



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/innovation-will-transform-agriculture-cambodia>

Innovation Will Transform Agriculture in Cambodia

One of the goals of my recent journey to Cambodia focused on exploring opportunities for transforming Cambodia's agriculture sector.

Cambodia's challenge is to produce enough nutritious and broadly accessible food to support a healthy, productive population and drive the growth of the national economy. Accompanied by seven journalists representing six South Asian countries, I visited projects supported by the U.S. Government's [Feed the Future](#) and [Global Climate Change](#) initiatives. In Cambodia, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) primary contribution to these initiatives is [HARVEST](#), a five-year food security program for Cambodia. Other programs we visited are supported by the United Nations [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), the [World Food Programme](#) (WFP), and the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD).

At each stop, I was privileged to talk to smallholder farmers and their families. After these conversations, I have no doubt that new, often very simple, technologies, which are at the heart of innovation, will become game-changers in Cambodia. It was exciting to see their benefits during our visits to USAID HARVEST sites in Siem Reap and Kampong Thom Provinces.

For instance, by sharing the purchase of a \$60 drum seeder, farmers in Chrey village improved the uniformity of their rice plantings and reduced the amount of seed and labor needed, thus saving farmers time and money. Since the plants are better spaced, their rice grows healthier, faster and is more productive. Another farmer held a jar of fertilizer briquettes and explained that they provide a more targeted, efficient, and cost-effective application of nutrition to plants, thus saving money and the environment by preventing excessive use of fertilizer. The demonstration plot spoke for itself, as the plants fertilized by the briquettes stood at least a foot taller than the adjoining traditional plot.

Farmers are also learning a range of new practices, including drip irrigation, water management, and pest management, all of which allow them to harvest two or even three crops per year, instead of just one. Farmer Savath Kdep showed us how cultivation of a beautiful plot of long beans provided not only enough for his family, but also enough for them to sell and earn additional income—an extra \$4,000 in one year alone.

Over five years, HARVEST will help 70,000 poor households improve their yields, diversify their production to include higher value and more nutritious horticultural crops, and store and market their products more effectively.

At the same time, it was also clear from these visits that technologies alone are not enough. Innovation in the Cambodian context must also include strengthening human capital development and knowledge-delivery systems in order to strengthen and support the fundamental resource base of the country: its people. In Kandal province, IFAD, FAO and their partners, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, are developing innovative models of training, extension, and local capacity building.

Private sector extension agents, working on commission, help farmers access and make effective use of high quality inputs and the technical knowledge necessary to make a rapid return on their investment. I also saw how the Preah Prasab Commune has established a group microfinance revolving fund initiative to facilitate access to new skills and basic capital for poor farmers so that they have the technical and financial capacity to adopt new technologies.

Many of the farmers we met have dreams that go far beyond subsistence farming. They are eager to gain new skills and technologies and to move to commercial production so they can improve their household income and offer their children healthier and more productive lives. We share this vision of success through innovation in agriculture development in Cambodia.

This post originally [appeared](#) on the U.S. Department of State blog.