Disseminating underutilized species as a foundation of resilient farming system

Sovanda Son, Suos Vuthy, Chett Ouddom, Sovannara Chheong, Samnang Yen, Rada Kong, Rick Bates, Lyda Hok, Manny Reyes, Koy Ra, Patrick Trak, Vira Leng, and Florent Tivet

Context of the Action
Considering plant diversity the foundation of agro-ecological principles, there is a need to preserve and share a large plant biodiversity and to continuously enrich genetic banks to design more diversified and resilient farming systems. Plant diversity can also contribute to improving the nutritional value of home gardens. Germplasm conservation and dissemination are challenging due to the high cost of seed bank maintenance, farmers limited access to good quality storage facilities, lack of knowledge and know-how of the key operators, and the lack of specific market demands for secondary crops and cover/relay crops.

Objectives of the Action
- Preserve and maintain seed banks and biodiversity.
- Empower smallholder farmers on seed production.
- Disseminate knowledge and know-how on the use of underutilized species and cover/relay crops.
- Share under-utilized species with smallholder farmers and development practitioners.

Genetic bank at the Conservation Agriculture Training Center
- Preserving and sharing over 50 species and over 330 cultivars of staple, cash crops and underutilized species.
- Providing training for smallholder farmers and development practitioners.
- Sharing seeds across the country: 9 tons of seeds will be shared with smallholder farmers and development practitioners in 2018.

In Battambang and Kampong Cham provinces, 12 farmers produce seeds of cover crops covering 34 ha with
- Crotalaria juncea
- Crotalaria ochroleuca
- Stylosanthes guianensis
- Centrosema pascuorum
- Sesbania sp.
- Sorghum and Pearl millet.

In the uplands of Battambang
Cover crops are also shared with smallholder farmers in the uplands of Rattanak Mondoul (Battambang) with sowing of sunnhemp or other cover crops prior maize for example. Sunnhemp is then rolled down and maize direct seeded the same day into the mulch.

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