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The Cambodian Society of Agriculture (CSA) provides a forum where members can share information, raise important concerns and identify solutions for agricultural problems facing the people of Cambodia.

The formation of the CSA and the publication of the *Cambodian Journal of Agriculture* come at a crucial time for agricultural development in this country. The scientific community has rapidly expanded and a strong platform has been built from which Cambodia’s research community can blossom. The Society now hopes to guide, and encourage agricultural research, extension and education in Cambodia.

The Society advocates the development of economically efficient, ecologically sustainable and socially responsible agriculture in Cambodia, while also providing opportunities for the dissemination of research results and exchange of information.

The importance of sustainable agricultural development to the identity of the CSA is made clear by the Society’s logo. Its hexagonal shape represents science and research and the principles of the Society to enhance the environment. This surrounds a tree with three differently coloured leaves: blue (water), green (agronomy and forestry) and red (earth and livestock).

The Society, originally known as the Agricultural Sectoral Meeting, was officially registered as an organization in 1998. It is coordinated by a committee composed of a president, secretary, treasurer and five executive members all elected annually.

In 2001, 60 financial members from eight countries represented government departments, international organizations and non-government organizations at the Society’s monthly meetings. The CSA meets on the last Friday of every month and also hosts seminars by a number of guest speakers.

Funding for the Society comes from membership, sponsorship, donations, and particularly with the help of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

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BUILDING COLLABORATION BETWEEN NGOS AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Peter Cox¹, Numa Shams², Gary Jahn³, Polly Ericksen⁴, and Paul Hicks⁵

ABSTRACT

In Cambodia, as elsewhere in SE Asia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have an important role in agricultural development: through extension and, increasingly, research activities. However, it is generally not their role to set up a parallel research and extension system. NGOs can facilitate access by farmer groups to government support services and, perhaps, promote change in these services so they are more relevant to the needs of local communities. In this paper, we develop a

framework to help civil society and agricultural research institutes, including international agencies, enter into more productive collaborative arrangements. We discuss the nature of issues to be faced when entering into collaboration, and how we can exploit opportunities for collaboration more effectively. Specific proposals are made for managing this. These relate both to the institutional arrangements to support partnerships and to the kind of research approach that can provide an appropriate focus for joint activity.

Key words: NGO, research and extension systems, civil society.

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing pressure on agricultural research and extension systems to reach resource-poor farmers. Science can be professionally respectable, and technically satisfying, and yet have little impact on the practical farming issues faced by smallholders who may have little voice in the research and political system (Rukuni, Blackie and Eicher, 1997).

One of the reasons for the increased presence of the NGO sector in agricultural research is a change in donor policy towards greater participation and decentralization. The World Bank claims that the role of the public sector has to be redefined to permit multiple approaches which account for user diversity, and to develop partnerships with farmer organizations, NGOs and the private sector for service delivery (World Bank, 1995). This is driven by the perceived need to increase the return on investment in agricultural R&D.

In the last decade, there has been increased interest, by both development specialists and donors, in fostering collaboration between government research and extension organizations (GOs), including international agricultural research institutes, and NGOs (CGIAR, 1997). The community-organizing skills of NGOs are seen to complement the technical skills of government and international agencies.

The issue is about how the research system can incorporate, and respond to, the voices of smallholders, including priority setting and mobilizing political support for agricultural research (Sands, 1988; Tripp, 1991; Rukuni, Blackie and Eicher, 1997; Ison and Russell, 2000). Smallholders are dispersed and often not confident in dealing with the political and social changes that are now taking place. NGOs could play a more active role as a partner of formal sector research systems and farmer groups to get the issues of small farmers onto the

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