

National Forum on Local Innovation

Subject
"Can Farmer Be Innovators?"

PROLINNOVA Cambodia collaborated with the General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA) to organize a National Forum on Local Innovation. The theme was "Can Farmers be Innovators," and was held January 28-29, 2010 at GDA offices in Phnom Penh. The event was co-funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) and the Rockefeller Foundation through the PROLINNOVA and FAIR programmes and CEDAC. The forum was chaired by H.E Lord Reaksmey, Secretary General of Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF) and facilitated by Mr. Sam Vitou, from CEDAC. There were 92 participants, 34 of whom were women. They came from 10 provinces and 19 institutions. The main objectives of the forum were to enable innovative farmers to share their innovations and best practices and to expose researchers, extension workers and educators to farmer innovations.

In his opening remarks, H.E Lord Reaksmey strongly endorsed the activities of PROLINNOVA such as farmer experimentation, lecturer and student exchange visits, and local innovation workshops. He also said PROLINNOVA activities included theory and practice so that they can be used by farmers, extensionists and researchers. The Royal Government of Cambodia is prioritizing agriculture as a primary driver for the country's economic development. Based on the government's strategic plan, MAFF is committed to make the plan succeed for positive change in the countryside

During the forum, 25 farmers presented and showed pictures and materials of their innovations both in plenary sessions and at market stands, in an open exhibit area lively with posters, papers and other materials. A selection committee was formed with five members from different institutions to select the best innovator. There were four main criteria to judge the best innovation: technical expertise created or adapted by innovator; extension and adaption by other farmer; presentation capability; and materials of innovation such as posters, photos and/or articles of the innovation. Five farmer innovators were selected: 1. Innovations on how to grow papaya to get more fruits and tolerant to water logging, by Mr. Ruos Mao from Takeo province; 2. Advantages of multi-purpose farm for the sake of adaptation to climate change and economic purposes, by Mrs. Leng Yeat from Kampong Thom province; 3. Eel raising in plastic containers, by Mr. Kheum Saret from Battambang province; 4. Chicken breeding to get more eggs and healthy chicks, by Mrs. Lay Phallang from Takeo province; and 5. Melon production, by Mrs. Yoeum Sokha from Battambang province. The prize for the first 3 farmers was USD250, 200 and 150, respectively. In addition, they received a certificate of recognition from the PROLINNOVA Cambodia Secretariat. The fourth and fifth farmers received USD50 each and a certificate of recognition. All farmers who displayed their innovations received an admiration prize as recognize their efforts.

The event was deemed a success, providing a positive platform for farmers not only to highlight their innovations but their role in generating new agricultural techniques. It was also an important opportunity to strengthen the "National platform" where farmers, researchers, extension workers, lecturers and students learn and share on local innovation together. There was strong recognition and support from MAFF and GDA to organize the event together with PROLINNOVA Cambodia in the coming year.

