



## Promoting environmentally sound agriculture and food safety in partnership with the Eco- Agri Center (EAC)



### Why did we initiate the project?

Organic agriculture and its products are becoming more popular in Cambodia due to the increased awareness of the importance of food safety and the negative environmental impacts of agriculture among consumers. However, for farmers themselves, it still remains difficult to switch to organic agricultural practices due to the following challenges:

- Limited knowledge amongst farmers on organic agriculture.
- Limited market access for organic farmers to sell their produces.
- Lack of suppliers for organic inputs to farmers like Biocontrol Agents (BCAs).

### What did we do to improve the situation?

- ✓ Established a partnership between the Eco-Agri Centers (EAC), an organic input supplier, the Khmer Organic Cooperative (KOC), an organic produce retailer and GIZ.
- ✓ Trained EAC staff in organic agricultural practices with a focus on BCA, training material development and teaching skills.
- ✓ Advised the EAC and KOC Management in business strategy and supply chain management.
- ✓ Assisted the EAC to establish contracts with farmers including the following provisions:
  - EAC provides organic inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and biocontrol agents to farmers,
  - EAC provides expertise, including technical support and training, on organic agricultural practices to assist farmers in achieving organic certification,
  - Farmers produce goods according to the organic standard, and the agreed amounts,
  - Farmers are subject to audits for organic certification,
  - KOC buys organic produce from farmers,
  - KOC performs farm audits to check whether farmers are following standard organic practices,
  - KOC defines quality criteria for each kind of vegetable or fruit.
- ✓ Facilitated field visits to ASEAN neighboring countries for the EAC management and technical staff to learn and exchange ideas about the production and trade of BCA products and the possibility to import these materials to Cambodia.
- ✓ Facilitated trainings for BCA suppliers (private sector) in Cambodia to enable them to produce a diverse array of more efficient BCA agents to reduce expensive BCA imports.
- ✓ Facilitated trainings for government officials to enable them to develop national regulations on the use and trade of biocontrol agents for Cambodian agriculture. This facilitated the registration of BCA products.

**Location** Cambodia  
**Partner** Eco-Agri Center (EAC), Khmer Organic Cooperative (KOC)

### WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

- ✓ Initially, 20 farmers (12 women, and 8 men) in the Kampot province participated in contract farming. Currently, there are 50 KOC contracted farming farmers from five provinces in Cambodia. Some plan to expand their farms due to their success.
- ✓ The average income of farmers has increased by 30%.
- ✓ Khmer Organic Cooperative (KOC) has been successfully certified as the first company in Cambodia supplying EU organic vegetable certification in cooperation with the Standards in the Southeast Asian Food Trade (SAFT) project.

### WHICH FACTORS MADE THE PROJECT A SUCCESS?

- > Creating opportunities for smallholder farmers to play an active role in the value chain by cultivating and producing agricultural goods while not having to worry about agricultural inputs, finances, and markets.
- > Strengthening the role of smallholder farmers in making the decision to convert to organic agriculture, and developing their capacity to carry out organic farming practices.
- > Providing necessary inputs to farmers such as seeds, biocontrol inputs, and technical advice.
- > Connecting farmers to new markets (for organic produce).
- > Reinforcing the supply of BCAs through both the public and private sector.
- > Cooperation between key actors in the value chain including the public and private sectors, and farmers as the producers of quality products who drive organic agriculture in the country.
- > Strong will of the private partner, in this case, EAC and KOC.

### What could be done to improve the project?

- ✓ Strengthen the capacity of BCA producers further in terms of regulation, production and marketing of their products, for a diverse and cost efficient supply of BCAs.
- ✓ Equip input retailers with the necessary knowledge on the responsible use of agricultural inputs. Trainings are needed so they can best give appropriate advice to farmers in using the input products.
- ✓ Raise awareness among smallholder farmers on their responsibility for producing safe food which benefits not only their own health, but also the health of their families, consumers' and the environment.
- ✓ Implement awareness raising campaigns among consumers on the benefits of safe locally produced food, and their responsibility for environmental protection.

### What is the long-term outlook?

- ✓ Improved livelihoods for farmers due to the reduced production costs and healthier and safer agriculture approach.
- ✓ Cambodian consumers pay more attention to the quality of the food they eat.



**Ms. Thlang Sovann Pisey, Director of Eco-Agri Co. Ltd.:** "The vision of Eco-Agri Co. Ltd is providing safe food to Cambodian people while at the same time helping the farmer community. Mr. Ieng Sotheara, the founder, sees that chemical retailers in Cambodia try to gain more profits by encouraging farmers to overuse chemical pesticide and fertilizer. In Cambodia, most farmers use chemical pesticide inappropriately which harms their health and environment. So, he founded the EAC to change the way farmers practice agriculture and provide safe and clean food for the consumers. What we need to do is to re-educate both farmers and chemical retailers on environmental friendly agriculture practices to produce safe food for Cambodian consumers while promoting the organic products among them."



**Mr. Kong Sina, Shop Manager of Khmer Organic Cooperative (KOC):** "The sales volume of vegetables and fruits in our shop has increased from 100 kg a day to 300kg a day. Most buyers come here to buy organic vegetables even though the vegetables do not look good from the outer appearance and have a higher price."



**Ms. Ing Sarun, Contract Farmer with EAC and KOC:** "I am very happy with the price and technical support from EAC. I improved my knowledge and vegetable growing. I have learned that growing organic vegetables does not only benefit me but also consumers and environment."