

# **TARASA23 - Transitioning Towards Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture: A Contribution to Food Systems Transformation**

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## **The future of rice fields: main lessons from an analysis of incentive mechanisms to agroecology in Cambodia**

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### **Forewords**

This abstract is submitted for a joint presentation and stand, in order to present key findings from a research study on incentive mechanisms toward sustainable rice systems in Cambodia. Based on our results, we would like to engage conference participants in exploring future trajectories for Cambodia's rice sector.

### **Abstract**

Rice is a strategic crop in Cambodia, serving as both a staple food and an export commodity. Our study of agrarian changes has revealed two opposing trends in current rice farming. Firstly, the decline of traditional 'organic by default' rice cropping systems that certification schemes fail to maintain. Second, a process of chemical input-based intensification linked to the shift from transplanting to direct sowing, from single annual cycle to multiple cycles, when water is available and/or labor force become scarce. To address social, economic and environmental issues, rice stakeholders have implemented a number of incentive mechanisms to promote sustainable practices. We examined to what extent these mechanisms are achieving their goals through a comparative analysis of rice certification, sustainable rice platform, and other incentives implemented in Cambodia. Our findings suggest that the existing economic incentives, in their current shape, are not influencing significant changes in farmers' practices. We posit that incentives should extend beyond economic values to include others intrinsic values of rice farming, such as cultural value, farmers' wellbeing, food safety, etc. These findings will feed the exploration of multiple scenarios with workshop participants regarding the future of rice farming in Cambodia and relevant incentives for sustainable practices. We will envision plausible transformation of the rice sector in Cambodia by delving into the rice-related attachments and values that go beyond economic incentives.