

REPORT ON NATIONAL PRIZES FOR BEST SRI FARMERS IN 2007

By CEDAC, July 2008

1. Introduction

The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) is a set of innovative rice cultivation methods developed in Madagascar in the 1980s. In 2000, when CEDAC first introduced SRI ideas to farmers in Cambodia, just 28 farmers in 18 villages volunteered to test SRI. Following the first success of this farmer-based experimentation, SRI began to spread throughout Cambodia. Currently, there are over 82,000 rice farmers from approximately 2,600 villages in Cambodia following SRI practices. Although the number of farmers using SRI has been increasing very fast, the level of adoption at national level is still low, about 4 percent of rice-farming families in Cambodia.

In order to call more attention to SRI opportunities and to generate more enthusiasm among farmers for using SRI and among research and development organizations and policy-makers to promote SRI, with funding support from Oxfam America, CEDAC in cooperation with the SRI Secretariat in MAFF, proposed National Prizes for the best SRI farmers in the country. The proposed grant will be used for identification and evaluation of best farmers and for organizing the prizes-awarding ceremony in Phnom Penh.

2. Objectives

In order to convince more farmers to adopt and adapt SRI in Cambodia, to generate wider interest among stakeholders in promoting SRI, as well as to present best practices in rice cultivation, CEDAC in cooperation with the SRI Secretariat plans to introduce National Prizes of best farmers for the main rice-growing season 2007. The objectives of the prize awards are:

- Increase awareness, interest and enthusiasm among farmers, research and development organizations, and policy makers on SRI as an option for sustainable rice intensification and for diversification of rice-based farming systems; and
- Document and disseminate farmer best practices in sustainable rice intensification

3. Activities

3.1. Preparation and Announcement

The Working Group and SRI Secretariat have prepared the criteria and the process for identifying and selecting 'best farmers' for the prizes. The SRI Secretariat and all NGOs who promoted SRI announced the opportunity for volunteer farmers to apply through an application form. The proposed criteria of 'best SRI rice farmers' are:

- Size of cultivated land under SRI
- Principles and practices of SRI utilized
- Gross product and yield
- No use of chemical fertilizer, pesticides, synthetic chemical substances, or genetically-engineered rice
- Linking SRI to other innovations (such as integrated farming, marketing, social and emotional development in community)
- Demonstrated leadership in promoting SRI in their own communities
- Women farmers are especially encouraged to apply

Information on the prizes was made public to all farmers to apply for competition through NGOs, government departments, and DAALI to Provincial Department of Agriculture. Interested farmers were requested to send in their applications for the award directly or through supporting organizations.

3.2. Short-listing at the provincial level

Organizations and Provincial Departments of Agriculture were asked to review the candidates from their respective provinces and to pass on the applications of qualified candidates to the SRI Secretariat at DAALI.

3.3. Short-listing at the national level

The evaluations were conducted by a mixed committee, with 3 representatives of CEDAC, 2 representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, one representative from the Royal University of Agriculture and 4 representatives of the Farmer-Nature Network (FNN). All committee members worked together as a group to identify the best SRI farmer nominated from each province. Finally, 19 farmers were selected for further consideration from among the 52 farmers who had applied and been approved in 10 provinces.

3.4. Visit to farmers' own fields

All committee members met together again to consider these 19 farmers to make the final decision. At last, 13 farmers were decided upon for verification on their own fields to find the best farmer. After committee visits and verification, members met together to calculate the farmers' respective scores. The criteria of 'best SRI rice farmer' for score were:

- Yield on complete rice area
- Yield on SRI area
- Use of natural fertilizer and soil management/soil improvement.
- Use of SRI steps and new innovations
- SRI area compared to total rice area
- Rice variety used
- Environment around home

At the result, 3 farmers were selected at the national level; other 11 farmers were given the first grade in each province; and another 9 farmers were classified for encouragement grade.

On April 20, 2008, all 23 best farmers presented their experiences, and the committee did a total calculation again before announcing the results. The next day, April 21, 2008, a workshop was conducted on the SRI award as part of an SRI national conference held at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAALI/ MAFF), organized by the SRI Secretariat. In this event, there were 180 participants (30 women) from 24 provinces and cities. The participants were farmers (SRI and non-SRI), MAFF, CARDI, DAALI, RUA and PNSA staff, and NGOs personnel. Objectives of the conference were first, giving awards to the best SRI farmers, also reviewing SRI progress in Cambodia, reviewing SRI progress province-by-province, finding out the results of SRI research by other institutions, strengthening SRI knowledge and policy of MAFF through awareness raising, sharing SRI experiences, communicating best practices and lessons learned,

and widely promoting SRI adoption of farmers. During the opening speech by H.E. Chan Sarun, Minister of Agriculture, the three best SRI farmers in Cambodia were recognized and given their awards, and awards were given also to the 11 farmers for their achievement at provincial level, and to 9 additional farmers for encouragement.

3. 5. The Awards Winners

A. The winners of the national awards

Name of farmer	Province	Total land (a)	SRI land (a)	Land registered for the competition (a)	Total yield (Kg/ha)	Yield registered for the competition (Kg/ha)	Class
Hak Seoung	Takeo	100	100	30	5,280	9,620	1
Tuy Phorn	Takeo	150	150	19	6,800	7,500	2
An Chrun	Kampot	50	50	10.5	8,000	9,285	3

B. The winners at provincial level

Name of farmer	Province	Total land (a)	SRI land (a)	Land area registered for the competition (in ares)	Total yield (Kg/ha)	Yield registered for the competition (Kg/ha)
Meng Paov	Takeo	80	75	15	3,920	8,493
So Tit	Kampong Speu	100	70	16	6,000	7,000
Hi Mom	Siem Reap	80	80	80	3,125	3,125
Pech En	Battambang	32	32	32	6,250	6,250
Sous Sary	Kampong Chhang	100	68	65	4,000	5,231
Keout son	Kampong Thom	200	97	40	5,750	4,857
Nu Korm	Prey Veng	70	70	22	4,400	5,909
Loun Pal	Kandal	480	80	15	3,628	4,500
Khan Pika	Kampot	60	40	14	4,938	6,235
Meoung Khun	Kos Kong	400	25	25	2,784	6,750
Neam Sam Eoun	Svay Reng	200	30	30	3,000	4,333

C. Farmers who receive encouragement prizes

No	Name	Province
1	Tem Pheach	Kampong Speu
2	Nut Choy	Takeo
3	Sem Sam Eoun	Takeo
4	Lem Chan	Krati
5	Hon Hak	Seim Reap
6	Preoung Iv	Battambang
7	Ton Chet	Kampong Thom
8	Mut Khem	Prey Veng
9	Kum Cheoun	Kandal



The prizes for the awards are:

- First farmer -- 500 USD
- Second farmer - 300 USD
- Third farmer -- 150 USD
- 11 farmers -- 25 USD each
- 9 farmers -- 20 USD each

IV. Conclusion

In general, this year's project was completed successfully, and there are many farmers interested in applying next year for prize awards. Cooperating NGOs and PDAs will continue this program and will improve it for next year. Farmers who did not reach recognition at the national level say they will improve their rice fields. In addition, they are promoting SRI to other farmers. Authorities and stakeholders are interested in this initiative and are collaborating with us. H.E. Dr. Chan Sarun, Minister of Agriculture, continues to encourage farmers to apply SRI methods and to send their applications to the SRI Secretariat.