



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/crop-diversification-farmers-get-most-out-their-land>

# With Crop Diversification, Farmers Get the Most out of their Land



HARVEST

Cambodian horticulture farmers like this one in Kampong Thom province are alternating crops to mitigate their vulnerability to climate change.

In Cambodia, diversifying crops is uncommon. The majority of farmers grow only rice, and they do it during the six-month wet season, leaving their fields unsown for half of the year. This practice limits the country's agricultural productivity and leaves farmers vulnerable to a variety of problems, including pests, market fluctuations and the effects of global climate change.

Through a [program](#) supported under Feed the Future and the Global Climate Change initiative, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is working with Cambodian farmers to change the country's reliance on cultivating a single crop by promoting crop diversification as part of a broader agricultural technical package. Crop diversification encourages farmers to plant a number of crops including different varieties of rice and vegetables on the same plot throughout the year, reducing the risk that a particularly long, hot dry season will threaten their food security or incomes.

This practice is beginning to take hold, with over 10,000 farmer clients who are part of the program having adopted crop diversification to date. One of those farmers is Sem Sokha. Based in Kampong Thom province, he grew only rice for years, occasionally experimenting with melons during the dry season.

"I never made any money with the melons," he says. "Honestly, I just did it to keep myself busy."

That changed in 2013, when Sem became a commercial horticulture client with the USAID program. With technical assistance, he began growing a variety of vegetables, including long beans and bitter gourd. He now plants these crops during the dry season on his once-dormant rice field, while continuing to grow rice during the wet season. This practice has led to dramatic increases in both productivity and income: Sem now earns a staggering 479 percent more than he did before diversifying his crops.

"After years of failure, I feel like I'm finally achieving success," he says. "I'm finally doing work that can support my family."

With this new approach to farming his land, Sem has increased his resilience to climate change. Climate projections show that Cambodia will face longer and more intense droughts and floods in future years, putting many farmers at risk of shocks to their livelihoods. But by optimizing his productivity during the dry season, Sem is in a much better position to adapt to changing weather patterns.

"I'm getting the most out of my land now," Sem says.