

RECOGNISING THE VITAL ROLE OF RICE

The United Nations has named 2004 as the International Year of Rice, reflecting the importance of rice as a primary food source for more than half the world's population. 'Rice is life' is the theme of the International Year of Rice. As a source of food security, as a way of life upon which many traditions are built and as a foundation of farming enterprises and trade, rice is vital.

One country where this is particularly so is Cambodia. In the past decade, as Cambodia has emerged from its recent troubled past, increased rice production has been an important economic driver.

Australia has played a role in this, most notably through work supported by AusAID, ACIAR and IRRI, to improve the rice varieties grown in Cambodia. The on-going partnership between IRRI and ACIAR is featured in this magazine.

But there is more to agriculture in Cambodia than rice, and ACIAR has recently developed a small suite of projects to help in the diversification of agricultural industries.

Increasingly in a global world, agricultural expansion and diversification can provide the means to improve livelihoods and build sustainable futures for poor farmers.

With Cambodia seeking WTO accession and entering export markets, the timing is right to expand agriculture.

Work on animal health, much of it being carried out in Laos, and applicable to Cambodia is one area where ACIAR is supporting agricultural expansion.

Rice will remain Cambodia's staple crop and the foundation on which much of this expansion is built. Agricultural research for sustainability, including that supported by ACIAR, has an important role to play in Cambodia's, and the region's, future.

PARTNERS IN RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Partners in Research for Development

presents articles that summarise results from ACIAR-sponsored research projects, and puts ACIAR research initiatives into perspective. Technical enquiries will be passed on to the appropriate researchers for reply. Reprinting of articles, either whole or in part, is welcomed provided that the source is acknowledged. This publication is freely available from ACIAR's website at www.aciar.gov.au. It is also freely available on request from ACIAR.

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