



raining session for small farmers on using cover crops to enhance soil health @ HEKS Cambodia

Unfettered climate change could lower Cambodia's GDP by 3-9% by 2050, affecting key crops such as rice, maize, cassava and cashew ([World Bank, 2023](#)). These adverse impacts will disproportionately impact smallholders, as well as women and individuals with disabilities who have less access to adaptation solutions. HEKS Cambodia is introducing a regenerative agriculture initiative, aiming to scale the use of cover crops for vital staple crops, increasing farmer profits, enhancing cropping system resilience, reducing food production emissions, and building supply chains for agroecological products. Key outcomes include training 1,000 farmers and improving access to cheaper, high-quality farming inputs, which will enable long-term, self-sustaining efforts for locally-led climate adaptation.



Key achievements

- Trained 1,083 farmers (71% female) in cover crops and agroecology
- 204 farmers adopted new practices
- Established 331.83 hectares under regenerative agriculture
- Produced and sold 59 tons of cover crop seeds



Social impact

- Empowers women, youth, people with disabilities, and Indigenous farmers with sustainable and profitable agriculture practices. These boost their farming yields, expand market access and improve their food security in the longer-term.



Adaptation benefits

- Enhances water retention and boosts resilience against droughts and floods
- Captures carbon in the soil, mitigating agricultural contributions to climate change
- Improves soil fertility, reducing the need for costly inputs while boosting agricultural productivity



Funding snapshot

- UNDP AFCIA Grant: US\$125,000 (initial grant)
- Co-financing by project implementing partner, [SmartAgro](#): US\$48,920



Replication potential

- Focusing on using easily accessible cover crops and customised seed mixes, making it adaptable to different types of farming systems.
- Training programs and behaviour change initiatives developed can be replicated and adapted in other regions.
- Market development strategy is a model for integrating regenerative agriculture into existing supply chains.
- A subscription-based discount scheme encourages smallholders to adopt new practices by offering lower rates initially, which helps boost both adoption and sales.



Innovation

- Combines regenerative practices with market development
- Empowers women farmers and strengthens food security
- Overcomes cover crop adoption challenges via targeted behaviour change



Investability

Sustaining criteria	<p>Projected 20% rice yield increase, saving \$45 per hectare through use of cover crops instead of chemical fertilisers.</p> <p>Solution focuses on farmers' behavioural change will last beyond the duration of the grant, as this directly benefits farmers' income and climate resilience.</p> <p>The strengthened market system for cover crops will boost greater competition and economic interest in this sector.</p> <p>Attempting financial sustainability through the implementing partner, <u>SmartAgro</u>, an organization that seeks to develop and implement a sustainable business model for cover crop seed production with farmer networks, development of agroecological input and no-till machinery.</p>
Financial innovation	<p>Connects farmers to markets for cover crops and agroecological products, promoting long-term economic viability.</p> <p>Reduces production costs through lower agrochemical use.</p>