

Five-Year Project on *Sustaining and Enhancing the Momentum for Innovation and Learning around the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) in the Lower Mekong River Basin*

A regional project on “*Sustaining and Enhancing the Momentum for Innovation and Learning around the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) in the Lower Mekong River Basin*” proposed by the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok to the European Community (EC) for financing was approved during September 2011 for implementation in rainfed areas of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The grant period is for five years and the amount provided is 2.88 million euros.

The proposal was prepared in response to a EuropeAid Call for Proposals, entitled “2009-2010 Global Programme on Agricultural Research for Development - Component 1: Research and Technology.” The project concept was based on recommendations emanating from a regional workshop in 2009 organized by AIT with the World Bank Institute (WBI) (<http://www.ait.ac.th/research/workshop-reports/AIT-WBI-Workshop-Report.pdf>). This workshop involved various government, non-government, academic and UN partners that are working in the Southeast Asian region and are concerned with sustainable intensification of agriculture, especially in rainfed areas.

The chief recommendation from the workshop was for the development of adaptive measures to protect against climate change so as to address the food security and livelihood issues of smallholding farmers in Lower Mekong River Basin (LMB) countries. The strategy was to set up local, national, regional and international ‘innovation platforms’ for joint initiatives and coordinated actions. This project will develop and strengthen north-south and south-south collaboration to address local, regional and global challenges of water scarcity, food security, and climate change.

The proposal developed by Dr. Abha Mishra and her colleagues at AIT grew out of working partnerships since 2005 with various national and international institutions including relevant ministries of LMB countries. Funding support for these collaborative activities has come from various organizations including the Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank, World Bank Institute, United Nation Environment Programme, and with collaboration from some Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centers.

The main project partners are the FAO Regional IPM Programme, Oxfam America, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, UK. Project associates include the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development (CIIFAD) in USA and the University of Queensland in Australia.

The project goal is to enhance the resilience of rainfed smallholder farmers and their farming communities as they deal with climate change and other challenges in the four countries. The project partners will stimulate and support local innovation through farmers’ participatory action research (FPAR) and collaboration among agricultural sector professionals and organizations for enhancing food security.

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