



Press Release on Sustainable Rice Summit

Partnership as a platform to bring people out of poverty

After a bountiful harvest in 2019, the government of Cambodia expects to have a surplus of 6 million tonnes of paddy on top of domestic consumption and local industrial needs, but more investments and connectivity among value-chain players is needed in the rice industry in the Kingdom.

Today, partnering stakeholders in Cambodia held the first Sustainable Rice Summit to lay out the benefits that private-public-producer partnership using the cooperative business model could bring to the Cambodian rice value-chain. The event was launched this afternoon through the joint sponsorship of the Cambodia Rice Federation, Amru Rice Company and the Cambodia Agricultural Cooperatives Corporation (CACC). It gathers some 60 Agricultural Cooperatives and fourteen co-sponsoring development agencies, including AusAid's CAVAC program, Oxfam-Cambodia, microfinance institutions AMK and Chamroeun, the Rural Development Bank of Cambodia, AgriBuddy, Bio-Agro Chemicals Company, Tropicam, Long Mith Agriculture Company Ltd, Banhji, 365 moving Co.Ltd and Hong Hiep Company.

Oknha Hun Lak, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cambodia Rice Federation lead the event. He said that "Today's sustainable rice summit brought the four key actors from public, private, produce and and the farming community to produce the sustainable rice successfully and with better impact. The success of the farmer is the success of the rice community."

His Excellency Mey Kalyan, Senior Adviser of the Cambodian government Supreme National Economic Council and Chairperson of CACC, said cooperative businesses could help strengthen local economies and empower Khmer citizens, especially marginalized people, as they tapped into a community's resources. The global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) emphasizes that sustainable development is at the very core of co-operative enterprises. As a model of business based on ethical values and principles whose goal it is to provide for the needs and aspirations of their members, co-operatives play a pivotal role in responding to local community needs and objectives, he added.

There were innovations begun by this partnership in the sustainable rice value chain. Participating bank and microfinance institutions has started a financial service that enable cooperatives to procure rice paddy harvested by their members that is guaranteed through the contract farming model. Trade by cooperatives on organic fertilizers started last year. Information-technology

applications have been adopted, such as the BlocRice cashless transactions, product traceability systems and market information on clear price signals.

Mr. Song Saran, CEO of Amru Rice (Cambodia) Co., Ltd and President of Cambodia Rice Federation, said the partnership of the Cambodian cooperatives, the rural bank and microfinance institutions and agricultural input companies and traders are growing. It is consolidating the rice value-chain and optimizing synergies among various stakeholders towards a greater momentum to the cooperative movement that will build on entrepreneurship.

“We are proud of organizing the first event as the sustainable rice summit. It will define the right track that stakeholders will focus on— that address productivity of smallholder farmers, the sustainability of the value-chain, that promotes a partnering platform to bring people out of poverty, preserve the environment and protect the earth. It will contribute to build society and build an ethics-based agreement with the private sector, especially financing, technical assistance, use of information-technology to support to low cost production, better product safety and rights-compliance and efficiency in the rice sector.”

