SRI-LMB’s momentum for innovation begins at 60 action research sites...

Message from Team Leader

The year 2014 was declared as International Year of Family Farming that place smallholder and family farming at the center of national regional and international agricultural, environmental and social policies and emphasizes their role as agents for alleviating rural poverty and ensuring food security for all. The SRI-LMB takes pride in exploring these visionary ideas into action through innovative research and extension and put farmers at the center and strengthen their own efforts, particularly as they are being most affected by, and are adapting to, climate change variability. With changing agricultural farm scenario where women farmers not only provide labour but also play an important role in all aspects of crop cultivation, conservation and commerce, the SRI-LMB ensures 50% participation of women farmers and works to empower them facilitating their participation in decision making and their equitable participation in flexible training programmes and community development efforts. The story of Ms. Thavee Yaknam, which you will read in this Volume, is just an example and inspiration for all of us to intensify our collaborative efforts to realize the ambitious yet achievable goal of equitable and inclusive development. Let us join our efforts. Together we can do it...

- Dr. Abha Mishra

SRI-LMB action research sites in 5 selected provinces of Cambodia & Thailand

After going through a season long intensive training in dry season 2014, the trained farmers of Cambodia and Thailand have set up 120 field experiments at 60 action research sites in 15 districts of 5 provinces in the wet season of 2014. The collaborative enquiry and innovation process continues to bring about the needed changes in farmers’ capacity to manage their own resources to achieve higher productivity of land, labour, capital and water. More specifically, the collaborative action research trials are concentrating on how to develop low-cost technologies for healthy and profitable crops, how to raise the productivity of their crops using principles of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and integrating with indigenous knowledge, plus other complementary crop management principles, and how to improve their farming systems (rice - legumes, rice-fish culture, rice-duck, rice-mushroom, etc).

They are exploring new and modified options based on the need and choice of their community so that the process of experimentation and innovation could yield locally suitable technologies to meet the larger goals of food sufficiency and profitability.
Completion of trainings on farmer participatory action research in Thailand & Cambodia

The season long training designed on Central Farmer Participatory Action Research (CFPAR) involving farmers, districts and provincial trainers was successfully concluded in Thailand and Cambodia. The CFPAR, one for each province, was designed for capacity building of farmer trainers (FTs) and district trainers (DTs) in experimentation, development of curricula on scientific, technical, social, and managerial aspects. Approximately, 120 farmer trainers, 24/province from 5 provinces, two from Thailand (Surin and Uttaradit) and 3 from Cambodia (Kampong Speu, Kampot and Takeo) received intensive training on smart way of rice cultivation revolving around the principles of SRI. The activities included collection, compilation, analyses and interpretation of yield and cost benefit data along with training on bookkeeping and farmers participatory action research management aspects. These trained farmers are now leading action research at 60 action research sites and handling approximately 120 field experiments on range of management practices.

Participants at CFPAR training at Tha Tum district, Surin, Thailand

One hundred six (106) participants including women and landless actively participated in season long Central Farmers Participatory Action Research (CFPAR) trainings that started early August 2014 in Kampong Speu province of Cambodia.

As a part of CFPAR, a Field Day was organized on 28th November 2014 at Agricultural Farmer Training and Research Center in Kampong Speu province by country office of the SRI-LMB Project hosted at General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF, Cambodia).

CFPAR trained farmers are taking lead in setting up action research in their communities as a part of FPAR involving other farmers and community members.

The Field Day marked the closing day of CFPAR and aimed to culminate and summarize the learnings from season long CFPAR activities. The purpose of the Field Day was to (a) bring participants and like-minded individuals to participate in the evaluation of experiments conducted at CFPAR; (b) evaluate results from field experimentation; (c) get impression and advice from other stakeholders and (d) plan for the next Farmers Participatory Action Research (FPAR).

The Field Day concluded in Kampong Speu, Cambodia

Field Day concluded in Kampong Speu, Cambodia

Read more at this link: http://www.sri-lmb.ait.asia/past/CFPARfieldday.php

Participants at CFPAR Field day in Kampong Speu, Cambodia

Participants at CFPAR training in Kampong Speu, Cambodia
Younger single seedling (“Tn Dei-yw” in Thai) & wider spacing led to tremendous response in plant’s vigor that resulted to “ZERO lodging” of the rice plants in Surin grown with SRI. The response was not only limited to commonly grown Homali 105 (Jasmine rice) rice but also niche varieties like Black Jasmine, Rice Berry and glutinous varieties like Ka Kho 6 (RD 6). Healthy and vigorous growth are paying rich dividends to the farmers and translating into higher yield, which many SMART farmers reported in terms of 4.6-5.5 Tons / ha, which is more than double compared to the normal yield.

This was witnessed during a “Farmer Exchange Visit” held in Surin, Thailand (10-13 Nov 2014) organized by the Department of Non-Formal Education, Surin in cooperation with AIT, Thailand and FAO. The purpose of the visit was to foster knowledge exchange for fuelling similar innovation pathways in other project countries - Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. A common dialogue platform was introduced where farmers and district trainers from project countries and Thailand could share their ideas and “innovated” themselves for ongoing/upcoming FPAR activities in their respective countries.

The objectives of the exchange visit were: (1) to strengthen the capacity of farmer and district trainers in designing, conducting, evaluating and managing experiments through Farmer Participatory Action Research (FPAR), and (2) to strengthen regional networking on matters related to the implementation of SRI research and development among farmers, extension agents and research institution representatives. The two days visit to SRI-LMB project sites, those included local experimentation and SRI demonstration fields in Chumphonburi and Sriphoraphum districts of Surin, extended cross-border peer-peer learning and enhanced the momentum for learning and encouragement among the learners.

The farmers and trainers are very hopeful to have a great start next season with more area under SRI in Thailand and also in Lao PDR who are going to initiate their field set up in dry season this year.

Read more at this link: http://www.sri-lmb.ait.asia/past/farmer-ex.php
SRI-LMB project has commissioned a group of consultants to conduct the desk review on access to productive agriculture land for smallholder farmers, landless and land poor to identify the common characteristics, and to negate evidence that illustrates the process of access to and control of productive agriculture land, and to investigate the underlying process behind the current occurrence of land distribution in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

The research analyzes its socio-economic and environmental impact on sustainable livelihoods, choice and equal access to land of the landless, land poor and smallholder farmers. This work and another policy research study, which is being undertaken by another group of consultants, aim to analyze public and private policy environment and practices towards smallholder farmers and small-scale agriculture in the context of food security and climate change in the Lower Mekong River Basin countries.

These studies will feed to policy advocacy and communication dialogue activities of the SRI-LMB led by Oxfam, one of the partners of the SRI-LMB.
On 4th December 2014, the Asian Center of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture Intensification (ACISAI) conducted its Second Steering Committee (SC) meeting held under chairmanship of Dr. Shobhakar Dhakal. The meeting was attended by all members and Co-Directors of the ACISAI Center. New joint publications, joint projects, support to the student research and development of professional master courses were discussed and agreed as plans for the ACISAI Center. The ongoing projects, activities, workshops, exchange visits were shared and discussed. Dr. Anil Kumar Anal was unanimously elected as next rotational chair of the SC. The next meeting will take place in May 2015 coinciding with the regional planning and review workshop of the SRI LMB project.

The program aims to enhance participant’s knowledge and understanding of the multidimensional factors leading to smallholder agriculture transformation, and to stress the interaction of factors within the framework of the institutional and the management system.

Dr. Abha Mishra, Co-Director of the ACISAI shared learning on System of Rice Intensification and good practices for sustainable agriculture intensification involving rainfed small-scale farmers of Thailand and of Lower Mekong River Basin countries for profitability, prosperity and environmental sustainability. Dr. Avishek Datta, one of the Steering Committee member of the ACISAI and Assistant Professor, AIT highlighted on “Smallholder Farmers to be part of the Solution of Global Food Security from Southern and Southeast Asian Perspective”.

The overall objective was to provide the participants with an opportunity to strengthen their knowledge and widen their views on different aspects of smallholder agriculture transformation.

Agri. officials from Ethiopia visit ACISAI Center

Agriculture professionals from Ethiopia visited ACISAI center on 25th September 2014, as a part of Professional Development Training and Exposure Visit Program on “Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Good Practices in Thailand”. This is a customized program specially designed in response to a recent request from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Project Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (USAID-CIAFS) in Ethiopia.

ACISAI concludes second Steering Committee Meeting

The program aims to enhance participant’s knowledge and understanding of the multidimensional factors leading to smallholder agriculture transformation, and to stress the interaction of factors within the framework of the institutional and the management system.

Dr. Abha Mishra, Co-Director of the ACISAI shared learning on System of Rice Intensification and good practices for sustainable agriculture intensification involving rainfed small-scale farmers of Thailand and of Lower Mekong River Basin countries for profitability, prosperity and environmental sustainability. Dr. Avishek Datta, one of the Steering Committee member of the ACISAI and Assistant Professor, AIT highlighted on “Smallholder Farmers to be part of the Solution of Global Food Security from Southern and Southeast Asian Perspective”.

The overall objective was to provide the participants with an opportunity to strengthen their knowledge and widen their views on different aspects of smallholder agriculture transformation.
Ms. Thavee Yaknam from Ban Non Muang, Tha Tum district of Surin province, Thailand is one of the SMART Farmers who participated in season long CFPAR in Tha Tum, Surin organized earlier this year. She is also a Farmer Trainer who is not only leading in setting up of new experiments with farmers of her village but also converting her entire traditional rice crop under SRI management. She is enjoined by a group of farmers in her community and has started adapting SRI management for ‘Blackberry’ rice variety, which sells in market at higher price, almost triple as compared to local varieties. She is very positive that SRI enabled her to reduce cost of production to earn better livelihood. SRI crop in her fields did remarkably well under adverse weather conditions this year, which received much less rain in early months of the rice growing season. She harvested almost double, i.e., 6 tons/ha, compared to the previous years. She encouraged visitors to visit her farm and her SRI crop. She continues to encourage other farmers in her community to join her innovative journey that she started with SRI.

Khun Mon, another SMART Farmer (participated in season long training in Surin province) is setting innovative experiments in his organic farm. He took initiative on his own to explore various possibilities of rice crop management under the principles of SRI that included testing ‘spacing’, ‘number of seedling’ water management—maintaining ‘just moist condition’—by both direct sowing and transplanting younger seedlings (at two leaf stage).

After few months, there was a transformational change in the crop stand. Single seedling transplants produced on an average 38 - 40 tillers that too full with grains. His learning did not stop there. In early November this year, there was strong wind in his area and he and his farmer colleagues observed that not a single plant lodged from his SRI experimental plots managed organically, whereas all direct sown plants were lodged. Khun Mon continuously feed his soil with all crop residues and even add fresh biomass to the soil such as bamboo leaves continuously. One can witness the ‘living’ soil in his farm.

He is waiting for the next rice season to test more innovative ideas and whole set of SRI practice and happy to continue to inspire other farmers in raising sustainable organic SRI rice production.

The Thai PMU office at ACISAI and provincial office managed by Department of Non-formal and Informal Education, Ministry of Education in Surin are continuously stand by these efforts for their success in charting innovative pathways of rice cultivation under SRI principle.
SRI-LMB welcomes new staffs!

Mr. Kong Kea joined as PMU/Country Coordinator for SRI-LMB project in Cambodia. He is providing guidance and coordination support to PMU office at country level.

Mr. Kea has been playing a vital role in promoting SRI management in Cambodia through managing projects implemented under General Directorate of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Contact details:
Cell: +855-17-959 727  
Email: kea_ipm@hotmail.com

Mr. Chhit Mak joined as National Training Expert for SRI-LMB project in Cambodia. He has been providing trainings on action research, experimental design, and coordination support to PMU and LMUs in Cambodia.

Contact details:  
Cell: + 855-11-645 390  
Email: mak.chhit@fao.org

Mr. Kongsy Xayavong joined as National Training Expert for SRI-LMB project in Lao PDR. He has been providing trainings on action research, experimental design, and coordination support to PMU and LMUs in Laos.

Contact details:  
Office: + 856-21-732072  
Email: kongsy47@yahoo.com

Mr. Phatnakhone Khanthamixay joined as PMU/Country Coordinator for SRI-LMB project in Lao PDR. He is coordinating PMU Office hosted at DAEC and also providing coordination and advisory support to Local Management Unit office located at provincial level.

He was working as Deputy Head for Division of Agricultural Technique and Mechanization Promotion at Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. He has experience and expertise in the area of small farm management, project management and village and local government development planning.

Contact details:  
Office: + 856-21-732072 ; Fax: + 856-21-732092  
Email: k__phat@yahoo.com

Mr. Mitesh Vishwas Sawant joined as a Training and Research Associate for PMU Thailand for the SRI-LMB project. He will be responsible for supporting field experimentation in Utrradit and Surin Province working closely with Ministry of Education’s provincial teams and Local Management Units (LMUs) and documentation of the results. He is a graduate of AIT from Agricultural and Engineering field of study.

Contact details:  
Office: +66-2-524-5823; Cell: + 66880147170  
E-mail: mitsawant@ait.asia

For more information please visit our social media links:

https://www.facebook.com/sri.lmb  
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5P9MFLsKlbshwMDY918XXw  
http://www.slideshare.net/srilmb/  
https://plus.google.com/photos/100435612470757772541/albums

SRI-LMB Newsletter is published bi-annually by SRI-LMB Publications Unit. We welcome your input, preferably in English. The deadline for submissions is on 30 May for June issue and 30 November for December issue. We reserve the right to edit all contributions. Please send inputs at srilmb@ait.asia and cc to Dr. Abha Mishra, Project Manager-SRI-LMB (abhamishra@ait.asia).

Website: www.sri-lmb.ait.asia

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.