

‘Regional Training Course on Communication and Advocacy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics’ from 27 June to 1 July 2016.

Country Report

Participant name: **Pich Pothy**, from Cambodia

Importance of Agriculture in Cambodia

Agriculture is the foundation of the Cambodian economy. About 80% of the population lives in rural areas and agriculture provides food for daily living, raw materials for agro-industry, and over 30% of GDP from agricultural production and export.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) gives agriculture a prominent place in its Rectangular Strategy and a high priority in its national development agenda. The RGC expects agricultural development to continue to deliver poverty reduction, through food security, increasing household incomes and job creation, and to contribute to economic growth and macro-economic stability. The sector has received increasing RGC support in terms of policy direction and financing.

Agriculture in National Development plan

The Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013 followed the RGC’s National Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013 and the Rectangular Strategy Phase-II. Presently, the agricultural sector has been supported through the improvement of irrigation, dissemination of new technology and other endeavors, especially agricultural research and development to adapt to climate change. In this connection, the RGC has strengthened the cooperation with development partners in order to mobilize funds and increase resources for promoting and enhancing agricultural productivity.

The Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan (ASDP), 2014-2018 is a medium-term plan that specifies the policy goals and objectives, indicates development outcomes, expected outputs and activities of MAFF for a 5 year period, from 2014 to 2018. This document reflects the RGC’s policy direction stipulated in the Rectangular Strategy Phase-III and also aligns with the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), 2014-2018, which continue to promote the enhancement of agricultural productivity, diversification and commercialization, promotion of livestock farming and aquaculture, land reform and sustainable management of natural resources.

Development of Agriculture

With support from the RGC, MAFF, concerned ministries and institutions, local authorities and development partners, and the farmers own efforts, modern agricultural practices are being adopted and agricultural production has progressed, overcoming many challenges and difficulties.

MAFF has promoted all forms of agricultural production, especially strategic crops such as rice, rubber, subsidiary crops and agro-industrial crops and processing, animal husbandry and

aquaculture. MAFF has also prioritized deep reform of the fisheries sector and the forestry reform programme.

Much work has been done to put in place and implement effective legal frameworks, deliver relevant infrastructure improvement and develop and disseminate techniques to increase production in a sustainable way. Rural areas have been provided with irrigation, good transport links and a positive business environment to enable the agricultural development achieved. The mechanism of Technical Working Groups is being widely used to analyse progress, determine priorities and co-ordinate government and development partners (DP) activity.

Moreover, after having promulgated the Policy Paper on “The Promotion of Paddy Production and Rice Export” of the RGC, rice exportation has progressively increased to international markets, and Cambodian rice namely Phkar Romduol is considered as the best rice quality in the world.

It is vital that Cambodian agriculture continues to move from subsistence-level to a commercial but sustainable basis. In the past 5 years, farmers across the country have recognized the benefit of higher value crops and activities and some have been actively and competitively involved in agri-business. Local and international investors recognize the potential of the agricultural sector and could invest much more in collection and storage facilities, processing and logistics systems once some of the remaining barriers to trade and investment are reduced. In particular, this concerns logistics, SPS standards and government capacity to regulate. The Government-Private Sector Forum has contributed to the identification of key constraints and to the prioritization of administrative and regulatory reforms.

The Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 is truly important with the provision of clear indications, policy direction and the priority actions to be undertaken in order to produce great achievements as directed by the NSDP 2014-2018 and this is a basic strategic plan to provide roadmap for agricultural development as all concerned institutions and development partners referred to in order to provide their technical and financial assistance for implementation all relevant priority actions set in this plan which to be contributing to the development of agricultural sector.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries highly committed in the implementation of the Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 with high expectation of results. However, negative impacts and obstacles may be occurred during the implementation of productivity and diversification for agriculture, especially rice production. The natural calamities, including flood, drought and insect destruction may be the root cause for failure in crop production. But, these problems will be mitigated through the strong commitments and full efforts from all concerned parties for achieving the great success to accelerate the development of agricultural sector.

Dissemination of statistics in NIS

The NIS has already gained considerable experience in the conduct of censuses and sample surveys, and in the associated data processing. The area now requiring special attention is analysis and report writing. It is not appropriate to rely on foreign consultants to carry out this work. The necessary skills need to be developed locally, so that Cambodians can take full control of all stages of the survey process. If it does prove necessary to employ a foreign consultant, the consultant must be encouraged to work alongside local consultants, so that there is some skill transfer. As indicated earlier, many of the senior and middle level staff in NIS could benefit from further training in data analysis and report writing. At the same time, they need to enhance their English-language skills. Similar training should be given to staff working in statistics units in line ministries, which will improve the quality of their outputs.

When preparing statistical reports for public release, care must be taken to assess the likely audience for the report. For instance, in the case of the report of a statistical survey, academic and other readers with a technical background will appreciate the full analytical report, whereas many general readers amongst the public simply want to know the main findings, presented in as simple a way as possible. Efforts must be made to present reports for these latter types of readers in an attractive fashion, keeping the reports short and to the point, and making liberal use of very simple charts, graphics, and pictures.

Dissemination

The main medium of dissemination for government statistics, whether from censuses, surveys, or administrative records, has traditionally been through hard copy publications. The NIS now has an active website, and statistical outputs such as indicators are increasingly being displayed there. Other media are also being used for dissemination. CD-ROMs are one means that is used for releasing reports.

A recent development is the production by NIS of a CD-ROM containing a large collection of statistical indicators. This database, produced with the support of UNICEF and GTZ, is known as CAMInfo, and contains time series data on all the indicators used for monitoring the MDGs and the various development plans. It is regularly updated, and is presented in such a form that, with a little training, it is possible for users to produce their own graphs and charts of the results. It is expected that CAMInfo will soon be available directly online on the NIS website. The underlying platform for CAMInfo is supported internationally.

With email now being widely used, this means of dissemination is becoming increasingly used by NIS for distributing reports. It is an attractive means of distribution from the point of view of cost and timeliness, but it is advisable to have some hard copy reports, for use by the general public, libraries and others who do not have email or Internet access. For the foreseeable future, dissemination of paper copies in short popular versions will be necessary.

Dissemination and pricing policies need to be reviewed. In principle there should be free dissemination of statistical information. In practice, copies of large reports being freely available with little limitation on number of copies taken has meant that stocks run out and that copies might not reach key users. Imposing a modest charge may cut down the number of

multiple copies taken and reduce frivolous demand. The number of copies of reports printed should be reviewed to reflect likely needs of users. Consideration should be given to parallel production of short popular versions of reports.

The NIS maintains a Data Users Centre, with support from UNFPA, where visitors can call in and obtain publications. Alongside the Centre is the NIS library containing a record of all key statistical publications.

Apart from the dissemination of current statistics, users need to be provided with the necessary metadata about the various statistical series, explaining the detailed methodologies used for the various statistical collections. In the case of statistics covered by the GDDS, a great deal of this information is available on the IMF GDDS website. For some series, such as the balance of payments, CPI and national accounts, special hard copy manuals have been produced, to guide the user in assessing the statistics. Similar methodological reports need to be prepared in respect of all key series of government statistics.

There is already demand from researchers for microdata from household surveys. Microdata are the original records of the information collected, giving details of the individuals and the individual households. It is needed by researchers because many of the more extensive analyses and modelling they wish to undertake cannot be done with the aggregated information provided in the publications of survey results. This kind of use has two main benefits: more use is made of data already collected (additional value added at little further cost to the statistical system) and data quality is improved as more experts report back on their experience of the data. But access to microdata has to be done carefully and the confidentiality of the data and anonymity of the individuals and households have to be respected and preserved.

The NIS should set up a policy on microdata release specifying, in particular, conditions of access, the safeguards to be imposed on the data and the researchers, what is meant by research and researchers. Only confidentialised unit record files (CURF) should be released. The NIS needs technical assistance in developing the skills to produce CURFs. Public trust in confidentiality of information provided to NIS and other data collectors must be maintained as the main priority. The NIS should also strengthen tools to preserve and disseminate such microdata.