

Investigating capacities to change soil and irrigation practices in vegetable production in two provinces in Cambodia

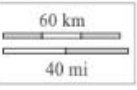
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Improving vegetable production in Cambodia offers a pathway to grow domestic consumption and exports, and improve nutrition, profits, and livelihoods. Interviews with 120 growers and 5 focus group discussions within 5 villages investigated growers' capacity to change soil and irrigation management in their Chinese cabbage, Petsai, Cucumber, Cauliflower, Lettuce and other vegetable crops. Low or no profitability (34% participants), insect pests (59%) and dry periods (18%) were growers' major limitations, with small farm size (0.08 ha) and limited schooling (21-36% had no schooling) contributing to the scenario. High cost of inputs is a limitation to making farming system changes, with most growers using their own funds and less than 10% borrowing funds to pay for crop inputs.

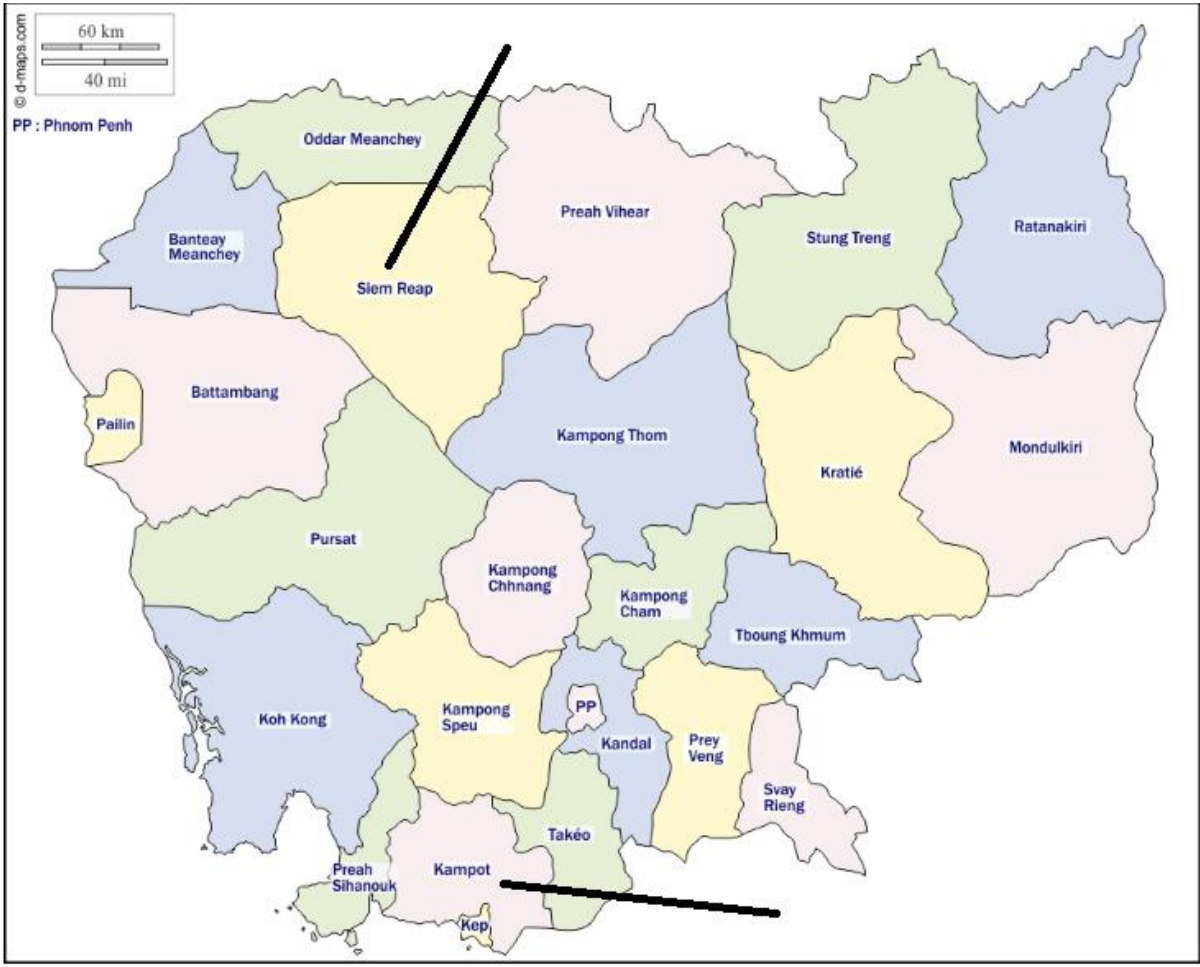
Communication and planning for vegetable growing occurred almost exclusively within families (93%), with 7.5% of participants discussing with other farmers. Lack of time (43%) and knowledge about farmer group activities (30%) limited ongoing group learning opportunities. Although very traditional, 28% of participants had tried new practices; 42% of participants indicated they will try new practices after exposure to a soil and irrigation research trial. The participants were keen learners, and after exposure to the research, 58% believed that liming improves yields and 18% prefer to evaluate this on their farms. Information sources about vegetable growing are limited, and growers had complex information needs. Facilitating and mentoring ongoing local support and technical information networks, and enhancing capacity and communication are seen as key strategies for empowering long term ability to change.

Province	Age (yrs)		Years of farming	Workers on farm	Education (%)					
					Nil		Primary		Higher Secondary	
Kampot	M	45	25	2	M	21	M	41	M	38
	F	44			F	20	F	48	F	32
Siem Reap	M	46	20	2	M	33	M	49	M	18
	F	44			F	39	F	54	F	7
	Discuss farming outside family %		Participate in group (farmer) %	Field day attendance %	Has tried new practices %	Will try new soil practices	Will try new irrigation practices			
Kampot	22		45	9	13	44	54			
Siem Reap	20		35	12	26	32	40			

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Input supply study findings	
Wholesaler to Local Supplier	Local Supplier to Farmer
Consumer-related Want latest varieties & high quality seeds	Consumer-related Small scale Insufficient profits & late repayments
Product Quality Poor seed quality & storage	Product Quality Interest in reducing chemical use
Relationship Payment difficulties due to farmer late payments Return poor quality seed	Relationship Farmers obtain credit from suppliers and are extending payments past harvest
Information Reliant on international product suppliers for technical information Language on labels often not local	Information Few suppliers have technical information to provide to farmers Language on labels often not local