



## Keynote

### **H.E. Dr. Ngin Chhay, Director General of the General Directorate of Agriculture for MoA Signing Ceremony on Establishment of a Cambodia National Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Chapter**

on 25 June 2021 (10:00-11:15 am)

1. Agricultural sector in Cambodia continues to be a crucial source of livelihood for the majority of population, mainly in rural areas, and it is still a priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) for many years to come.
2. Promoting agricultural sector and rural development is one of the RGC's priorities, which is clearly reflected in Rectangular Strategy IV with regard to strengthening the role of agriculture sector in generating jobs, ensuring food security, reducing poverty, and developing rural areas. The focus will be to improve productivity, quality and diversification; promote agro-processing industry and market linkage; and boost vegetable production for import substitution.
3. Rice is the main crop in Cambodia and its production occupies around 75% of the cultivated land in the country. Rice production, processing, and marketing are estimated to employ about 3 million people, more than one-fifth of the country's population. In the last decade, half of the poverty incidence's reduction has been driven by the increase in rice production and incomes generated from rice sector.
4. Over the past decades, Cambodia has witnessed a significant transformation of the rice sector, from a country categorized as the net importer in the 1990s to be the net exporter with paddy production increase from 9.32 million metric tons in 2013 to 10.94 million metric tons in 2020. The export of the milled rice has also significantly increased from 387,061 tons in 2014 to 690,829 tons in 2020. One of the key challenges is the indiscriminate use of agro-chemicals leading to the destruction of the ecosystem balance and posing hazard to humans, other living creatures and the environment
5. Cambodia became a Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) member country in 2015 after the kick-off workshop which was conducted by the Department of Rice Crop (DRC) of the General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA) in collaboration with Oxfam, SRP Secretariat, and International Finance Corporation (IFC). It has initially been implemented as pilot phase. Its approach demonstrates great potential to help transform rice sector into the Sustainable Rice Landscapes, by generating multiple benefits including improved farmer livelihoods and their resilience, healthy watersheds and biodiversity protection, enhanced ecosystem services and reduction in environmental impacts.
6. The SRP definitely fits to Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 on promoting agricultural productivity, diversification, competitiveness and commercialization "**growing for the markets**". The SRP standard should be applied as much as possible in every rice production ecosystem in Cambodia for improving rice productivity, assuring food safety and increasing

profitability in a sustainable manner for supplying good quality and safe products in the competitive global markets.

7. **The Cambodian National SRP Chapter** was initiated in January 2019 during the Global Plenary and General Assembly on SRP which was conducted in Siem Reap province and all SRP partners agreed that GDA is the leading agency to coordinate the National SRP Chapter. After the conference, several meetings were conducted to discuss with SRP stakeholders especially private sectors in order to fulfill the requirement of the SRP Secretariate.
8. Today, GDA, Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), CIRAD and Swisscontact have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to support establishment of a Cambodia National SRP Chapter. There are many crucial and urgent activities that need to be carried out in order to form a strong National SRP Chapter and to boost SRP activities in Cambodia. Therefore, the participation and commitment of every stakeholder is very important for moving SRP forward to achieve our goal to benefit rice producers (farmers), private sectors and the natural environment.
9. This initiative is certainly the right step toward enhancing and improving rice cultivation in both production and quality in Cambodia in a sustainable way contributing to more cost-effective production and reduction of greenhouse gas emission, ecological disruption, environmental contamination, public health concern and toxic residues in food.
10. Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all partners for working very hard together with GDA to establish the National SRP Chapter and enhance SRP activities in the Cambodia and also thank you all for your collaborative efforts to make this MoA come to exist and be implemented. I wish you all the best and stay safe and healthy.

**Thank you**