360 kilograms last year.

“I bought more lands and I do not worry about education for my four children anymore because I have enough savings,” said **Mrs. Duangjan**, who has become a lead farmer passing on her knowledge in doing organic rice farm to other farmers in her neighbourhood, most of whom are women.

Local farmers in Ubon Ratchathani is the first province to adopt the SRP practice.

Thailand's Rice Department and Olam International under support of German development agency GIZ are working to extend the sustainable standard to other farmers in Roi Et and Surin provinces, both in northeastern Thailand, in coming years.

little note 1 6.25 rai is equal to 1 hectare

* <https://www.asean-agrifood.org/hom-mali-rice-farmers-in-northeastern-thailand-enjoy-sweet-smell-of-success/>

WHAT WE DO



01

BETTER RICE, BETTER LIFE Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA)

Better Rice, Better Life, a motto for the **Better Rice Initiative Asia** project, carries on to phase II to improve lives of farmers in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam and quality of rice for consumers around the globe. At least 35,000 rice farmers will be introduced to the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standard for good practices to benefit themselves, consumers, and environment. The project is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), governments of the three countries and Olam International.



02

COFFEE 'PLUS', PLEASE Coffee+ Thailand

A good taste of coffee comes with great responsibility. Coffee drinkers can always enjoy their sips of coffee while coffee farmers can enjoy reaping benefits of sustainable coffee plantation. The **Coffee+** project invites small-holder coffee farmers in Southern Thailand to a Farmer Business School to learn good practices and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Farmers also get connect with other farmers, build their networks and become entrepreneurs.



03

SMOOTH LANDING OF FRUITS AND VEGGIES

Facilitating Trade for Agricultural Goods in ASEAN (FTAG)

After a long travel, fruits and vegetables from Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam find a good rest at each other's borders. Thanks to a kind cooperation of the three countries and a support of the **Facilitating Trade for Agricultural Goods in ASEAN (FTAG)** project. Six types of vegetables and fruits including chili, banana, dragon fruit, longan, lychee and mango have been selected as agriculture ambassadors for further exchange and discussion on border facilitation, plant quarantine regulations and import and export agreements.



04

NO WORRIES, PESTS CAN BE MANAGED

Better Rice Initiative Asia - Promotion of Integrated Pest Management in Thailand (BRIA - IPM - Thailand)

Pests, plant diseases, weeds and rodents give a big headache to farmers and many chemical products ended up being wrongly used. However, a situation is different among farmers in central Thailand. Through a joint **Better Rice Initiative Asia - Promotion of Integrated Pest Management in Thailand (BRIA - IPM - Thailand)** partnering with CropLife International Company, farmers learn to deal with pests more strategically from checking and analyzing pest, ecology systems and plant protection products.

05

GROWING SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Livelihoods Funds Project: Regenerative Rice Farming in Thailand

When soil is well taken care of, inorganic and organic fertilizers are applied with care and water is used with respect, farmers will then enjoy the seeds of success they have sown. More than 150 farmers in central Thailand are coming back to stand firm on their feet with a support of **Livelihoods Funds Project: Regenerative Rice Farming** project highlighting responsible agriculture cultivation with a link to finance and market sources.

WHAT WE DO

06

SAY 'YES' TO SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL

Sustainable and Climate-friendly
Palm Oil Production and
Procurement (SCPOPP)
in Thailand

Palm oil is used in daily and packaged food, from cosmetics and hygiene products to bread. Sustainable oil palm plantation is a sole answer to save the planet and oil palm small-holders in Southern Thailand are doing it with a support of the **Sustainable and Climate - Friendly Palm Oil Production and Procurement (SCPOPP)** project.





09

RICE FARMERS & CLIMATE FIGHT

Thai-German Climate Programme (TGCP) - Agriculture

Thailand is one of the 195 countries signing in the Paris climate treaty to keep a global temperature rise below 2 degree Celsius. In the agreement, the country needs a plan to prevent greenhouse gas emission, while adjusting to climate change impacts. With a support of **Thai-German Climate Programme (TGCP) - Agriculture** project, local government officers in agriculture and across work on the plans for action to reduce its impact, mainly from methane from rice cultivation in Southeast Asia.



08

AROMA OF RICE AND JOYFUL FARMERS

Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative Thailand

Farmers at Thung Kula Rong Hai (field of the crying Kula) start taking great care of their scented rice because they also eat the rice they grow. This northeastern area had suffered desert-like conditions during dry season and flooding during rainy season. Today, the region has become a well-known rice producing area of the country. With a support of a joint protect **Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative Thailand** of Mars Food, Herba- Bangkok (Ebro Foods) and the Thai Rice Department, farmers get to grow aromatic rice in a more responsible manner. Plus, with financial knowledge and skills, farmers make better decisions with all their financial resources.



10

FARMERS FEEL THE HEAT Thai Rice (Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action) NAMA

Climate change is real and the backbones of Thailand prepare to put on their boxing gloves to fight against it. With a support of **Thai Rice NAMA**, a joint project funded by NAMA Facility with the Thai government, farmers in central part start applying low greenhouse gas emission methods with the use of new technology such as laser land levelling and alternative wetting and drying. Less amount of water and organic fertilizers are used. Farmers will not just feed the world, but save it.

07

SPACE TECHNOLOGY FREES FARMERS' STRESS

Remote-sensing based Information and Insurance in Emerging Economies (RIICE)

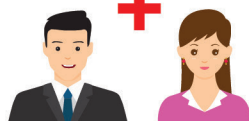
Small-holder farmers in Southeast Asian countries and India are able to get settled more quickly after the unfortunate crop loss. Thanks to a support of **Remote-sensing based Information and Insurance in Emerging Economies (RIICE)** project. When harvest fails or natural disasters hit, with a crop insurance using the space technology information, farmers receive their payouts and relief supports in more transparent and timely manners. Insurance companies also better plan to handle crisis through the space data.

WHAT WE DO

Oil Palm
Farmers

Coffee
Farmers

Rice
Farmers

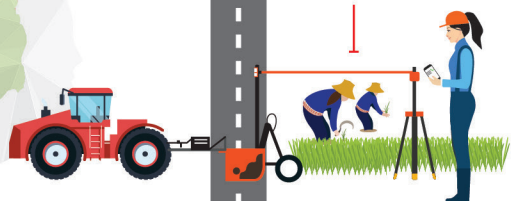


Government officials
from Thailand
and ASEAN

Trainers provide
knowledge and skills



farmers apply
their knowledge
to their farms



IT IS A VALUE CHAIN

Farmers can
expand new
markets on
sustainable
agriculture food,
get more income
while consumers
have healthy food
and well-being.



Farmers
produce rice,
coffee and palm oil
environmentally
friendly with new
technics and
technologies.

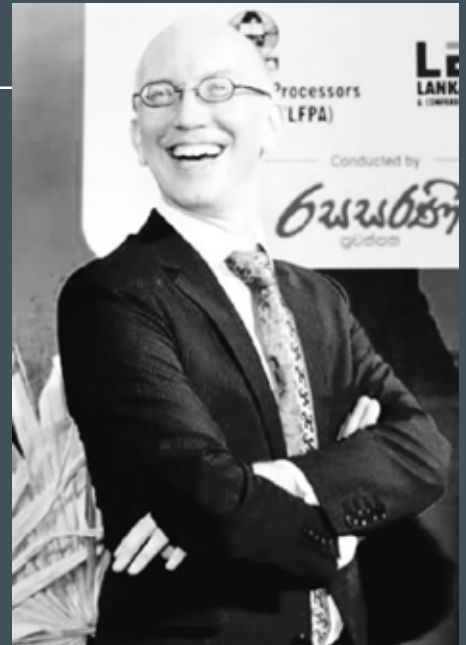


Six types of fruits and vegetables
are exchanged on border of the
three countries; Indonesia,
Vietnam and Thailand



BETTER RICE FOR BETTER LIFE

A thought



‘A good beginning makes a good end’. I totally agree. Welcome to the first issue of news and stories of the Better Rice Initiative Asia in 2019. In this issue, we gear up a very good start by presenting the kick-off on Better Rice Initiative Asia Phase II (BRIA II) project in Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand.

Together with our partners, we achieved outstanding results to improve the rice value chain through the implementation of the BRIA I project from 2014-2017 and provided knowledge from seed production, planting, integrated pest management up to harvesting technologies amongst others to rice farmers, which led to more sustainability in rice production. Most importantly, many of them can sell rice to international markets and earn more income for their families.

In BRIA II, the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standard provides us with the framework for our activities and a clear focus and guidance to private sector, institutions and farmers like how to significantly increase productivity and sustainability in rice farming.

Through this, we now can continue and strengthen our commitments to support rice farmers to promote sustainable growth in agricultural production. We work closely with partners across the region to provide more training on the adoption of sustainable practices and technologies as well as better organizational management of farmers groups to over 35,000 rice farmers in the three countries in Asia. Our main private partner, OLAM International also provides a direct market linkage for the produce.

We hope that the project will bring a great contribution to improve the quality and sustainability of the rice value chain not only to the farmers, but those countries for better rice and better life.

Enjoy reading!

German Muller
Regional Project Director

BRIA'S IN VIETNAM

Vietnamese rice farmers look forwards to sustainable cultivation to bring them profits and stability

Fifty per cent of targeted farmers in a sustainable rice project in Vietnam show interests in learning new farming techniques and change is what they want.

"We expect the project will create change and bring more benefits to our farmers," said Trinh Van Cuong, a farmer and director of Vinh Cuong Cooperative in Bac Lieu Province.

"Our 5,000 farmers in Vinh Cuong cooperative are interested in the new rice farming techniques of the Sustainable Rice Platform standard. We expect the new change of rice techniques will make more profits and help us sustain," Mr. Cuong expressed during a recent kick-off workshop of the Better Rice Initiative Asia phase II or BRIA II project in Vietnam.

The BRIA project, backed by the Vietnamese Government and Olam International with support of German International

Cooperation (GIZ), has entered its second phase, known as BRIA II to improve market access for rice farmers in four provinces of the Mekong Delta - Can Tho, An Giang, Dong Thap and Bac Lieu.

The project's objective is to raise the living conditions of farmers in Asia by improving the quality of the rice they grow and helping them reduce their investment cost.

"Rice is one of the targeted sectors by the National Government to increase food security and livelihood of farmers," said Do Duc Thinh, Director of Department of Economic and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

"We [Vietnam] are successful in rice production and exporting to 150 countries, but it is low quality export with lower price and [we consider it as] unsustainable."



Mr. Ole Henriksen

team leader at GIZ Vietnam speaks to the audience during the kickoff event of the Better Rice Initiative Asia Phase II project on 12 December 2018 in Can Tho province, Southern Vietnam. (Photo by GIZ Vietnam)



Mr. Paul Nicholson

from Olam International Cooperation sheds light on the sustainable rice production among the participants following the opening ceremony of the kickoff event of the Better Rice Initiative Asia Phase II project on 12 December 2018 in Can Tho province, Southern Vietnam. (Photo by GIZ Vietnam)



About 80 participants, including government officials, private companies, millers, exporters and agribusiness scientists listens to opening remarks delivered by Mr. Do Duc Thinh, director of Department of Economic and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development at the kickoff event of the Better Rice Initiative Asia Phase II project on 12 December 2018 in Can Tho province, Southern Vietnam. (Photo by GIZ Vietnam)

"In joining the BRIA II project, Vietnamese cooperative rice farmers have a chance to produce sustainable rice and meet high market requirement in European and United States," Mr Thinh said at the kick-off workshop.

BRIA II will reach 10,000 rice small-holder farmers in four provinces by 2022.

Today, the rice sector in Viet Nam provides income to 9.3 million households; still, many farmer households remain poor. Most of rice farmers are small-holders characterized by often having poor infrastructure and limited access to know-how and technical advice, quality farm inputs, machinery and services, as well as to financial services and stable markets.

Mohit Agarwal, Director of Olam Vietnam Cooperation said that **"For the BRIA II, we will help the farmers to produce a good quality rice with empty pesticide residue, increase farmer access to market and achieve the Happy Farmer and good Sustainable Rice Platform standards."**

He introduced at the workshop that Olam Vietnam maintained top 5 largest private buyers for Viet rice during many years and Olam International was operating in 70 countries supplying various products to 23,000 customers worldwide.

About 80 delegates across sectors attended the event on 12 December 2018 in Can Tho province, Southern Vietnam.

BRIA'S IN INDONESIA

A happy handshake to guarantee sustainable rice growing and more incomes to farmers in Indonesia

At least 9,000 small-scale farmers will receive higher rice prices as a result of the improved crop yields and better access to agricultural services, thanks to a newly signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) for sustainable rice cultivation.

The local Government of Simalungun district, North Sumatra province of Indonesia has recently signed the MoU for phase II of the Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) or BRIA II project to support participating rice farmers in growing sustainable rice.

Jan Posman H. Purba, head of the district's agricultural department expressed his appreciation for the continued collaboration for the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) BRIA phase II project, facilitated by Olam International and German Cooperation Agency (GIZ).

"Thanks to GIZ for selecting Simalungun district as the only working

area of the BRIA II project in Indonesia. We are also very happy that GIZ has cooperated with several related private sectors to help improve the well-being of farmers, especially those who work in rice fields," Mr. Purba said in his opening remarks.

According to Mr. Sulaiman Ginting, senior advisor of the BRIA II project, Simalungun district has been selected for the project's second phase due to its the largest producing area for paddy production in North Sumatra.

At least 9,000 small-scale farmers will participate the Farmer Field School (FFS), a group-based learning, said Mr. Ginting.

The FFS provides farmers a better understanding in the seed selection, seed treatment, effective use of fertilizer and integrated pest management.



Mr. Syahril Purba, head of Extension Division of Agriculture Department shakes hand with a farmer at the symbolic handover of the guaranteed microcredit from Bank Mandiri, crop insurance from PT Jasindo and social security coverage from the Employment-related Social Security Provider (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan) on 3 October 2018 in Simalungun District, Indonesia. (Photo by GIZ Indonesia)



More than 100 participants attend the kickoff event of the second phase of the Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) project on 3 October 2018 in Simalungun District, Indonesia. (Photo by GIZ Indonesia)

The BRIA project has supported the training of about 3,000 farmers and their net income has increased following the training.

The project has entered its second phase, known as BRIA II to transfer agricultural technologies to farmers to boost rice production based on the sustainable rice cultivation for the farmers in selected areas.

The MoU was signed by Mr. Purba and Ms. Lisa Peterskovsky, from the BRIA II project on 3 October 2018.

More than 100 participants from related institutions, private companies, universities, media and farmers attended the event.

For the first cycle of planting season, the project will be implemented in three sub-districts, which are Hutabayu Raja, Tanah Jawa and Panombeian Pane.

Under a cooperation agreement, technology based on the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification standards will be provided to farmers.

Furthermore, the project also facilitates the farmers to get a package of social security services which consist of the Kredit Usaha Rakyat (KUR) programme, the guaranteed microcredit from Indonesia's largest bank, Bank Mandiri, crop insurance from PT Jasindo and social security coverage from the Employment-related Social Security Provider (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan).

NEWS



01 A TRAINING CENTER FOR CLIMATE-FRIENDLY PALM OIL PRODUCTION TO OPEN ITS DOORS IN SOUTHERN THAILAND THIS JULY

As a palm oil boycott is not a way out of this mess, a training center for sustainable palm oil plantation will soon open for the first batch of 500 small-scale farmers in three southern provinces of Surat Thani, Krabi and Chumphon. Plus, their production is expected to be increased for at least 20 percent in the future as a result of the training courses.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/a-training-center-to-boost-climate-friendly-palm-oil-production-to-be-opened-in-southern-thailand/>



02 A DEGREE OF GLOBAL WARMING CAN BE MUCH WORSE THAN YOU THINK

It may sound small, but Dr. Chitnucha Buddabon, Director of Rice Research Center in Ubon Ratchani province has warned the participants at the first awareness raising on climate change event on 30 October 2018 at the Krungsri River Hotel, Ayutthaya province that a degree of temperature change could lead to a loss in rice yield and production by at least 10 percent.



<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/rice-farmers-key-players-in-fight-against-climate-change/>

NEWS



03 'RICE FARMERS' KEY PLAYERS IN THE GLOBAL CLIMATE BATTLE

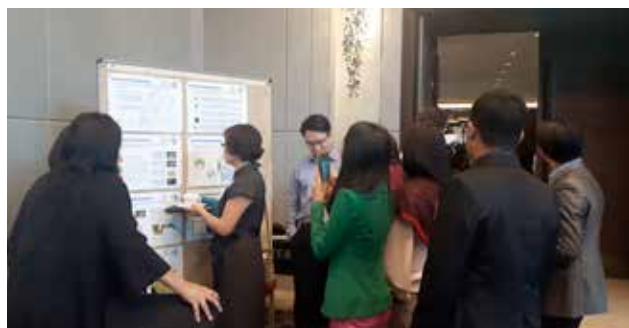
Farmers from several provinces, who attended the second awareness raising on climate change event on 14 December 2018 at Charoen Thani Hotel in Khon Kaen province, have been urged to take a greater role in fighting against global warming by making the shift towards low-emission rice production.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/rice-farmers-key-players-in-fight-against-climate-change/>

04 FARMERS AND CITIZENS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TO FACE 'LESSER IMPACTS' FROM NATURAL DISASTER

While countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are more exposed to natural disasters, experts from several countries at a workshop entitled: "Advanced High-Level Course on Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance" from November 20-22 last year in Bangkok have agreed to make the best use of remote sensing technology and learn best practices on disaster-risk management from global examples and experiences which can help each other deal with the challenge more effectively.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/farmers-and-citizens-in-southeast-asia-to-face-lesser-impacts-from-natural-disaster-with-the-help-of-disaster-risk-transfer-solutions/>



Contributors



Naylinya Chappanapong (Oh)

Senior Communication Officer

for Agriculture and Food at GIZ Thailand

Spent several years in creative communication and fundraising at different leading organizations - Oxfam, Habitat for Humanity Thailand, Plan International Thailand, and Action Aid Thailand. Nothing satisfies her more than creating new activities for the cluster, contributing the overall growth of the organization and a cup of Caffè Cappuccino every day.



Prangthong Jitcharoenkul (Maprang)

Junior Communication Officer

for Agriculture and Food at GIZ Thailand

Former journalist recently joined GIZ Thailand in November 2018, bringing along with her five years' experience of reporting, writing and interviewing. Her articles - straight news and features - on varied topics appear in Bangkok Post and Kyodo News. She secured a full scholarship from the Indian government to study for a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) with a triple major in history, economics and sociology and had lived in Southern India for 3 years.



Nguyen Ngoc Son (Son)

Project Officer for Land use and Agriculture

GIZ Vietnam Agriculture team

With passion for green landscape, rice fields and nature, Son has worked for the agriculture development in the Mekong Delta at GIZ Vietnam for more than 4 years since 2015. The sustainable agriculture sector is an important field that is supported by Land use and our agriculture team. He was responsible for the Integrated Pest Management between 2015-2017 and is right now working hard for the Better Rice Initiative in Asia Phase II project that encourages sustainable rice farming in Vietnam.



Nurhayati Lubis (Nunk)

Junior Professional for Public Relation, Monitoring and Evaluation

at GIZ Indonesia - BRIA II Project

Truly a newcomer in writing world. Used to be a field and admin staff for almost 18 years at several INGOs projects - EU Leuser Management Unit, JICA, USAID, and GIZ in Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Always eager to expand her knowledge on new and challenging issues. Love spend most of her spare time travelling with her children and actively involve on social activities taking care of kids with cancer.





What is Sustainable Development



It means to meet the needs of the present generation, without compromising future generations to meet their own needs.

It focuses on the balance of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues.



<https://www.facebook.com/gizthailandagrifood/?ref=bookmarks>



www.asean-agrifood.org



Sustainable Agrifood System in ASEAN

