

## CASIC – Paving the Way for Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Intensification in Cambodia

Climate Change is progressing and negative impacts on food production are expected to further increase, thus exacerbating the problems of hunger and malnutrition. In order to promote sustainable intensification (SI) and Conservation Agriculture (CA) as measures to adapt to climate change and increase food security in Cambodia, the country recently launched the Cambodia Conservation Agriculture Sustainable Intensification Consortium (CASIC) . It will bring together different stakeholders to engage in promoting CA and SI practices in Cambodia through improved knowledge management, research, networking and promotion.

In the quest to promote sustainable intensification (SI) in Cambodia, the country has embarked upon Conservation Agriculture (CA) initiatives. CA activities usually focus primarily on cropping system design, soil fertility assessment and agricultural engineering, rather than commercial practices. However, in recent years, commercial practices in this area have also been promoted.

The formation of the Cambodia Conservation Agriculture Sustainable Intensification Consortium (CASIC) aims at further augmenting the current work by bringing together different stakeholders. Furthermore, it makes CA more accessible to farmers through market actors offering services. CASIC has the vision to be a well-established platform with a vast network of organizations that are working on the CA issues in Cambodia, e.g., markets, research, policies and service provision. The mission of CASIC is to establish knowledge management of CA-related resources that will be easily accessible by smallholder farmers, semi-commercial farmers, and agricultural cooperatives, create an enabling environment to boost investment in CA/SI, promote and enhance CA/SI practices and enhance collaboration between stakeholders.



Bos Khnor research station

On 21 May 2020, HE Minister Veng Sakhon, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), has formally approved the formation of CASIC. This decision is a turning point to foster the dissemination of conservation agriculture and sustainable intensification practices in order to restore and preserve agricultural soils in Cambodia, advance farm sustainability and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

CASIC is a multi-stakeholder consortium that will consist of different organizations coming together and meeting on a regular basis to discuss the promotion of CA/SI practices in Cambodia via four thematic committees, which focus on:

- a) knowledge management, led by the Royal University of Agriculture (RUA),
- b) networking and collaboration, led by Swisscontact,
- c) research, led by the Department of Agricultural Land Resources Management (DALRM) in close collaboration with the Center for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD); and,
- d) promotion, led by Swisscontact.

Several Cambodian ministries are involved in the CASIC Steering Committee<sup>1</sup> and various organizations are represented on the executive board, namely the Department of Agricultural Land Resources Management/GDA, the Department of Agricultural Engineering/GDA, CIRAD, the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Agricultural Intensification and Nutrition (CE SAIN) of the Royal University of Agriculture, Swisscontact, and Kansas State University. CASIC will be embarking upon its strategic plan in the coming months and will launch new initiatives in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.

Over the next few decades, the supply side stressors due to climate change threaten to increase food prices to levels that will further curb hunger and malnutrition and may cause politico-economic disruption.<sup>2</sup> Experts often cite SI as an effective response to this challenge as it focuses on increasing production on already existing agricultural lands through sustainable practices, and thus ensuring food security. Through CASIC, Cambodia would contribute to the global shift towards SI, ultimately leading to improved climate change adaptation and increased food security.



Meeting held under HE Om Kimsir to discuss CASIC



Farmers experience no-till planter firsthand

<sup>1</sup> the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM), Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce

<sup>2</sup> Godfray, H. C., & Garnett, T. (2014). Food security and sustainable intensification. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 369(1639), 20120273. doi:10.1098/rstb.2012.0273