TRAVERSES

No. 53

December 2023

Organisations in the value chains and quality management

Coordinated by Paul Belchi (Iram)

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The editions of the "Groupe *initiatives*"

Groupe initiatives

This work and this issue Traverses received financial support from the Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency - AFD)

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TRAVERSES PUBLICATIONS

The aim of the Traverses publications is to draw critical lessons from the practices of the member organisations of the "Groupe *initiatives*" in order to contribute to the strategic and methodological debate within the international solidarity sector. The approach is based on the exchange of practices within the G*i* and on study days open to stakeholders from the associative, public, academic and corporate sectors. **Drawing on the hands-on experience of members and their partners on the ground, this work leads to the formulation of recommendations and collective positions.**

Acknowledgements

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With the contribution of: Elise Perniceni (Gret).

For their involvement and participation in the discussions, we would like to express our sincere thanks to: Nhem Saroeun, (Director of CESPA), Snguon Chamroeun (Coordinator of CESPA), Hun Sokhin and Sok Kunthyda (CESPA producers), Thai Soda (Deputy Director of Ecofar), Soeun Chhay (producer involved in the DeFiP project), Vaeng Neang (member of PMUAC), Oeur Sam Ath (Director of PMUAC), Champa Chhong (Green Farmers producer and collector), Tann Di Nary (Agris Project Manager responsible for the Green Farmers Association), Kimly Phoeun (Director of the Department of Commerce of Siem Reap Province), Nhim Thangcheng (executive at AMRU Rice), Emmanuel Dollfus (Deputy Director of the AFD), Laure Steer (Programmes Officer at the Iram); Kimsour Team (General Resources and Logistics Officer), Chin Chav An (Communications Officer), Keo Socheata (Director of the Gret), Damien Lagandré (Regional Director of the Gret).

We would like to offer our warmest thanks to **our colleagues from the 6 organisations of the "Groupe *initiatives*" who participated in the various stages of this work.** We would also like to thank **all the partners in the field** (producers, collectors, civil society, local authorities, private actors): their efforts underpin this work, which is based on their feedback from experiences in the field.

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This publication is supported by the Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency - AFD). However, the ideas and opinions presented do not necessarily represent those of the AFD

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Supporting producer organisations for sustainable rural development in Cambodia

The "Groupe *initiatives*" brings together international solidarity organisations that share the same desire to work for a habitable world respecting the economic, social and cultural rights of all. Six of these organisations have been present in Cambodia (Agrisud International, APDRA, AVSF, Geres, Gret, Iram), often for many years. The country moved into the category of "lower middle-income countries" in 2015. The textiles, agriculture, tourism and, more recently, construction and real estate industries have significantly improved incomes and reduced the share of people living below the poverty line from 47.8% in 2007 to 9.5% in 2019 (despite rising again during the COVID-19 pandemic), albeit displaying poorer results than neighbouring countries in terms of quality, food security and nutrition.

This growth nevertheless comes with increasing challenges to the sustainability of both agricultural production systems and energy systems, while pressure on water resources and the effects of climate change are becoming more and more acute. In this context, how can economic development, the fight against poverty and the preservation of the environment be reconciled? As always at the "Groupe *initiatives*", our members contribute to the debates on the basis of associative practices and expertise. Starting here from their actions on the ground in favour of integrating family producers and artisans into value chains and giving them access to profitable markets, our six members examine in particular the challenges of quality management through organisations within the sectors.

By capitalising on and questioning their experiences and practices, our members make progress together but also, and above all, want to contribute to considerations with the actors in the territories, value chains and field of development in Cambodia, to question the positioning of rural agencies and operators and to contribute to public policies. This is an essential role for international development NGOs such as ours, from the perspective of international solidarity in achieving the SDGs.

We hope that this joint work in Cambodia will be the first of an enhanced collaboration both between members of the "Groupe *initiatives*" and with all local actors.

Marie-Noëlle Reboulet, President of the Gi

"Groupe *inititiatives*" seminar in Phnom Penh on 5 October 2023

Capitalising on the G*i*'s experiences in Cambodia

Through Traverses 53, the G*i* has endeavoured to capitalise on, question and debate the practices of its members operating in Cambodia, a country where most of them have been active for a number of years. This study was carried out as part of the Syner-G*i* project "Strengthening and structuring development CSOs and their partners for enhanced incorporation of associative expertise," supported by the Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency), whose objective is to support the sharing and dissemination of the G*i*'s members' practices in order to strengthen their alliance in the field of project expertise and engineering, and ultimately to better promote their values and approaches with regard to solidarity, development aid and the fight against inequalities.

The members of the G*i* in Cambodia (Agrisud International, APDRA, AVSF, Geres, Gret, Iram) have decided to carry out a joint cross-capitalisation of their actions concerning support to organisations in the agricultural and artisanal sectors and quality management, a cross-cutting issue of interest to all these organisations. Teams from G*i* member organisations in Cambodia have already been able to share their practices and experiences through field visits and meetings. Some organisations are partners in joint projects (Agrisud and Gret, AVSF and Iram). This exercise of cross-referencing and capitalising on their experiences relating to the organisations in the value chains and their quality management practices is a continuation of their discussions, and tends to structure and formalise their analyses, to value their achievements and to call into question the development processes involved in their actions.


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The aims of the study are to share their experiences and lessons learned; to question and debate their approaches, practices and tools; to identify the structuring factors for the development of value chains in favour of family producers and artisans; to formulate recommendations; and to construct positions. The approach consisted of valuing and promoting relevant and innovative experiences and practices, strengthening the internal dynamics of the G*i* in Cambodia by identifying added value, complementarities and synergies, fostering discussions with stakeholders in the territories, value chains and development in Cambodia, and contributing to public policies.

The capitalisation process took place in several phases:

- **A framing phase** (in May 2023, remotely) to identify the issues and cross-cutting questions of capitalisation and validate case studies;
- **A study trip to Cambodia** (June 2023) by the coordinator to attend workshops to discuss matters with members of the G*i* and their main partners, and to visit their projects;
- **A seminar in Phnom Penh** (held on 5 October 2023) with more than 70 participants, presentation by G*i* members and their partners of their experiences, followed by a debate and discussions with external speakers and participants;
- **Publication of the capitalisation work in the Traverses series,** including a cross-sectional analysis and summary sheets by case studies.

Challenges of quality management by organisations within the value chains in Cambodia

Cambodia's agricultural development is based on promoting the country's important natural resources, namely water, relatively abundant land and a variety of ecosystems. Several development dynamics are in play, ranging from large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture to family production, and from models that exploit soil fertility in a non-sustainable way (especially after land clearing activities) to sustainable agroecological systems. The practices adopted by some family farms meet the aim of sustainability but face a lack of recognition, particularly among stakeholders downstream of the value chains. Supporting the integration of these farms into these value chains is therefore a tangible means of strengthening and disseminating their sustainable practices.

In this context, the six members of the G*i* working in Cambodia (Agrisud International, APDRA, AVSF, Geres, Gret, Iram) jointly wish to capitalise, question and debate their experiences and practices on the theme of organisations in the value chains and their quality management.

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CAMBODIAN ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL GROWTH CALLED INTO QUESTION

In the two decades leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Cambodia experienced strong economic growth and became a lower-middle-income country in 2015. Strong growth was driven by garment exports, agriculture, tourism and, more recently, construction and real estate. This contributed to a significant reduction in the number of people living below the national poverty threshold (from 47.8% in 2007 to 9.5% in 2019, despite an increase during the COVID-19 pandemic). In 2019, the share of agricultural value added in total GDP was estimated at 22.1%, involving around 3 million people in the sector (equivalent to 32.3% of the total labour force), mainly small-scale producers. Despite the strengths of Cambodian agriculture (significant domestic water resources, diverse ecosystems, significant human resources), the agricultural sector remains characterised by unsustainable practices (deforestation, weak control of agricultural inputs), continues to rely on exports of certain unprocessed commodities (e.g. rice, rubber) and lacks diversification of production and value-added.

Concerning food security and safety, the situation in Cambodia has improved considerably in recent years. However, the country lags behind neighbouring countries in terms of quality, food security and nutrition. Malnutrition remains prevalent among the poorest and most vulnerable groups, while the country faces a lack of policies and technical standards for monitoring and managing food security and inadequate coordination of relevant government agencies.

Manual transplanting of rice by producers who are members of the PMUAC

Against this backdrop, the G*i* organisations have supported the integration of family farmers and artisans into local, national and international supply chains and markets for several years or, in some cases, even decades. The aim has been to improve the sharing of value in their favour and to contribute to improving their incomes and living conditions, maintaining jobs in rural areas and thus ultimately combating poverty and food and nutrition insecurity. Agrisud International, APDRA Pisciculture paysanne, AVSF, Gret and Iram are involved in agricultural value chains, while Geres is involved in energy value chains.

The integration of family producers and artisans into value chains while improving their access to profitable markets makes it possible to promote the more sustainable practices that they implement with the support of the G*i* members, in particular practices in the fields of agroecology, sustainable forest management and the efficiency of energy equipment. These practices address the increasingly pressing challenges of the sustainability of agricultural production systems in the context of soil degradation and erosion, loss of biodiversity, pressure on water resources and climate change. They also meet the aims of sustainability of energy systems in a situation where biomass (charcoal and firewood) accounts for more than 40% of primary energy supply in Cambodia and thus remains a major factor in degradation and deforestation (5% annual deforestation between 2010 and 2014, and 1.2% between 2016 and 2021).

Family producers and artisans often find it difficult to connect to markets, facing a lack and asymmetry of information vis-à-vis the intermediary operators in the chain, where consumer and policy expectations are growing and are accompanied by more demanding quality standards and specifications, and where competition from abroad and from large-scale producers is strong.

Moreover, their fragmented and weak organisation, their weak capacity to invest and finance their factors of production and their still strong need for technical, organisational and commercial capacity-building make it impossible for them to adapt fully and meet market demand. Furthermore, their position at the end of the chain puts them in a relatively weak position in negotiations, which does not allow them to promote the quality and specificity of their products and practices at their fair value or to benefit sufficiently from remunerative prices and thus from the wealth created throughout the chain. Finally, their difficulties in communicating and advocating do not allow them to exert sufficient influence for a more favourable institutional, legal, fiscal and commercial framework.

Rice farmers who are members of the PMUAC organisation

Box 1

Quality and organisations: what are we talking about?

The topic of "organisations in the value chains and quality management" requires clarification of the various underlying concepts that are used during the capitalisation exercise.

- Value chain: series of production, processing and transport operations required to supply a product to an end consumer. They are carried out by several actors with their own strategies. These transactions generate value distributed among the links in the chain based on their economic and commercial relationships.
- Organisation – group of individuals in a structure with rules and a communication system facilitating the flow of information to meet specific needs and objectives.
- Quality – characteristics, attributes, value of a product or service determined by users or consumers to meet their needs and expectations. Quality is therefore a relative, needs-based and multidimensional concept. Quality can include various components such as generic quality, which is mainly based on health safety and nutritional level, and specific quality, which is based on organoleptic aspects, functionality (convenience, distribution, etc.), social and environmental aspects.
- Quality management: a set of standards, rules, and processes that are implemented and executed, which both promote the achievement of the expected characteristics of a product or service and measure and control quality.

Actions investigated and issues

A VARIETY OF ACTIONS AND COMMON INTERVENTION RATIONALES

The members of the G*i* intervene or have intervened with producers and artisans in various territories and sectors facing these market access issues:

- Local market in Siem Reap Province: market gardening, spices, rice (Agrisud, Gret), horticulture (Agrisud), poultry (Gret), fish farming (APDRA) Phnom Penh and Kampong Chhnang
- national market: sustainable coal and improved stoves (Geres)
- International market in the region of Preah Vihear: rice (AVSF and Iram)

They have implemented various strategies, practices and tools, and have developed them in the course of their interventions in order to meet the challenges of improving production and supply, the collective organisation of producers and artisans, structuring and consultation within the value chains, support for local processing, product quality management, enhancement of the quality and specific characteristics of products and raising awareness among downstream and institutional stakeholders.

The members of the G*i* in Cambodia share a common intervention rationale: they have opted for a strategy of quality recognition and promotion by the market, in other words by downstream actors and consumers. Various quality signs have been developed during the interventions, mainly through own brands based on internal specifications, and third-party certifications based on external specifications (organic certification, fair trade). These quality labels are carried by different types of producer organisations (agricultural cooperatives, unions, associations) which have been set up in the course of the interventions. Their responsibilities include production support, quality management and business development.

Agrisud: since 2016, Agrisud has implemented the Agroecological Intensification and Diversification of Peri-Urban Agriculture project in the Province of Siem Reap (IADA) with the aim of intensifying agroecological and diversifying local agricultural production, developing a range of agricultural services for the professionalisation of farms and agricultural chains and transitioning to territorial food systems. The project supported the creation of the Green Farmers Association (GF), which is responsible for collecting, processing and distributing the agricultural products of its members, as well as performing marketing, labelling and promotion activities, in particular through its brand.

APDRA Pisciculture paysanne: since 2020, APRDA has implemented the *Development of fish value chains* (DeFiP) project in Cambodia to improve food and nutritional security and diversify the livelihoods of rural populations by developing family agroecological fish farming aimed at local markets. At this stage of the project, producers are not brought together in a formal organisation, but are networked through informal groups for training sessions, exchange visits and discussions.

AVSF / Iram: from 2013 to 2017, AVSF and Iram participated in the implementation of the *Support to the Commercialisation of Cambodian Rice Project* (SCCRP), one of the activities of which enabled the development of a large-scale organic rice sector in the province of *Preah Vihear. The project supported the establishment of the Preah Vihear Mean Chey Union of Agricultural Cooperative* (PMUAC), the first officially registered agricultural cooperative union in Cambodia. It is responsible for the management of the internal control system, certification, the strengthening of technical capacities for organic production, and the facilitation of links with both the international market, through its organic and fair-trade certifications, and the national market through its own brand. AVSF has maintained its support for PMUAC until the present day.

Geres: between 2003 and 2019, Geres supported the production and distribution of improved stoves in Cambodia. The SEFED (*Support the Emergence of Sustainable Supply Chains in the domestic energy*) project, implemented from 2016 to 2019, aimed to consolidate the local production and supply chain of the improved stoves, maintain the quality of the stoves and gain market recognition by supporting a local association (*Cambodian Efficient Stove Promoters Association* – CESPA) of producers and distributors of stoves, as well as to establish a label to ensure that the quality of the improved stoves was promoted on the market.

Gret: since 2010, Gret has implemented the *Semi-intensive Agriculture for smallholders' farmers using less inputs Project* (APICI). The project supports the development of a more efficient production and marketing system for agricultural products (rice, fruits and vegetables, chickens) by supporting agroecology, market access and the structuring of professional farmer organisations. Among other things, the project supported the establishment of the Sovathapheap Thoamacheat Agricultural Cooperative (ECOFARM), which is responsible for the internal quality control of its members' products by means of a participatory guarantee system (PGS), as well as the collection and sale of its members' products.

The main information on the interventions of the members of the G*i* is presented in summary sheets in the appendix.

ISSUES RELATING TO ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The members of the G*i* have identified the following main issues concerning support to organisations in the value chains and their quality management.

Quality construction

- Who determines quality: consumers, intermediaries or producers?
- How is quality characterised?
- To what extent are production systems adapted/transformed by the quality objective?

Organisations, quality management and marketing

- What were the processes involved and the stages in setting up the organisations?
- How do the organisations manage quality?
- How do the organisations develop marketing?
- What are the conditions for sustainability of the organisations?

Positioning of G*i* members

- What was the position of the Gi members throughout the process?
- What transfer and ownership processes by local quality management and organisations stakeholders have been implemented?
- What is the role and involvement of other development actors (public authorities, decentralised government services for agriculture, trade, donors, technical development partners, etc.)?

Hun Sokhin, member of CESPA

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Determining quality: between responding to the market and promoting existing practices

It is generally accepted that the definition of the quality of an agricultural or craft product is determined by consumers or end-users. Reality shows that the mechanisms for determining quality are more complex because they involve other actors, starting with the producers themselves, who play an important role in the construction of quality and thus of demand. The experiences of the members of the G*i* show how their partner producers ensure a certain balance between adapting to existing demand and shaping it through the recognition of their specific production practices.

Box 2

Issues concerning the construction of product quality

- Who determines quality: consumers, intermediaries or producers?
- How is quality characterised?
- To what extent are production systems adapted/ transformed by the quality objective?

The members of the G*i* have done a great deal of work to strengthen producers' knowledge of the markets and their specific requirements, in particular the strong determinants such as health quality, organoleptic quality, compliance with third-party certifications, supply threshold volumes, product diversification, delivery frequency and time frames, etc. This information and knowledge have proved to be indispensable for producers in order to develop their offer and enter these markets. The G*i* members' projects has facilitated a detailed and contextualised characterisation of each value chain.

Today the interventions of the G*i*'s members enable the supported producers to better characterise the demands of the downstream players in the chain, allowing them to orient their production choices accordingly. This knowledge has been provided to the producers by the members of the G*i* themselves, through their knowledge of the field and through market analyses and studies. It has also been built up through collective or bilateral inter-professional meetings between producers, intermediaries and end buyers. This type of meeting has symmetrically introduced buyers to the particularity of farmers' products, allowing them to contribute elements of commercial negotiation while also arousing the interest of buyers, who may see these particularities as a differentiating factor of interest to them on the market.

Some of these requirements may already be covered by producers, while others require changes in their production systems. The aim of the interventions of the G*i*'s members has been to construct quality by proposing innovations adapted to existing production systems in order to meet the requirements of downstream players, while maintaining the particularity of current production systems and strengthening their sustainability.

For example, Geres and CESPA introduced a number of innovations in line with existing practices: preparation of the clay mixture, stove moulding techniques, firing and drying processes, among others. Agrisud and Green Farmers proposed the cultivation of some "western" vegetable crops (e.g. lettuce) that are not usually produced by local farmers, but have been integrated into existing farms thanks to raised garden bed production, shading and ventilation techniques. Gret and

Box 3

Example of the rice value chain in Preah Vihear: multi-stakeholder meetings to strengthen knowledge of quality requirements

At the beginning of the SCCRP project, the AVSF-Iram team acted as a facilitator in connecting 8 producer cooperatives with 4 rice exporters who were potential buyers in order to discuss the expected quality requirements. A collective meeting was held to present the production context and potential, as well as the requirements of demand: demand for fragrant photosensitive varieties ("Jasmine" variety types) and white rice varieties, compliance with certain international organic standards (EU Organic Standard – EOS and US NOP organic standard). The buyers also defined a series of additional quality criteria, defining quality classes by which each batch of paddy rice delivered by farmers would be evaluated, which would in turn determine their price: varietal purity, moisture content and rate of broken kernels.

These meetings allowed producers to take stock of buyers' expectations and identify the potential offer to be provided. Following the plenary discussion, the cooperatives met bilaterally with each of the potential buyers to discuss the terms each could offer. The result of this important step was the signing of the first supply contracts between the cooperatives and the company AMRU-Rice.

ECOFARM, for their part, determined a minimum diversification among their members (minimum of three types of vegetables produced), who usually produced one or two crops, and a ban on chemical treatments which could still be used.

Rice growers in Preah Vihear were able to capitalise on the favourable environment (organic practices already in place, no need for irrigation, etc.) in order to meet the requirements of the organic specifications quickly, while adjusting their variety choices and mechanising the harvest to meet the quality requirements for the rice (varietal purity, moisture content, broken kernels rate).

Finally, Agrisud and Green Farmers supported the establishment of processing units managed by some of GF's members and dedicated to the marketing of essential oils, dry spices, infusions, beverages, etc. Breaking with local practices, this innovation involved a major training process for producers who had never worked in this type of business before, but allowed for a useful addition that was well integrated into the household's schedule of activities.

In the case of the relatively new fish farming industry, producers have a clear understanding of consumer expectations, but they are hampered by the lack of technical references to meet this demand while having a technically feasible and economically viable production system. The challenge of the project is therefore first and foremost to create technical references. To this end, it has adopted a participatory approach with fish farmers to test and co-develop fish farming systems adapted to their technical, social and economic contexts capable of producing fish in line with their quality expectations (see box below).

Furthermore, the particularity of fish farming supported by APDRA, compared to the sectors supported by the other members of the G*i*, is the high proportion of self-consumption of the production. This rationale has been taken into account by APDRA, although its vision remains the development of a family-run agroecological fish farming with a commercial aim. It conducted a survey to understand the beneficiaries' objectives in order to provide them with tailored accompaniment, which resulted in a typology consisting of four profiles: potential local suppliers of fry, potential professional fish farmers, farmers who consider fish farming as a small-scale secondary activity, and vulnerable farmers.

Box 4

Example of participatory research-action on fish farming systems with producers in Siem Reap Province

A fish farmer was able to produce fish of the quality expected for consumption at ceremonies such as weddings. During one production cycle, he obtained 65 kg of tilapia, with homogeneous individuals reaching a weight of 600 g in March, at the height of the wedding season. He was able to sell them at $ 2.75/kg for a ceremony. The data collected during the cycle were particularly valuable in understanding what led to such an outcome. He was able to implement a well-balanced feeding strategy, shifting from high-nitrogen granules during the rainy season to higher-carbon granules and rice bran when water levels dropped. This prevented the deterioration of water quality and ammonia pollution, while maintaining a good level of natural productivity. Although the survival rate was very low (22%), it is unlikely that he would have achieved the same satisfactory individual weight at harvest with a higher survival rate given the reduced access to water and lack of oxygenation. This leads to recommendations on how to consider the number of stocked individuals and how to combine this with other parameters such as food resources, access to water or target fish size. From one cycle to the next, this farmer has learned from his mistakes and is improving his fish farming practices step by step.

Farmer Ram Seurng (left) harvesting tilapia

This example illustrates the particular attention paid by the members of the G*i* to the need to take account of all the purposes of agricultural production, and the functioning of production and activity systems as a whole, in order to fully understand their interactions with the ecosystems and the socio-economic context that shape farmers' rationales. This makes it possible to better tailor the support provided to producers, with the members of the G*i*, their partners and producers thus fully contributing to the agro-ecological transition in all its environmental, economic and social aspects. The results of some of the interventions illustrate the ability to scale up agroecological practices without compromising on principles, as evidenced by the increase in the number of cooperatives that are members of PMUAC (from 5 to 25 cooperatives) and the large volumes of paddy rice sold per year by PMUAC (an average of 9,600 t/year over the past five years, representing almost one third of the Cambodian organic rice production), as well as the 3 million improved stoves sold between 2004 and 2013 with the support of Geres.

This holistic approach prevents possible over-dependency on one product or market, and thus enables better risk management. For example, the Covid crisis severely reduced tourism in Siem Reap and consequently the demand for food products. The decrease in this key outlet for Green Farmers has resulted in a sharp fall in its membership (from over 800 members in 2020 to fewer than 500 today). However, maintaining diversified outlets for domestic consumers (local direct sales, sales to local collectors who serve as the link to Siem Reap's wholesale market) has allowed the business of Green Farmers and its members who have retained their capacities to meet the demand of hotels, which have gradually resumed their business.

Finally, this construction of quality has taken shape with the drawing up of internal specifications within the organisations to guide their members. Regardless of the types of production, target markets, internal control and certification systems, this quality characterisation has been formalised. The support provided by G*i*'s members has been key, both in terms of content and in the process of development, ownership and validation.

Box 5

Example of ECOFARM's internal specifications for healthy vegetables

- Type of production: produce at least three types of leafy or fruit vegetables
- Seed selection: local seed/open-pollinated seed/hybrid seed provided by the input supplier (F1). F1 is the hybrid seed and cannot be reused for subsequent generations. GMOs are banned
- Protection of plots: the plot/farm dedicated to growing safe vegetables must be separated from the plots subject to chemical treatments
- Soil fertility management: natural fertiliser (solid compost, animal manure, biomass fertiliser based on 1.5-2 kg/m^2), depending on crop development
- Pest control: use of locally produced biopesticides only; repeat number of biopesticide sprays every 3-5 days, use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) measures
- Method of cultivation: combination and rotation of crops
- Crop management: stop spraying biopesticides at least 7 days prior to harvest and also stop using liquid compost at least 7 days prior to harvest.
- Expected quality: variety of vegetables, freshness, good appearance, regular supply

The experience of the interventions of the G*i*'s members shows that the requirements of demand and the characterisation of the quality to be offered on the market is understood by grouping producers, which usually leads to the establishment of structured organisations.

Organisations as key structures for quality management and market access

Grouping producers and artisans into organisations is generally an approach adopted by development actors who see it as an opportunity to support a large number of beneficiaries, enable them to pool production factors and/or strengthen their positioning and advocacy within the value chains and territories in which they are involved. The experiences of the GI's members demonstrate the value added of setting up producer organisations to integrate value chains and to be able to manage quality when it is driven by a clear goal, identified and shared by producers.

Box 6

Issues concerning the organisations, their quality management and their business development

- What were the processes involved and steps in setting up the organisations?
- How do the organisations manage quality?
- How do the organisations develop marketing?
- What are the conditions for sustainability of the organisations?

BUILDING AN ORGANISATION AROUND A SHARED GOAL AND IDENTIFIED FUNCTIONS

The organisations set up as part of the interventions of the members of the GI result from the identification of needs shared by producers in order to achieve a quality they have defined. The nature and functioning of the organisations are guided by the pre-existing level of organisation of the producers, the type of quality label targeted (internal approach, external certification), the underlying quality control system and marketing methods (individual, collective).

The legitimacy of these organisations lies both in the identification of a shared purpose and clear functions and in the progressive and participatory process by which they take shape. This process is ongoing, with organisations needing to adapt as their strategy evolves. For example, Green Farmers was created in 2018 as an association, a status enabling it to promote the products of its members who sell their market garden products individually, and to organise quality control. It also relied on grassroots organisations built on existing communities, favouring some form of social control and regulation. Now boasting some 419 members, Green Farmers' activities have evolved into more direct marketing and the association is considering changing its status to a social enterprise.

ECOFARM members followed a similar path: the need to develop collective standards for safe products, desired by producers supported by the APICI project, facilitated the creation of the ECOFARM group in 2015. Growers then wanted to diversify their strategy through collective selling to increase volumes and gain new markets, culminating in the official registration of ECOFARM as an agricultural cooperative in 2019. This was done in several stages: presentation of the law on agricultural cooperatives to the members, drafting of the statutes and regulations of the AC, convening of a first General Assembly to take a decision, preparation of the document for legal registration. This development, which entails compliance with a required quality, has reduced the number of producers concerned. Of the 313 producers identified at the start of the project, 60 made up ECOFARM in 2015, and now 125, including 71 involved in vegetable gardening.

Similarly, the producers of improved stoves supported by Geres had to change their organisation when their quality remuneration strategy changed from a system of payment for environmental services (carbon credits) to product differentiation in the market with a quality premium. Indeed, for nearly ten years (2004–2013), the carbon credits generated enabled producers and distributors to cover a significant part of their production and quality control costs, enabling them to sell their labelled improved stoves at a subsidised price, thus ensuring a satisfactory margin. These were brought together in an association (up to 52 producers and 113 distributors), which was necessary to capture the value added of carbon credits. Once carbon credits were exhausted, the shift to a market valuation of quality required a paradigm shift that not all members had anticipated and understood: the perception of the label as a constraint (necessary for obtaining carbon credits) remained as such, as the label was not perceived as a means of differentiation on the market. Producers and distributors have not found any common ground to integrate quality control costs into the selling price or into commercial development. Furthermore, they do not seem to have taken stock of the evolution of the value chain's environment, which has become more competitive (see figure below). The new CESPA association has therefore refocused its activities on only a few producers (25 in 2023) willing to target premium markets.

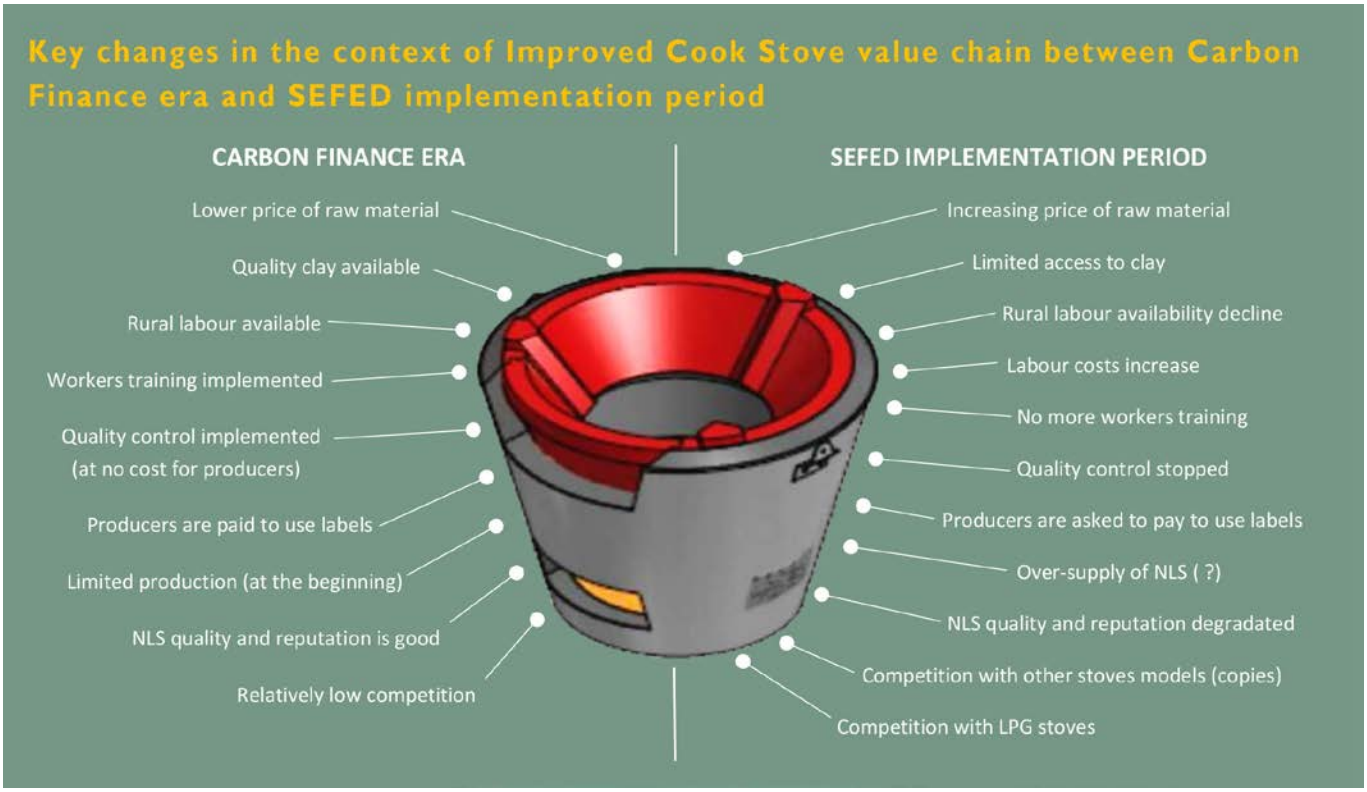

Figure 1: Key changes in the context of Improved Cook Stove value chain between Carbon Finance era and SEFED implementation period (source: Geres)

The creation of PMUAC was initiated by existing agricultural cooperatives in a participatory process after an initial test of meeting the requirements of the organic specifications (see box below).

Box 7

Process for creating the PMUAC (rice sector)

In 2013, a first level of organic compliance monitoring was carried out by the Cambodia Organic Agriculture Association (COrAA) and funded by the SCCRP project. The issue of sustainability soon came up. The Iram developed a note exploring scenarios for organising and assuming control and certification functions on a permanent basis. It also produced an Excel tool to simulate different cost and volume scenarios at scale. This served as the basis for a decisive workshop held in March 2015 with the eight cooperatives involved and their purchasers. Different scenarios were presented and discussed, in particular, for the oversight and management function of the internal control system:

- Internalise at the agricultural cooperative (AC) level: recruit staff at the cooperative level (seasonal or year-round / full-time or part-time).
- Internalise at the inter-cooperative level: pool resources to recruit staff for several cooperatives (possibly through a formal union of cooperatives, or with part-time contracts for each cooperative and a time-sharing agreement between them).
- Outsourcing: hire service providers on a task-contract basis (as was done with COrAA in 2013).

After several stages of reflection, it was felt that the first option would not be viable at the level of the ACs because the scale is relatively small, and the solution of pooling resources between the ACs to recruit their own permanent staff was chosen. The principle of creating a union of ACs was decided at that time, and then endorsed by the General Assemblies held in each of the 8 ACs. It should be noted that the decision to create this structure was taken with a very clear functional objective, in response to a clearly identified need. The PMUAC currently consists of 25 ACs, comprising 5,403 member households.

In the same rationale of creating organisations based on identified needs, the fish farmers supported by APDRA have not (yet) started to think about the value of forming an organisation with a commercial or quality control objective, as the quantities and quality produced so far have not been sufficiently stabilised to target intermediaries collectively. However, the improvements made in recent production cycles will certainly contribute to discussions among fish farmers and to the development of an organisation.

These experiences serve as a reminder that the establishment and maintenance of organisations can only be sustainable if they are driven first and foremost by producers, with the risk that the organisations will be dependent solely on the NGOs that support them and will collapse at the end of the projects. Furthermore, the experiences of the members of the G*i* show that the selection of a quality and the creation of a collective is not a linear process; the result may be a reduction in the number of members of these organisations compared to the beginning of the projects. These experiences thus make it possible to identify the challenges and conditions underlying the establishment, legitimisation and maintenance of producer organisations.

ORGANISATIONS AS KEY STRUCTURES OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The experience of the interventions of the members of the G*i* shows the need to set up producer organisations in order to formalise the definition of quality in a specification, to perform the associated quality control and to strengthen farmers' production capacities.

The organisations ECOFARM and Green Farmers have opted for a peer review system. These systems allow producers to take real ownership of quality issues, are adapted to the production context and are affordable for producer organisations of this scale. ECOFARM has opted for a comprehensive participatory approach by opting for the implementation of a participatory guarantee system (PGS).

Box 8

Definition of the participatory guarantee system (PGS)

Participatory and non-fee-based PGS certification is based on peer review. By promoting the networking of stakeholders within agricultural territories, this is in line with a progressive approach. PGS is a quality assurance system based on systems that certify producers according to the active involvement of stakeholders and that are based on trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. For ECOFARM:

- The PGS quality standards are developed by the cooperative's producers themselves to ensure that it meets their needs and that they are able to implement it.
- The PGS requires the establishment of an internal committee to verify, through on-the-spot inspections, that their products are of good quality and are safe for consumers, according to a set of criteria
- This internal system has a low cost compared to third party intervention as it mainly requires time, on the part of the internal committee, to perform the inspections on the ground and issue the annual certificate, and does not require payment for external certification

Preparation (washing, grading) of safe vegetables by a group of producers from the ECOFARM cooperative before sale – Siem Reap

The main stages of the PGS are described in the following figure. They involve a variety of actors (*implementers*): representatives of the cooperative's groups (GRs), agroecology advisors, the cooperative's management committee (*MC*, members of the ECOFARM board), and the certifying committee (*CC*, village and municipality elders, representatives of the Department of Agriculture, and consumers).

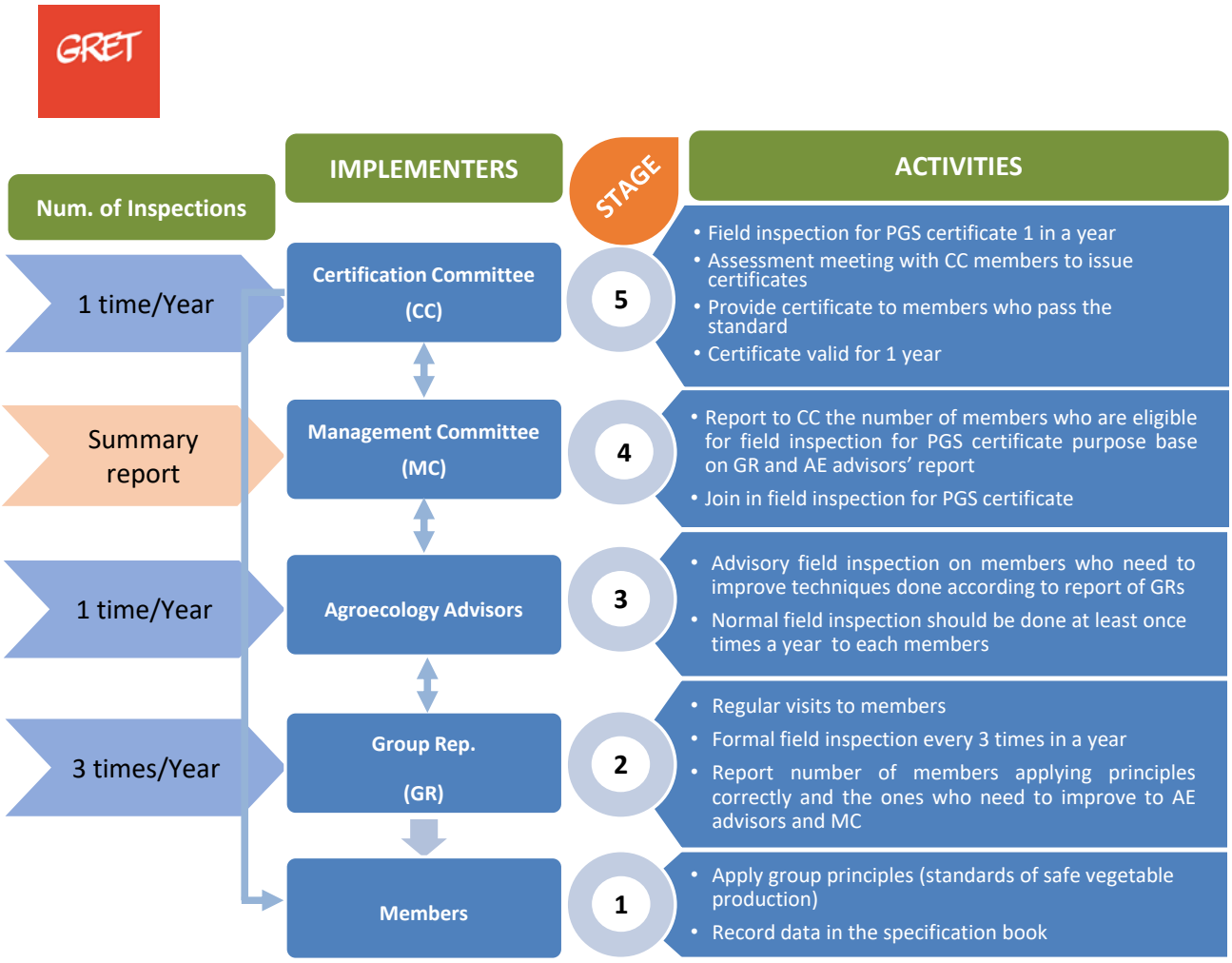

Figure 2: Quality assurance process for ECOFARM's PGS (source: Gret)

As the local market is the one targeted by ECOFARM, the implementation of the PGS is relevant as it involves all the local players in order to foster their confidence in quality and organisation. The PGS has helped strengthen the capacity of producers to produce and market local and safe products. The cooperative now has the capacity to sell 7 tons of vegetables per month. In addition, the PGS is a reference point and innovation centre around Siem Reap: during the project, more than 900 people (producers, cooperative representatives, students, government authorities) visited ECOFARM, in particular to discover the PGS. The partnership with the provincial Department of Agriculture within the framework of the APICI project greatly contributed to the recognition of this PGS.

In the case of Green Farmers, internal control is carried out between peers by producers referred to as "master farmers" through farm visits, complemented by monthly monitoring of the GF office. This system also represents a low-cost approach. However, the control system, and the specifications that underpin it, are destined to evolve: indeed, the Green Farmers Association sees this peer review as a first step in strengthening its capacities and moving towards external certifications (GMP – *Good Manufactured Products*, *CS – Cambodian Standard*, HACCP, ISO), which it believes are necessary to strengthen the credibility of its practices. GF aims to enter the export markets for certain products processed by its groups (beverages). This peer review system performs on a relatively large scale, covering more than 1,000 family farms.

Vegetable raised garden bed organised by the ECOFARM

The peer-review systems have encouraged the involvement of young people, who are generally more literate, to carry out the monitoring visits and, above all, to document quality and practices in the monitoring diaries. In addition to the review system, regular discussions between producers enhance the sharing of experiences and the development of skills. Finally, the capacity-building activities of G*i* members vis-à-vis group representatives (ECOFARM) or master farmers (Green Farmers) has helped them become legitimised among their peers. These systems nevertheless entail a significant risk of work overload for group representatives (ECOFARM) or Green Farmers, and of motivation if compensation remains modest.

CESPA's internal control system is also based on peer review, complemented by laboratory energy efficiency tests (ITC Biomass Energy Lab) on a randomised sample of households. The establishment and coordination with the laboratory still require the intermediary of a third-party structure (Geres until 2019, today the NGO SNV).

Finally, the PMUAC has set up an internal control system based on successive checks by inspectors (who are producers) at the level of each agricultural cooperative and internal supervisors employed by the Union in order to meet the requirements of EU and US third-party organic certification (see figure below). The large scale achieved by Preah Vihear's rice supply chain allows for economies of scale and covers the costs of this internal control system (including supervisors' pay and ongoing training) and third-party certification.

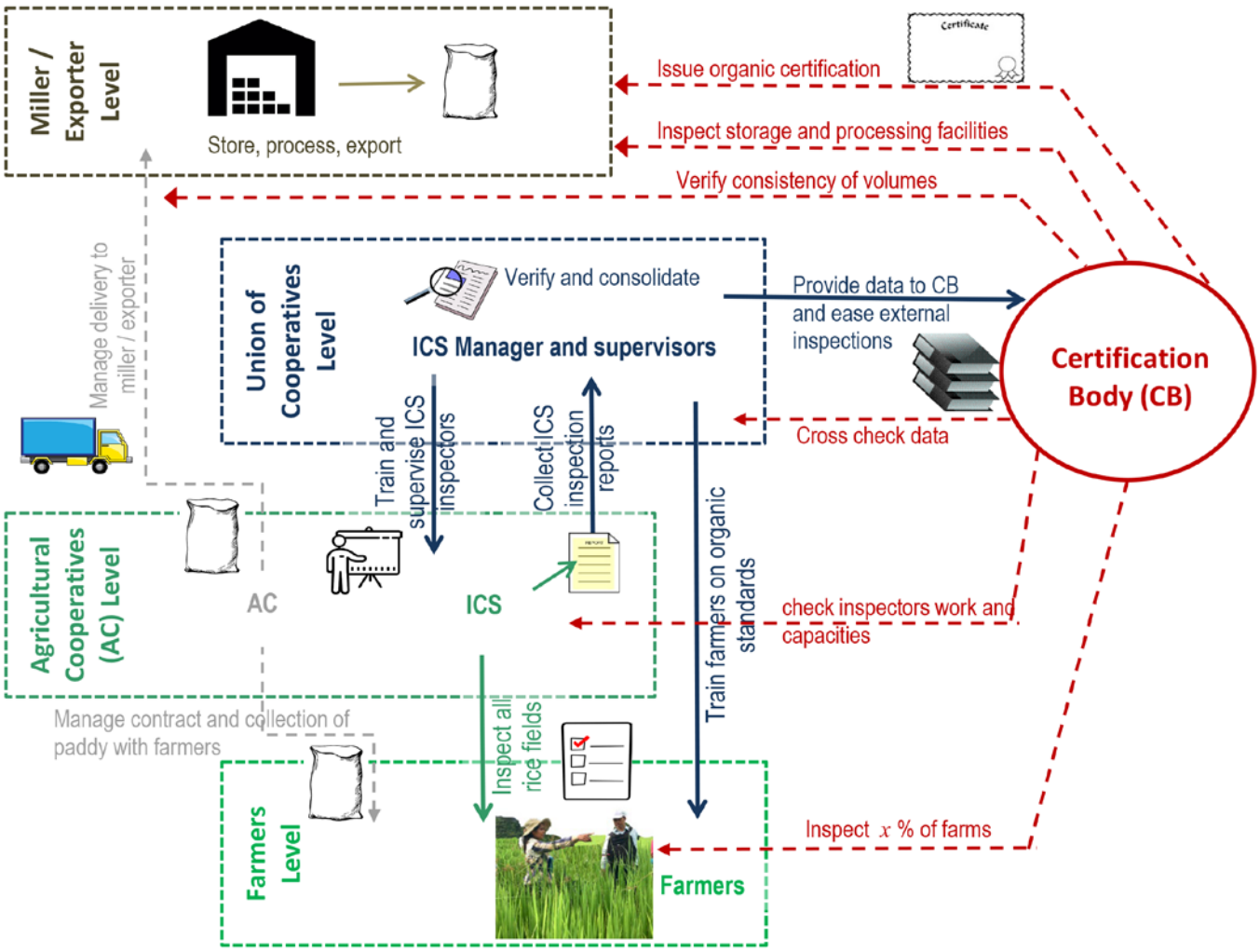

Figure 3: Internal Control System and Organic Certification process of PMUAC (source: AVSF and Iram)

This quality control function was a fundamental pillar underpinning the creation of the Union and allows for a considerable reduction in certification costs. In addition, the anticipated phase-out of the project allowed all oversight and internal control management roles to be transferred to the PMUAC in order to ensure the rapid development of its internal capabilities.

All the organisations supported by the G*i* members have set up an internal quality control system, the nature of which is adapted to their scale of intervention and to the markets targeted by the organisations.

ORGANISATIONS AS KEY STRUCTURES FOR COMMERCIALISATION

In addition to the issue of quality management, the experience of the interventions of the GI's members shows the value of setting up producer organisations in order to develop commercial opportunities, largely through the implementation of group sales to "secure" markets and with the help of support. Through them, producers have been able to supply the quantities of products according to the qualities and frequencies requested by the buyers, requirements that they would never have been able to meet individually or that would have been very difficult to achieve.

Individual sales are mainly made to local markets (in their village, to their neighbours), and to a lesser extent to intermediaries at commune level or wholesale markets; the example of fish farmers supported by APDRA illustrates this trend. Sales to local intermediaries and wholesalers, as well as to "top-of-the-range" customers (hotels, restaurants) or exporters, are usually done collectively (e.g. ECOFARM and Green Farmers).

Wholesalers seek to reduce their logistics costs by optimising transport and reducing handling costs; they tend to favour collecting a few products in large quantities. They have a certain level of requirements when it comes to choosing their suppliers: quality, regularity of supply, service (particularly delivery). The diversity of the products offered and of the service (ease of ordering, delivery) are essential criteria that must be met by collectors or intermediaries wishing to supply wholesalers. The same type of criteria also applies to the category of large hotels and restaurants, which manage their supplies through orders from as few suppliers as possible, who ensure the delivery of the products.

For the products of the organisations ECOFARM and Green Farmers destined for the urban area of Siem Reap, producer-collectors collect from their peers and sell them to collectors and wholesalers. The two organisations therefore have similar marketing channels (see figure below).

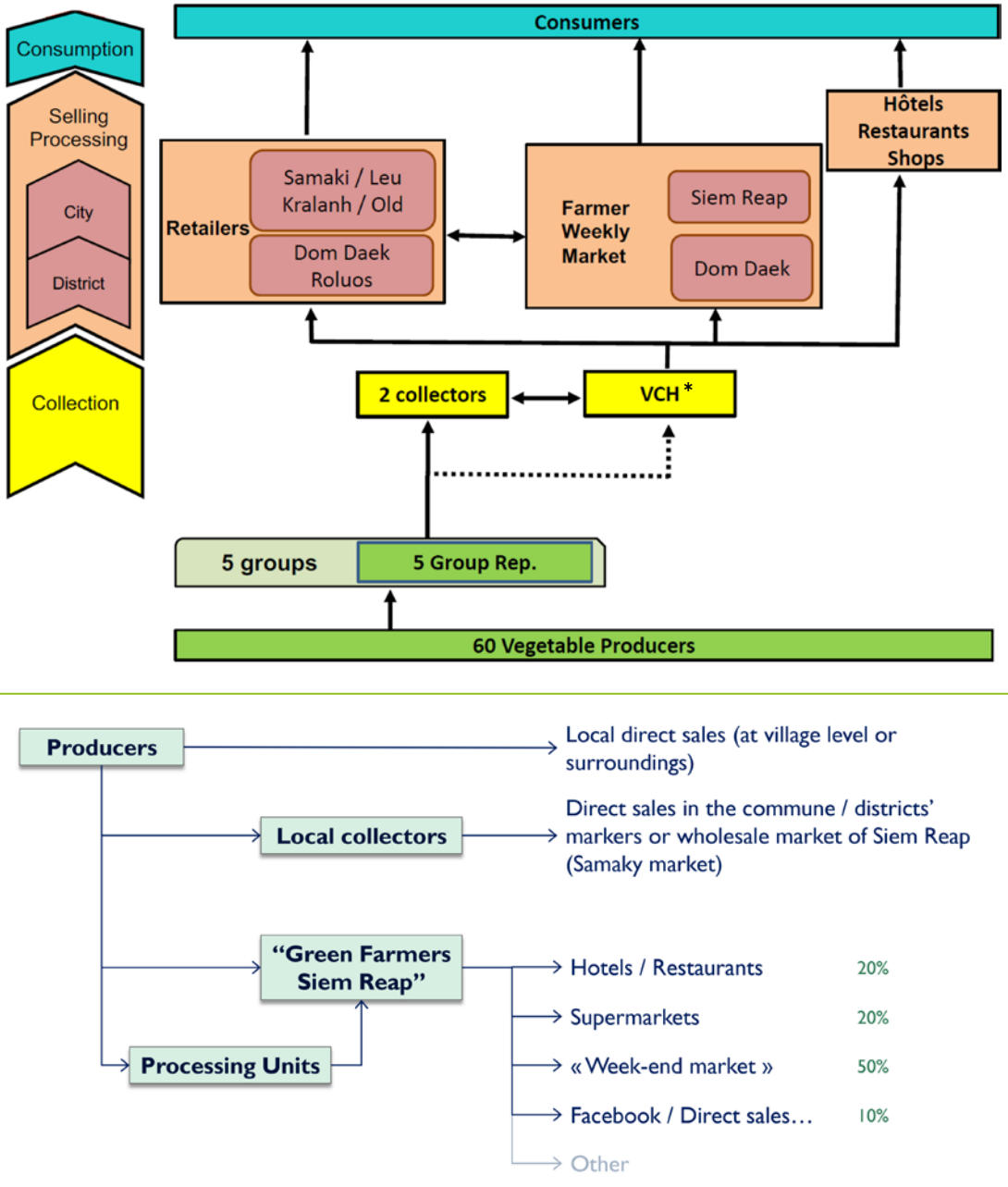

Figure 4: ECOFARM (top) and Green Farmers (bottom) marketing channels for the Siem Reap urban area (source: Gret and ARTE-FACT)

These producer-collectors usually have experience in trade or entrepreneurship, and contacts and networks with downstream actors. They are also responsible for planning the production of the organisation's members. The implementation of such production planning within these organisations has been crucial in meeting the demand for volume and variety of vegetable products. Whereas growers used to produce without worrying about the type of vegetables the buyers wanted, they now have information from the collectors and can organise themselves to determine the cycles to be implemented. This knowledge and organisation have enabled the members of Green Farmers, for example, to supply their top-of-the-range customers (hotels, restaurants, hotel schools) with "Western" vegetables.

For rice producers in the PMUAC, collection is carried out at the level of each agricultural cooperative that is a member of PMUAC: the producers either drop off their harvest at their cooperative's storage areas, or some cooperatives offer a field-side collection service. Incorporation into the union has not per se changed the way in which harvests are collected or sold, as cooperatives are still the commercial entities with sales contracts with purchasers. However, the union plays a planning support role to ensure that the areas sown correspond to the volumes of the different rice varieties expected.

Moreover, the introduction of collective selling is accompanied by the issue of the delay in purchasers' payment to producers. Payments are indeed usually delayed by several days or even several weeks compared to the delivery dates of the products, depending on the practices of the purchasers. For example, this might involve the transport time, quality control and weighing of the rice by the purchasers of the PMUAC cooperatives, or the monthly payment arrangements introduced by the wholesalers who buy from Green Farmers. As far as possible, the organisation may act as a credit provider to its members, to facilitate their cash management, as is the case with PMUAC.

The other important contribution of the organisations has been commercial development, particularly the more high-end outlets that are inaccessible to individual producers. The business development function has been internalised and professionalised within PMUAC. High-quality human resources, with continuous training and a high level of commitment and loyalty, have been a key factor in the business development of PMUAC. This has increased the number of purchasing contracts, diversified buyers (5 rice exporters), generated organic premiums and created a collective brand of premium jasmine rice for the local market. Financing for the development and maintenance of rice quality (technical support, quality control), as well as of organisations (cooperatives, PMUAC), has been made possible by the differentiation of products on the market, incorporating a premium quality and, above all, an organic premium. The producers have chosen to divide the earnings generated by the premium into three parts: 75% for producers, 12.5% for cooperatives and 12.5% for the union. Economies of scale have been targeted (critical mass of human resources) to ensure the sustainability of this financing through the market. The cost of PMUAC's functions (in particular internal control, the 12 employees, etc.) is fully covered by a share of the organic premium (and a little by the fair premium) from the sale of rice.

Green Farmers also aims to internalise the business development function, which is still carried out by Agrisud today. The strategic commercial choice has been to prioritise high-end markets (hotels, restaurants), which are more profitable and better able to cover the costs of quality management and organisation.

In addition, through their actions, the members of the G*i* have targeted the entire food system, in particular through consumer awareness (campaigns, fairs, etc.). For example, the producers of ECOFARM and Green Farmers sell directly at the "weekend market" held every Saturday in Siem Reap, the creation of which was supported by Gret and Agrisud. They also sell directly through online orders placed by consumers on their Facebook pages. As such, these face-to-face consumer contacts are opportunities for both organisations to raise brand awareness and enhance their reputation; they can interact directly to present quality requirements, answer questions and create proximity.

At the same time, Green Farmers raises awareness among the professional players furthest downstream in the chain such as hotels, restaurants and, above all, hotel schools. Shared gardens have been set up for students, and products from Green Farmers members are regularly used in cooking classes.

Weekend market in Siem Reap

Finally, the IADA project has, more recently, supplemented its intervention rationale at the level of food systems with a territorial approach, with support for municipalities in which actions are carried out in identifying strategies to accompany the development of sustainable food systems (participatory agroecological action plans). It has also initiated the implementation of quality standards and a defined certification process for local products sold at the weekend market in Siem Reap, in conjunction with the provincial Department of Trade and other projects (Gret's APICI project, IFAD's AIMS project). Specifications have already been drawn up, as well as the foundations of a system for monitoring (certification) compliance with these specifications. A label management committee has also been set up.

Figure 5: Sovathapheap Siem Reap certification logo (source: Agrisud)

These experiences have shown that setting up organisations has been crucial in order to achieve volumes and diversify production, which are common requirements for all sectors.

A progressive position of support for the members of the G*i*

The approach of the G*i* members is based on the principles of partnership and subsidiarity with organisations in the South. The reality of this and its constraints show that, at certain stages of the development of the value chains, organisations may themselves be called upon to act as stakeholders in the sectors and thus, in part, to replace local actors, in particular producers and their organisations. The experiences of the G*i* demonstrate the importance of gradual knowledge transfer and capacity building processes among their partners to ensure the sustainability of their activities and organisations.

Box 9

Issues regarding the positioning of G*i* members and other development actors

- What was the position of the G*i* members throughout the process?
- What processes have been put in place to facilitate transfer and ownership by local actors of quality management and organisations?
- What is the role and involvement of other development actors (public authorities, decentralised government services for agriculture, trade, donors, technical development partners, etc.)?

The experience of the members of the G*i* shows the long-term support needed for smallholder producers to join supply chains, gain recognition of their particularity while developing and changing their production methods and develop their quality management and commercial capabilities in order to receive benefits. Most of the support provided by the G*i*'s members has primarily focussed on support for production (construction of a common reference framework, technical support for producers) while gradually extending to support for management of organisations and business development.

At the start of the interventions, the members of the G*i* generally took on a large number of technical support tasks such as training, animation of producer groups and consulting. The members of the G*i* also provided methodological support to rationalise and objectify the orientations and practices of the organisations and their members: situation analysis and needs collection, participatory research (APDRA), forward-looking work (AVSF and Iram), PGS approach (Gret). Some members contributed highly innovative technical knowledge unknown to producers, such as the artisanal distilleries initiated by Agrisud. Finally, Geres directly carried out the complex monitoring and evolution of the performance of the improved stoves to quantify the greenhouse gas emissions avoided.

The members of the G*i* have been vectors of technical, economic and organisational innovations.

In addition, some members of the G*i* have implemented their actions in partnership with local actors such as the Trailblazer Cambodia Organisation (TCO) for APDRA and the Cambodia Institute for Research and Development (CIRD) for Gret and Geres, allowing an exchange of skills and knowledge to promote local sustainability.

Members of the G*i* have also facilitated the establishment of partnerships between stakeholders in the value chain and local stakeholders. AVSF, Iram and Agrisud have been at the heart of the relationship between PMUAC and Green Farmers with rice exporters and hotels, restaurants and hotel schools respectively. Their role has been instrumental in securing opportunities. The members of the G*i* have been the driving force behind the development of business opportunities without ever being an economic actor in supply chains. In terms of territorial partnership, they encouraged their interventions to be rooted in local development strategies and involved local authorities (decentralised agricultural and commercial services) in implementing or monitoring activities. For example, an officer from the Provincial Department of Agriculture in Siem Reap was part of the Gret project team and was involved in the PGS. Organisations generally benefit from political backing that allows them to operate in a more secure business environment. Finally, the members of the G*i* acted as the interface between donors and final recipients, enabling them to access funds from international development assistance.

The challenge facing G*i* members is the transfer of knowledge and skills to producer organisations. The business model can hinder the integration of support functions. For example, the improved stove control system has always been supported (in whole or in part) by Geres and now SNV, as it is expensive and technically demanding. Similarly, the Green Farmers business model does not yet allow for the internalisation of the two Agrisud employees in charge of management and marketing. On the other hand, technical skills have been fully integrated by PMUAC, as well as their financing, thanks to the economies of scale achieved.

Finally, the members of the G*i* were keen to give producers and organisations the freedom to choose their policies. Today, organisations have clear strategies that should allow them to anticipate their growth stages, including their financial self-sufficiency.

Recommendations

The capitalisation exercise led to the emergence of a number of cross-cutting recommendations shared by the members of the G*i* to support organisations and manage their quality.

Construction and quality management

- Develop producers' capacities to analyse market demand and price changes by working on cooperation between producers to improve the compatibility of agricultural schedules and production choices
- In light of the lack of technical references, encourage farmers to innovate and test new techniques to identify promising opportunities
- Accompany paradigm shifts by raising awareness and demonstrating
- Adapt innovations and practices to the specific context of each producer, in technical terms (type of soil, amount of water) and socio-economic terms (time available, budget). Do not offer a standardized solution
- Strengthen campaign/cycle planning to match buyers' demands in terms of products, volumes and frequencies; think market strategy ahead of harvest
- Incorporate the costs of quality control into the selling price, as well as the costs of any functions that will need to be maintained beyond the duration of the project and integrated into the value chain

Marketing

- Develop a marketing structure owned by producers to play the role of collector and wholesaler, in order to supply peri-urban markets, restaurants and hotels
- For short supply chains, ensure a direct relationship between producers and consumers to create confidence in the quality of products, and quality standards tailored to farmers' capabilities and customers' needs
- Develop communication and logistics tools to improve the ability to connect supply and demand (e.g. internet/SMS platform)

Organisational management

- Quality targeting must be a driving force to unify producers and create organisations, not the other way around
- Allow producers to be autonomous, while supporting them, in defining a clear purpose and an identified function of their organisation. Creating a structure is not an objective in itself, but must meet a functional necessity
- Build the capacities of the producers and staff to become full partners
- Create strong, representative and well-structured farmers' organisations able to defend their interests

Positioning of G*i* members in the development process

- Avoid, as far as possible, substitution in the implementation of roles that need to be maintained beyond the duration of the project, build human capacity from the outset of the intervention and anticipate the transfer of responsibilities and functions to the organisation
- Initiate partnerships with local authorities and development actors (research centres, NGOs, etc.) to promote quality value chains led by producer organisations and institutionalise the development of local agroecological sectors at regional level (strategy, implementation of collective certifications)
- Be flexible in supporting organisations (recognising that institutional development is a process that requires ownership) and mobilise human resources and technical assistance as needed

Vegetable gardeners of the organisation Green Farmers

Case studies – fact sheets

Support for the agroecological transition of peri-urban family farming through a range of services

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- *Agroecological Intensification and Diversification of Peri-Urban Agriculture project in Siem Reap Province* (IADA) : i) continue agroecological intensification and diversification of local agricultural production, ii) develop a range of agricultural services for the professionalisation of farms and agricultural chains, iii) support the transition to territorial food systems
- Implementation period: phase 1 (2016–2019), phase 2 (2019–2022), phase 3 (2022–2025)
- Main donors: AFD and CD92; Location: Siem Reap Province

PRESENTATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN AND THE ORGANISATION ACCOMPANIED

- Stakeholders: small family farms (project beneficiaries), village collectors, wholesalers and retailers
- Production: variety of vegetables and condiments produced on raised garden bed or open ground, fruit; products processed by groups of farmers (herbal teas, dried spices, beverages, spirits)
- Outlets: Siem Reap urban markets, supermarkets, restaurants, hotels
- Organisation: Green Farmers Association (GF). It is responsible for collecting, processing and distributing the agricultural products of its members, as well as marketing, labelling and promotion activities. Founded in 2018, it now has 419 members in 34 villages and has 12 employees, two of whom are supported by Agrisud who will eventually be taken over entirely by the GF structure.

CHARACTERISATION OF REQUIRED QUALITY AND KEY ISSUES FOR PRODUCERS

QUALITY REQUIRED	KEY ISSUES
• Safe and local products • Minimum volumes required • Product diversification • Regular (daily) supply, delivery service • Sanitary certification required for processed products (GMP)	• Small family farms unable to provide the volumes, regularity and diversity required individually • Need for technical capacity building • Difficult to maintain regular production throughout the year: water reduction in dry season, flooding in rainy season • Competition with rice cultivation (labour and cash) • Little knowledge of local demand quality requirements and purchasing procedures • Cash flow issues • Competition with imports of vegetables from neighbouring countries

G*i* MEMBER INTERVENTION RATIONALE

Agrisud's approach was first of all to strengthen the market garden production capacities of family farms: agroecological practices and post-harvest training, economic and financial management, and campaign planning. It has relied on a system of "master-farmer" producers for agricultural monitoring and advice, and on the creation and strengthening of socio-professional organisations, including five agri-food processing groups (essential oils, dry spices, infusions, juices, etc.). The project then accompanied the creation of the Green Farmers Association to help local family

farms meet market demand, in particular the minimum volumes, regularity and diversity of vegetables desired. The strategic commercial choice has been to prioritise high-end markets (hotels, restaurants), which are more profitable and better able to cover the costs of quality management and organisation. The association has made it possible to improve the supply in response to their demand (diversification, development of the off-season, establishment of greenhouses and cultivation tables) and to improve the marketing channel (interprofessional workshops, shortening of the chain, centralisation and GF supply planning). At the same time, GF raises awareness among the stakeholders furthest downstream in the city of Siem Reap (hotels, restaurants and hotel schools) and consumers about sustainable production issues (communication campaigns, trade fairs, etc.). It makes it possible to differentiate products on the local market (specific weekly market, product visibility on social networks, development of own brand).

For quality management, GF supported the collective definition of internal criteria for practices and qualities adapted to producers' production systems and constraints. Internal control is carried out peer-to-peer by Green Farmers members (visiting growers, keeping logbooks) with monthly follow-up from the GF office. This internal control is also seen as a first step towards external certifications (GMP – *Good Manufactured Products*, CS – *Cambodian Standard*, HACCP, ISO) needed to strengthen the credibility of GF's practices.

G*i* MEMBER'S POSITION DURING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Agrisud supports GF with regard to production (agroecological practices, processing processes, setting standards) and organisational aspects (establishing internal controls, GF governance). It strongly supports GF in business development, in particular by facilitating links with professional training stakeholders (hotel schools). Finally, Agrisud contributes to the political and technical dialogue with the provincial authorities for the implementation of the collective label. In addition, it continues to provide financial support to GF, including the provision of two employees for the positions of Director and Sales Representative.

PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACTS

- Support for 1,970 family farms, 90% of marketed agricultural production
- Access to premium markets (60% of GF's outlets): diversification of production (including "Western" vegetables, increased delivery capacity, logistics organisation)
- Good technical and managerial capabilities developed within GF, human resources partially stabilised
- Increased knowledge of downstream actors on existing local production, quality of GF products, impact of local sourcing on territorial development and sustainable food system.

Follow-up of a beneficiary by a master farmer in Chreay, 2023

ENABLING AND LIMITING FACTORS OF THE INTERVENTION

ENABLING	LIMITING
For quality management	
• Productions adapted to the current system, not requiring major changes • Establishment of an internal control system adapted to farmers' production systems and recognised by downstream actors • Regular exchanges between producers to share experiences • Interprofessional meetings twice a year to promote the sharing of information from collectors regarding quality and expected volumes • Involvement of (literate) youth to document quality control • Communication campaigns through fairs, open houses, social networks, website, etc.	• More restrictive distribution of working time to produce safe and/or organic vegetables compared to conventional • Lack of quality seed • Risk of high workload for master farmers (follow-up of around 30 peers) • Operating costs still covered by Agrisud (two people) • Market for processed products requiring standards to gain access • Impact of the Covid crisis: disruption of specific outlets for agroecological products on weekly markets and with tourism operators
For the management of organisations	
• Economic interest of producers to join the organisation (secure and profitable outlets) • Basic organisations built on existing communities (social control and regulation) • Trained and experienced master farmers for leadership positions • Financial stability to cover the costs of 10 out of 12 GF staff • Past marketing and commercialisation experience of GF staff • In close collaboration with the Provincial Directorate of Commerce and the APICI project • Low cost of internal control system (compensation of master farmers) • Collective construction of outlets for local products with other organisations (Gret, CIRD, etc.)	• Ultimately, this associative structure is not adapted to the longevity of the activity and its development. Creating a (social) company will professionalise the business and facilitate its development • Impact of Covid crisis: Green Farmers has seen a very strong demobilisation of member farms: from more than 800 in 2020 to less than 419 today

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improving the supply chain for hotels and restaurants or increasing the share of local products in these supplies are means to improve the living conditions of producers, not objectives in themselves
- Structure markets, support the investments needed to create them and facilitate the establishment of processing workshops to ensure the sustainability of agricultural chains
- Need to create strong, representative and well-structured farmers' organisations able to defend their interests
- Ensure a direct relationship between producers and consumers that creates confidence in the quality of products and quality standards adapted to farmers' capabilities and customers' needs
- Develop producers' capacities to analyse market demand, price changes and work on consultation with producers to improve the suitability of agricultural schedules and production choices
- Develop a marketing structure to act as wholesalers and supply restaurants and hotels, such as the Green Farmers Association
- Develop communication and logistics tools to improve the ability to connect supply and demand (e.g. internet/SMS platform) as Green Farmers does

Development of small-scale fish farming systems in a complex environment to meet local demand

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- *Development of Fish Farming Value Chains* (DeFiP) project: to improve food and nutritional security and diversify the livelihoods of rural populations by developing a family-run agroecological fish farming aimed at local markets
- Period of implementation: phase 1 (2020–2022), phase 2 (2022–2025)
- Main donor: AFD; Location: Siem Reap and Kampong Thom Provinces
- Local implementing partner: Trailblazer Cambodia Organisation (TCO)

PRESENTATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN

- Stakeholders: family farms (project beneficiaries), intermediaries
- Production: secondary activity, on-growing (dozen species) and rearing (tilapia), three main fish farming systems (pond, in-pond cage and rice-fish farming)
- Outlets: mainly for own consumption, direct sales on the local market (villages), less often to intermediaries
- Organisation: no formal organisation, networking through six groups of 10 to 40 fish farmers for training sessions, exchange visits and discussions

CHARACTERISATION OF REQUIRED QUALITY AND KEY ISSUES FOR PRODUCERS

QUALITY REQUIRED	KEY ISSUES

• Species diversity according to tastes and markets
• Optimal size required by intermediaries according to species, less stringent demands for villagers
• Larger quantities requested by intermediaries, and at a fixed frequency
• Perceived better quality in the March-June period when fish farming is less competitive with the fishery
	• Price strongly correlated with the quality of fish obtained
	• Lack of technical references and financing to intensify production on very small areas: high risks and low margins
	• Risks related to seasonal fluctuations in rainfall that are difficult to predict:
	  ‣ rainy season: flooding of ponds, escape of fish and entry of predators
	  ‣ dry season: lack of water and risk of pollution
	• Poor access to markets: difficulty to meet demand (size, quantity)
	• Consumer preference for wild fish, aversion to fish products considered less tasty (but declining)

G*i* MEMBER INTERVENTION RATIONALE

The project adopted a participatory approach with fish farmers to test and co-develop fish farming systems adapted to their technical, social and economic contexts, capable of producing fish that meet their quality expectations. The focus is on understanding farmers and their choices, discussing their challenges in order to find suitable solutions together and implementing experiments to answer their questions. APDRA collaborates with the CIRAD research institute to support the scientific research carried out as part of the process. The project chose to support producers in the upgrading of ponds dug prior to the project, in order to limit investment costs. Financial support is limited to a lump sum for the purchase of fry for the first year of involvement in the project. Ultimately, a non-funded approach is envisaged. This process relies on the networking of farmers in order to create a social dynamic; thematic sub-groups of farmers are set up.

Gi MEMBER'S POSITION DURING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

APDRA supports fish farmers both technically and in their organisation throughout the process of developing their business. This involves close monitoring and evaluation, in-depth studies, participatory meetings, and scientific validation of innovations. APDRA does not take the place of farmers but supports their initiatives. This implies light financing, guaranteed freedom of choice for farmers and the independence of peasant groups. APDRA is not a commercial actor in value chains and is not directly responsible for managing or developing business on behalf of farmers.

PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACTS

- Fairly weak first results in 2022 (yields, weight, survival rate), improved in 2023 (30% of cycles have net margin+ USD 100, 10% of cycles have net margin + USD 200)
- Refocus on research action and identifying promising technical routes
- Improved control of production cycles by fish farmers
- Quality and quantity still not stable enough for farmers to work together to target intermediaries

ENABLING AND LIMITING FACTORS OF THE INTERVENTION

ENABLING	LIMITING
For quality management	
• Participatory approach and co-construction of references by and for fish farmers, fine monitoring and evaluation • Use of species already known to fish farmers • Valorisation of existing ponds allowing for a certain efficiency of the intervention (low investment costs) • Networking of farmers: key to innovation transfer and problem solving	• Secondary and risky activity for producers, need to target motivated producers • Participatory action research approach necessarily resulting in mixed results at start-up • Recent but promising rearing work • Ambitions necessarily measured due to climate context (floods and droughts) and competition with wild fish

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Need to adapt practices to the specific context of each producer, in technical terms (type of soil, amount of water) and socio-economic terms (time available, budget). Not looking for a standardised solution
- Plan before starting a cycle: identify the desired end result in terms of species, individual weight and timing
- Obtain fry from a reliable source and follow best practices for selection, transport, release and acclimatisation of fry to their new environment
- Identify and anticipate climate risks (flooding and water scarcity in the dry season) by developing a management plan (dams, several ponds)
- Thinking of the market strategy, contacting buyers prior to the harvest
- In the context of a lack of technical references, encourage farmers to innovate and test new techniques in order to identify promising opportunities.

Fish farmer Ms Thai Lam feeds her fish

Organic rice value chain development with Preah Vihear Mean Chey Cooperative Union

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- An action to develop a large-scale organic rice value chain in the province of Preah Vihear (conducted within the framework of the Support to the Commercialisation of Cambodia Rice Project – SCCRP); follow-up of a joint AVSF-Ethiquable project and short missions within the framework of the ASPIRE project
- Period of implementation: 2013–2017 (SCCRP), 2017–2023 (AVSF-Ethiquable), 2018–2021 (ASPIRE)
- Main donors: AFD, IFAD, Ethiquable; Location: Preah Vihear Province

PRESENTATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN AND THE ORGANISATION ACCOMPANIED

- Stakeholders: family farms, agricultural cooperatives and union of cooperatives (project beneficiaries), rice millers, wholesalers and retailers, exporters
- Production: three varieties of organic jasmine rice and one variety of certified organic white rice
- Outlets: North American and European export markets (NOP and EOS certification)
- Organisation: Preah Vihear Mean Chey Union of Agricultural Cooperative (PMUAC). It is responsible for the management of the internal control system, the holding of certifications, the strengthening of technical capacities for organic production, and the facilitation of links with the market. Registered as a union in 2016, it has 25 member agricultural cooperatives (5.403 households) and 12 employees

CHARACTERISATION OF REQUIRED QUALITY AND KEY ISSUES FOR PRODUCERS

QUALITY REQUIRED	KEY ISSUES
• Organic certification (NOP, EOS) • Varietal purity • Moisture content • Broken kernels rate • Fair trade SPP certification (small volume and single buyer)	• Ensure and maintain "organic farming" certification • Lack of labour and difficult access to harvest mechanisation that does not allow optimal harvest: high rate of broken kernels and poor moisture content • Lack of labour and effect of climate change forcing growers to sow directly instead of continuing nursery/transplanting: increased competition with weeds • Diversify buyers to avoid monopsony situations

G*i* MEMBER INTERVENTION RATIONALE

At the technical level, the initial support from AVSF and Iram consisted of consolidating the organic rice production practices of the cooperatives pre-existing in the project, first through a contract with the Cambodian Organic Agriculture Association (COrAA) and then by internalising the expertise on organic specifications and inspection within PMUAC. On the commercial side, the strategy was to develop annual supply contracts between cooperatives and purchasers, and to rely on external standards and labels, in particular organic certification (NOP and EOS), but also the creation of a collective brand, which would allow the quality of Preah Vihear jasmine rice to be remunerated. The definition and maintenance of a quality required the establishment of a collective control and promotion structure, namely a Cooperative Union (PMUAC), while leaving the prerogatives of marketing (contracts with rice millers) to the cooperatives. PMUAC now holds organic and SPP certifications.

Financing the development and maintenance of the quality of rice (technical support, quality control), as well as organisations (cooperatives, PMUAC), has been made possible by the differentiation of products on the market, incorporating a premium quality and, above all, an organic premium. Economies of scale were sought (critical mass of human resources) to ensure the sustainability of this financing through the market. The cost of PMUAC's functions (in particular internal control, the 12 employees, etc.) is fully covered by a share of the organic premium (and a little by the fair premium) from the sale of rice. Finally, the project adopted a position of technical assistance by supporting the functioning of organisations (general assemblies, meetings, etc.) and leaving it up to the farmers to decide for themselves.

Gi MEMBER'S POSITION DURING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Iram and AVSF played mainly the role of facilitator and adviser/trainer throughout the process, without ever being involved in the supply chain. The AVSF and Iram teams acted as facilitators in establishing contacts between the cooperatives and potential buyers (facilitating plenary and bilateral meetings), including support in drawing up the first purchase contracts. Beyond the initial SCCRP project, AVSF continued to provide support and advice to PMUAC when specific difficulties were encountered, and to assist the Union in its development, in particular on internal control and commercial aspects. It has made it possible to support innovations such as the sale of organic rice milled and packaged by the cooperatives themselves, the optimisation of the working time of employees available off-season, and the enhancement of other crops practised by member farmers (e.g. groundnuts).

PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACTS

- PMUAC: first registered Agriculture Cooperatives Union in Cambodia, 5 to 25 member cooperatives in 10 years
- 9,600 tonnes of paddy rice sold annually on average over the last five years
- Improved quality with the help of PMUAC helping to mobilise combine harvesters
- Diversification of purchasers (5 rice exporters)
- Development within PMUAC of good technical and managerial capabilities, stabilised human resources
- Level of organic premium generated sufficient to improve producer incomes and finance cooperatives and PMUAC, including internal control system

ENABLING AND LIMITING FACTORS OF THE INTERVENTION

ENABLING	LIMITING
For quality management	
• Organic certification supported by existing quasi-organic practices in the province • Large scale achieved by Preah Vihear rice supply chain enabling economies of scale and cost recovery • Rice export development period: effective engagement of Cambodian companies (e.g. AMRU Rice) to find a market capable of absorbing several thousand tonnes of organic rice	• Broken kernels rate still high for some growers • Low availability and high cost of local labour (harvest, truck loading) • Financial difficulties for some producers to benefit from combine harvesters during the harvest
For the management of organisations	
• The quality control function was a fundamental pillar of the creation of the Union and allows for a considerable reduction in certification costs. • Anticipation of the project's phasing out: transfer of oversight and internal control management roles to PMUAC in order to develop its internal capabilities rapidly • Honesty of the cooperative directors, strong commitment and loyalty of the young PMUAC operational team • Maintenance of AVSF's long-term technical support	• Some volumes of jasmine rice are not sold as organic rice due to lack of market, so sold in conventional form • PMUAC services to be strengthened: organic seed production, organic fertiliser supply • Capacity building in managerial and administrative management in selected ACs

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Give producers autonomy, while supporting them, in defining a clear purpose and an identified function of their organisation, which is not an objective in itself.
- Avoid substitution in implementing roles that need to be maintained beyond the duration of the project and anticipate the transfer of roles and functions to the organisation.

Support the emergence of sustainable supply chains in the domestic energy sector

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2003–2013: Support for the production and distribution of improved homes in Cambodia
- SEFED (*Support the Emergence of Sustainable Supply Chain in the domestic energy*) project: supporting the emergence and empowerment of local actors involved in the production and distribution of improved stoves and sustainable biofuels
- Period of implementation: 2016–2019; Main donor: AFD
- Location: Kampong Chhnang Province
- Local implementing partner: Cambodia Institute for Research and Development (CIRD)

PRESENTATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN AND THE ORGANISATION ACCOMPANIED

- Stakeholders (beneficiaries of the project): producers and distributors of stoves
- Production: three to five improved cookstove models
- Outlets: consumer markets in Kampong Chhnang, other provinces and Phnom Penh
- Organisation: Cambodian Efficient Stove Promoters Association (CESPA), dedicated to the promotion of its members (producers and distributors), in charge of quality control and market development. Created in 2004, registered as an inter-professional association in 2017, it had 25 producer members in 2023

CHARACTERISATION OF REQUIRED QUALITY AND KEY ISSUES FOR PRODUCERS

QUALITY REQUIRED	KEY ISSUES
• Value for money (or sustainability/cost): most important factor for the buyer • Fuel efficient stoves to reduce expenses • Low smoke emissions • Cooking speed • Ease of use and safety • "Modern" design (size, materials)	• Shortage of skilled workers, lack of adequate training • Irregularity in the quality of the raw material (especially clay) • Raw material price increase • High demand may cause some producers to neglect quality in order to meet the quantity ordered. • Quality maintenance and financing of quality control

G*i* MEMBER INTERVENTION RATIONALE

From 2004 to 2013, the production and distribution of improved stoves was supported by carbon finance: reductions in greenhouse gas emissions generated carbon credits, which, when sold on the voluntary market, financed the production, sale at a guaranteed minimum price, quality control and distribution of improved stoves. Following the end of carbon credits and after three years of withdrawal (2013–2016), the strategy adopted by Geres during the SEFED project was to implement a label promoting the quality of improved stoves on the market. The price has been liberalised, theoretically higher than that of conventional stoves in order to value their higher quality standards.

The financing of the development and maintenance of the quality of improved stoves was thus made possible first by payments for environmental services (carbon credits) and then by differentiating products on the market with a quality premium. In both cases, defining a quality and maintaining it required the establishment of a collective control and promotion structure (CESPA), while allowing producers and distributors to sell individually.

Gi MEMBER'S POSITION DURING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

From 2004 to 2013, Geres ensured the quality control of homes and the direct implementation of marketing. In 2015, at the start of the SEFED project, Geres partnered with the Cambodian association CIRD to support it in the process of transferring ownership of the first organisation created, ICoProDac, to CESPA, which became effective in 2017. The CIRD and Geres provided technical and organisational support to CESPA. In 2019, Geres completely discontinued its direct support to the sector and CESPA, taken over by SNV which is still present today.

PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACTS

- 2004–2013: more than 3 million improved stoves sold, approximately 300 members (producers and distributors) in the organisation
- 2013–2016: increased price competition and deterioration in the quality of stoves
- Since 2016, production of a diversified range of products well adapted to the cultural context and particularly to the culinary practices of Cambodian users.
- Today, 25 members (producers) produce and sell 500-800 stoves upgraded with three different models per month
- Strong competition, difficult scale-up of differentiation; reluctance of distributors to increase their purchase prices to producers
- Producer-to-consumer initiatives

ENABLING AND LIMITING FACTORS OF THE INTERVENTION

ENABLING	LIMITING
For quality management	
• Long-term technical assistance, training, commercialisation and innovation support (more than 10 years): significant contribution to long-term capacity building • Establishment of a collective structure allowing the management of quality control by means of a laboratory, the development of marketing	• Quality control costs not included in selling price during carbon credit period: distortion difficult to cover when switching to market period • Lack of knowledge and monitoring of market developments • Label perceived as a constraint (payment required from producers) rather than a differentiation tool: difficult paradigm shift • Difference of opinion between producers on the quality to be defined and produced
For the management of organisations	
• Searching for a certain quality and introducing quality control: unifying and structuring elements of producers • Proximity of the organisation to its members • Support from development partners such as Geres and SNV: capacity building in management	• Quality control ensured for a long time by the Geres: difficult to strengthen the organisation's capacities • Fees collected by CESPA insufficient to guarantee financial independence and continuity of internal control system; need for continuous external financial support • Reduction of members impacting on the ability to recover costs of quality control

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Avoid substitution and build institutional and human capacities from the early stages of the intervention
- Incorporate the costs of quality control into the selling price, as well as the costs of any functions that will need to be maintained beyond the duration of the project and integrated into the value chain
- Anticipate the end of external support (e.g. carbon credits) in order to anticipate market launch. The challenge is to maintain the quality of production once these supports have been removed
- Strengthen local partner or organisation to ensure quality control
- Support paradigm shifts by raising awareness and demonstrating
- Promotion through voluntary approaches (label) still requires the support of government actors, research centres and development partners whose services are publicly funded

Participatory guarantee schemes for the local certification of safe vegetables

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- *Semi-intensive Agriculture for smallholders' farmers using less inputs Project* (APICI) project supporting the development of a more efficient production and marketing system for agricultural products (rice, fruit and vegetables, chickens) by supporting agroecology, market access and the structuring of professional organisations of farmers
- Period of implementation: since 2010 – ongoing
- Main donors: AFD and CD92; Location: Siem Reap Province

PRESENTATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN AND THE ORGANISATION ACCOMPANIED

- Stakholders: small family farms (project beneficiaries), village collectors, wholesalers and retailers, agricultural cooperatives, consumers.
- Production: variety of vegetables and condiments produced on raised garden beds or on open ground;
- Outlets: markets in the Greater Siem Reap area, supermarkets in the Province of Siem Reap or Phnom Penh city, restaurants
- Organisation: Sovathapheap Thoamacheat Agricultural Cooperative (ECOFARM). It is responsible for collecting and selling the products of its members and organising the participatory guarantee system. Created in 2015, before becoming an agricultural cooperative in 2019, it now has 125 members, 71 of which are involved in the PGS.

CHARACTERISATION OF REQUIRED QUALITY AND KEY ISSUES FOR PRODUCERS

QUALITY REQUIRED	KEY ISSUES
• Safe and local products • Freshness and good-looking products • Minimum volumes required • Product diversification • Regular (daily) supply, delivery service	• Small family farms unable to provide the required volumes and diversity individually • Need for technical capacity building, including pest management • Difficult to maintain regular production throughout the year: water reduction in dry season, flooding in rainy season • Little knowledge of local demand quality requirements and purchasing procedures • Cash flow problems, late payment by buyers • Competition with imports of vegetables from neighbouring countries

G*i* MEMBER INTERVENTION RATIONALE

In order to support producers and enable them to meet quality requirements, Gret's strategy initially consisted of building the capacities of individual farmers to improve their cropping systems (yield, diversification of production, reduction of chemical inputs) through technical training in agroecology and peer exchanges based on a local network of pilot farmers. Subsequently, the project supported their grouping into producer groups (vegetables and chickens) and then into cooperatives to organise collective sales in order to achieve the volume and quality demanded by intermediaries and wholesalers, thus promoting contractual agreements with these actors and a sustainable increase in the income of the members of the cooperative. It also supported some producers (those with initial skills and capital) in developing the collector's profession to be responsible for collecting the cooperative's products, marketing them, organising procurement and providing advice to members.

To manage quality, ECOFARM has defined internal quality specifications adapted to the production systems and constraints of the producers. Internal control is based on a PGS, which involves a variety of stakeholders at different stages including representatives of the groups, producers-advisers in agroecology, the management committee of the cooperative, collectors, local authorities (heads of villages and communes) and provincial authorities (representative of the Department of Agriculture) and consumers.

Gi MEMBER'S POSITION DURING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Gret advises the members of ECOFARM and its committee on technical, marketing, communication, organisational, financial and management aspects. It supported the drafting of internal standards and the implementation of the PGS. In addition, the APICI project subsidises some of the equipment used in the production process such as containers, cultivation tables, materials/ingredients for biopesticides and compost, etc. Finally, it helps raise awareness among public authorities and downstream stakeholders of local value chains and quality, in particular by strengthening ECOFARM's capacities in terms of advocacy and digital communication.

PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACTS

- A total of 71 safe vegetable producers, 45 of whom can supply all year round: increase in purchasers and volumes (approximately 7 tons of vegetables sold per month), internal certificates granted, contracts with downstream players, sales on the weekly market, etc.
- Premium price of 300 to 500 KHR/kg of vegetables, reduction in production costs by 40 to 60%
- Diversification of opportunities: 50% on quality markets, 15% on Siem Reap's weekly farmer's market, 20% on wholesale markets, 15% to private individuals via Facebook
- Visit of more than 900 people (producers, representatives of cooperatives, students, government authorities) to ECOFARM to observe production practices and present the PGS
- Strengthened producer capacities to produce and market local and healthy products

ENABLING AND LIMITING FACTORS OF THE INTERVENTION

ENABLING	LIMITING
For quality management	
• Outputs and standards adapted to the current system, not requiring major changes • Establishment of an internal control system adapted to farmers' production systems and recognised by downstream actors • Regular exchanges between producers to share experiences, support from agroecology advisors • Previous marketing/trade experience of producers who are in direct contact with intermediaries and wholesalers • Involvement of local authorities in the PGS promoting its recognition (in particular the provincial Department of Agriculture) • Low cost of PGS compared to third party intervention (mainly requires time on the part of the internal committee to carry out inspections)	• More working time to produce safe and/or organic vegetables compared to conventional • Lack of quality seeds for vegetables • Mobilisation of stakeholders for semi-annual or annual visits still covered by Gret (local authorities, provincial department of agriculture) • Low and infrequent (annual) financial incentives for the control committee
For the management of organisations	
• Economic interest of producers (premium price) • Basic organisations built on existing communities (social control and regulation) • Qualified and experienced producers in management positions	• Cooperative not financially able to have paid staff: relies on motivated and competent producers

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The PGS feeds on diversity and empowers smallholder farmers by enabling them to create highly-adaptable, locally-driven systems that meet individual needs
- The PGS enables farmers to earn a higher income while producing food that has a positive impact on human health, education and environmental concerns.
- The PGS has reduced the need for migrant labour by increasing incomes and their regularity to meet local labour needs.

Organic paddy rice collected in one of the PMUAC member cooperatives in Preah Vihear

NOTES

SUMMARY

Several development dynamics are at work in Cambodia: from large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture to family production, and from models that exploit soil fertility in a non-sustainable way to agroecological and sustainable systems. The practices adopted by some family farms meet the challenge of sustainability but face a lack of recognition, particularly among stakeholders downstream of value chains. In this context, the members of the G*i* in Cambodia (Agrisud International, APDRA, AVSF, Geres, Gret, Iram) have, for several years, been supporting the integration of family farmers and artisans into local, national and international supply chains and markets in order to improve the sharing of value in their favour and to contribute to the improvement of their income and living conditions.

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The Institute for research and application of development methods (Iram) has worked in the field of international development since 1957. Its aim is to promote a less unequal society in favour of sustainable development by combining high quality independent expertise with strong ethical principles and commitment. In association with local partners, its activities on the ground cover all stages of the project cycle, from pre-identification to implementation and research to final evaluation.

Manual harvesting of rice by producers who are members of the PMUAC ©AVSF

THE GROUPE *INITIATIVES*

Created in 1993, the "Groupe *initiatives*" (G*i*) is a collective of professional international solidarity associations that have come to the conclusion "that [they] would make more progress together than separately and that [they] can overcome [their] differences and [their] competition by setting common challenges and shared goals" (see the G*i* Manifesto).

It currently consists of 15 member organisations. The dynamics of rapprochement within the collective expresses the will of the members to better assert their values and their specific approaches to combating inequalities for a habitable world, for economic, social and cultural rights and for international solidarity.

The "Groupe *initiatives*" is a forum for exchange as well as sharing experiences and practices in order to foster the considerations of international solidarity stakeholders and to formulate recommendations in the field of public policies.

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Graphic design: Terre Nourricière - 200 copies - December 2023