



## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND SMALL-SCALE FARMERS IN CAMBODIA, LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND MYANMAR

Consumer demand for safe food with low environmental impact is increasing everywhere, including the Asia region, offering new opportunities to organic producers. However, because of the high cost of third-party certification, these opportunities are not readily available to smallholder farmers. In addition, consumers are faced by difficulties in finding and trusting organic or safe food products in the market. In response to this, the project addressed certification and marketing issues through the promotion of the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia. PGS is a low-cost certification suitable for smallholder farmers and local markets. It is based on the active participation of farmers, consumers, rural advisers and local authorities, who come together to make decisions, visit farms, support one another and check that farmers are producing according to an Organic Standard.



### WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The project introduced PGS to the participating countries, provided PGS-specific training at national level, formed the trained farmers into PGS groups, linked them to potential markets, buyers and consumers, organized media campaigns and developed promotional materials to raise awareness on PGS and organic agriculture, and created, in collaboration with IFOAM-Organics International, the Global PGS map and registered the PGS groups on it. In order to do this, 13 participants (46 percent women) from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar were trained as master trainers through a regional training of trainers event on PGS. These, in their turn, trained 255 farmers (44 percent women) in Cambodia and 262 (56 percent women) in Lao People's Democratic Republic in PGS. At the end of the project, 96 farmers (58 percent women) in Cambodia and 194 farmers (50 percent women) in Lao People's Democratic Republic were members of formed and operational PGS groups. The number of regular consumers is estimated at 8 200 for Cambodia and 8 300 for Lao People's Democratic Republic. This translates into improved livelihoods for smallholder farmers, and safe and fresh products for consumers. The project also made a comprehensive assessment of the legal and regulatory environment in each country.

### IMPACT

Smallholder farmers in PGS groups have improved their selling conditions, increased their income and improved their livelihoods. The volume of PGS production in both countries is estimated to be more than 1 000 tonnes per year, mainly of vegetables and fruit, representing a gross value of more than USD 900 000 per year. Farmers now have the capacities and incentives to continue to produce PGS-organic products and to market them through different channels. Many farmers also reported more confidence in explaining to consumers and buyers the benefit of PGS, and some farmers are now trainers in their rural communities. Knowledge-sharing and empowerment are among the benefits of working with PGS; for instance, facilitating organizations are empowered and continue to support PGS in rural communities on their own initiative. At national level, the participating governments are now developing national documents that envisage the role of PGS as a verification system for organic agriculture, especially for local and national markets.

### KEY FACTS

**Contribution**

USD 362 000

**Duration**

September 2015 – December 2017

**Resource Partners**

FAO

**Partners**

Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao People's Democratic Republic

**Beneficiaries**

Smallholder farmers producing or wishing to produce organic food, small-scale entrepreneurs, facilitating organizations and consumers wishing to buy safe and organic food



## ACTIVITIES

- Assessment conducted of legal and regulatory environments in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and recommendations made for incorporation of PGS.
- Facilitating organizations identified and master trainers trained: six in Cambodia (one woman), five in Lao People's Democratic Republic (three women) and two in Myanmar (two women).
- Training in PGS provided by master trainers to 617 farmers in 40 PGS groups.
- Two media campaigns organized and two workshops held on organic agriculture and PGS for small-scale entrepreneurs.
- Global PGS map established.
- Continuous technical support provided at field level
- Promotional materials developed, including stories from the field and videos based on the beneficiaries' experiences and the results achieved
- Market survey for PGS products conducted in Lao People's Democratic Republic.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



### Project Code

TCP/RAS/3510

### Project Title

Small-scale Farmer Inclusion in Organic Agriculture Development through Participatory Guarantee Systems

### Contacts

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

[FAO-RAP@fao.org](mailto:FAO-RAP@fao.org)

Mayling Flores Rojas (Lead Technical Officer)

[Mayling.FloresRojas@fao.org](mailto:Mayling.FloresRojas@fao.org)



Resource Mobilization Division  
Marketing, Outreach and Reporting Unit  
[Reporting@fao.org](mailto:Reporting@fao.org)