



By Carl Collen

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## East-West Seed aids in veg access

New partnership for Cambodia and Lao PDR will train 35,000 smallholder farmers in off-season vegetable production



**T**he World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) has selected East-West Seed Knowledge Transfer (EWS-KT) for its innovative approach in enabling smallholder farmers to adopt one or more off-season vegetable production methods.

Through the Grow Against the Flow project, the partnership aims to reach and train more than 35,000 smallholder farmers and more than 70,000 households with techniques that can help them grow and harvest vegetables, even in difficult climatic conditions.

The project aims to increase income and livelihood outcomes for the farmers reached, while simultaneously and positively impacting food and nutritional security in their communities and women's empowerment to create more resilient communities.

"We are so pleased to launch this partnership with the World Vegetable Center," said Stuart Morris, director of EWS-KT. "EWS-KT's approach is to showcase profitable and sustainable

horticulture techniques that truly make an impact in the lives of smallholder farmers.

"It also creates a sustainable impact by catalysing market development and demonstrating that vegetable production can be a viable business opportunity," he added.

Grow Against the Flow is about making vegetables more available, affordable, and accessible by enabling smallholders in Cambodia and Lao PDR to increase year-round production of safe to eat vegetables.

"We were looking for a partner that had solid technical expertise, strong resources to effectively reach farmers and an aligned mission to put farmers at the center of any intervention," explained Dr Srinivasan Ramasamy, flagship program leader for safe and sustainable value chains and lead entomologist at WorldVeg. "EWS-KT is a natural partner for this project as their work combines sound technical know-how with catalysing sustainable

solutions to enhance food security and nutrition."

Chhor Nonin, EWS-KT manager, has been observing the impact of farmer training projects in Cambodia for over 20 years.

"It's positive to see the farmers benefiting from our training," he said. "You see the difference it makes in their lives. They go from using low-yield traditional approaches to adopting new technologies. They generate more income, are better connected to markets, and transform their perception of what is achievable. Neighboring farmers see the benefits of using improved techniques and varieties and begin replicating, step by step, so it reaches even more farmers."

EWS said that it recognised that farmers needed access to quality seeds and knowledge on how to grow crops, noting that it supported intensive training to smallholder farmers as a long-term precursor to commercial activities in some of the world's least developed markets.

To ensure that these pre-commercial activities are best geared towards benefiting smallholder farmers, training programmes are managed through a non-profit initiative dedicated to improving on-farm skills and innovation – East-West Seed Knowledge Transfer (KT).

As part of the project, EWS-KT will lead activities to intensively build the technical capacity of farmers in Cambodia, and

provide technical training to trainers in Lao PDR to promote improved off-season vegetable production.

Delphine Larrousse, WorldVeg's East and Southeast Asia Regional Director, noted that the timing for investment in Cambodia and high quality extension services in the vegetable sector were critical, especially to strengthen resilience and coping mechanisms during COVID-19.

"The pandemic has disrupted the supply chain with a disproportionate impact on the food chain, which is already showing impact in Cambodia," she outlined. "This opportunity to partner with EWS-KT will help take effective solutions to scale, and empower farmers for a more food and nutritionally secure future."