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Australia, and online



Climate-smart premium rice: securing future value chains in the Mekong Delta

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on behalf of the AGB/2019/153 Project Team

Crawford Fund Conference 11 August 2026



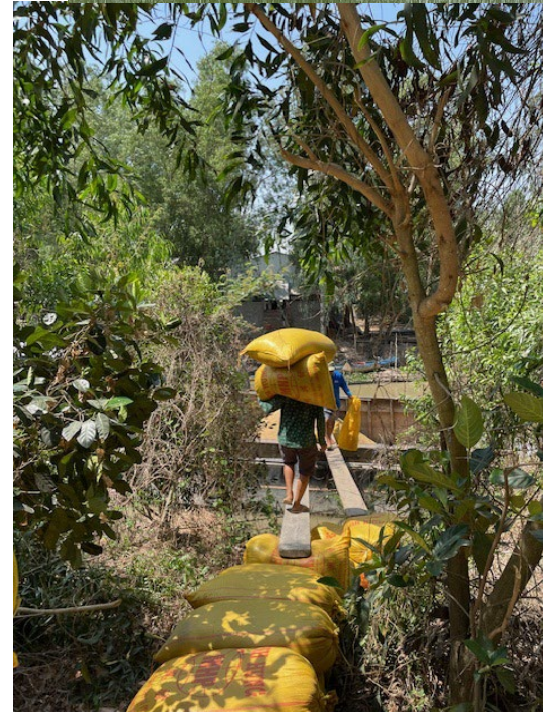
Australian Government
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Why the Mekong matters?

- Vietnam is 5th largest rice-producing country and the 3rd largest rice exporter
- 53% Vietnam rice is produced in the Mekong Delta (MD), contributing over 90% exported rice, to >150 countries
- Rice provides livelihoods for ~1.5 million smallholder households
- Persistent challenge: fragmented production, overuse of inputs, dependency on middlemen, mounting environmental pressures and limited access to high-value export markets



How can small-scale farmers break this cycle?



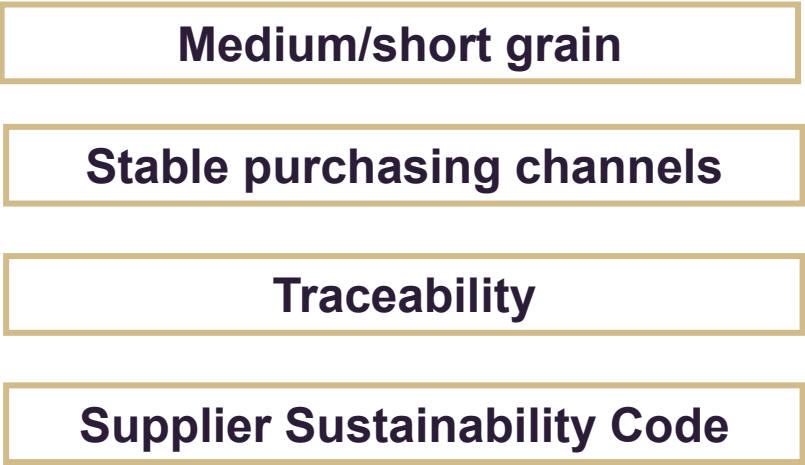
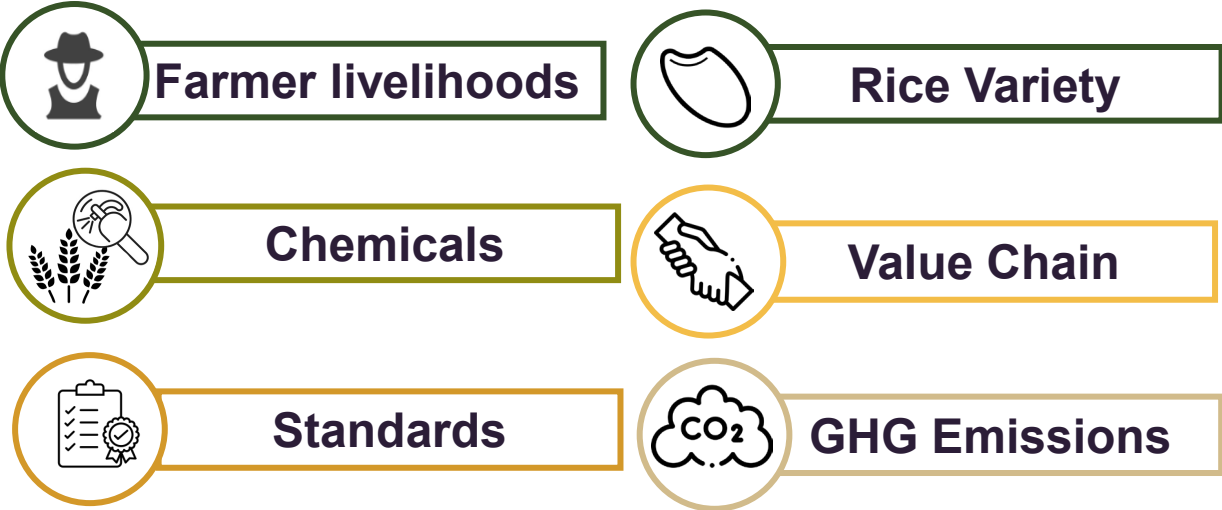
Policy transformation and SunRice investment

Government shift from quantity to quality

SunRice shift to global sourcing

Policy orientation: High-quality, high value and sustainable agriculture

SunRice investment: Lap Vo mill Premium export markets



Opportunity: Encourage smallholder farmers' to engage in SunRice's established high-quality export market, and towards sustainability

Project brief

Project Aim

The project aimed to establish a **highly-productive, sustainable, traceable, quality-assured** value chain for tropical short grains, benefiting **rice-farming households** and meeting established **SunRice market** requirements.

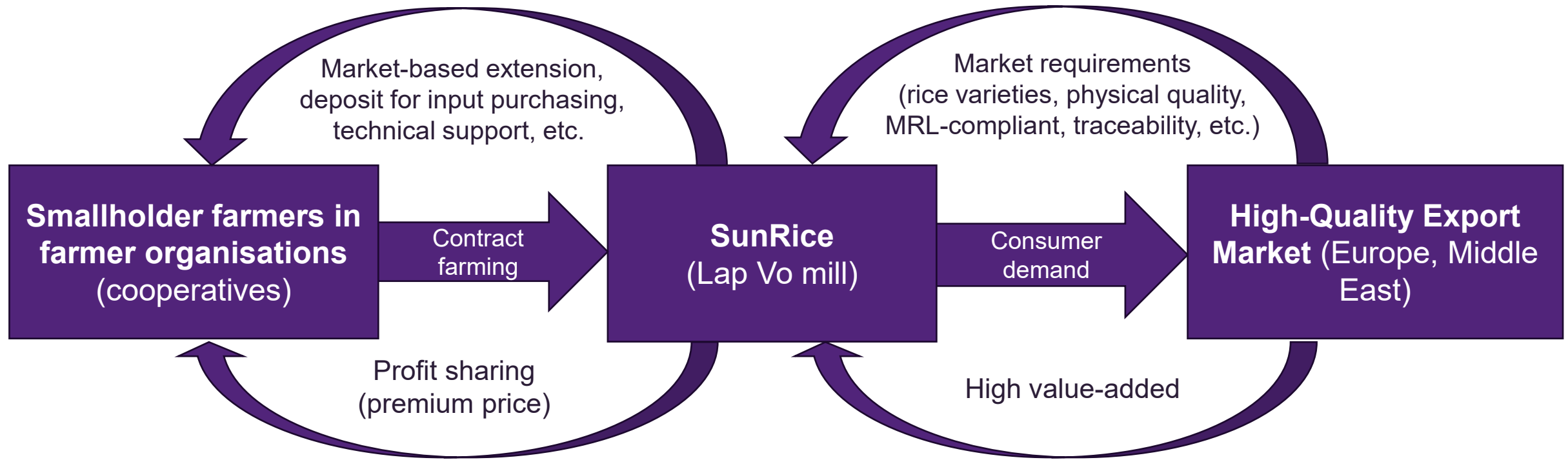
Approach

The project was delivered through a **collaborative, transdisciplinary Public-Private Partnership** that combined the scientific expertise, research capability and technical knowledge of public sector partners with SunRice's market access, commercial experience and operational expertise across high-quality rice value chains.





Market-led, high quality, export market value chain



The success of this model depended on strong coordination, alignment and trust between farmers and the exporter.

Key outputs and outcomes





Key numbers

- **Engaged 7** Cooperatives, across **3** Provinces (An Giang, Kien Giang, Dong Thap)
- **Directly involved 104** Smallholder households, benefiting **> 500 people**
- **Facilitated 289** production contracts, covering **> 2,000** ha and delivering **>15,000** tonnes of wet paddy directly to the SunRice mill
- **Achieved 100%** compliance with maximum residue limit (MRL) requirements.
- **Delivered traceability** with **100%** farmers maintaining digital or paper-based farm records
- **Strengthened** local capability through a network of **21** agricultural extension officers and **181** community-based extension leaders
- **Supported** the next generation of agricultural professionals through the engagement of **51** students (33 undergraduate, 11 master's, 7 PhD)
- **Generated and shared new knowledge** through 24 peer-reviewed publications and 28 presentations conferences



Market-led R4D outputs – Driving Innovation from Genetics to Policy



New market-driven variety

- Short-duration, short-grain
- Stable yield & high grain quality

***Meets quality,
boosts
competitiveness***



Sustainable intensification

- Reduced fertiliser
- Reduced seed rate
- Reduced Chemicals
- Increased IPM
- AWD water management

***Produce more rice
with less***



Post-harvest innovation

- Extended safe delivery window
- Improved drying protocol

***Reduces food &
quality loss,
encourages coop
delivery***

Policy Comment: Unraveling the Rice Varietal Dilemma within the EU-Vietnam Trade Agreement

Julia Checco, Tinh Van Thai, Jaquie Mitchell, and Ammar Abdul Aziz

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<https://doi.org/10.21801/ajad.2025.22.2.7>

Abstract

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), effective on 1 August 2020, provides Vietnam with a tax-free quota of 80,000 t of rice annually. However, a significant portion of Vietnam's rice exports to the EU fail to qualify for this quota because the outdated varietal list in the EVFTA does not align with changing consumer

Policy engagement

- Translated project evidence to policy guidelines
 - Varietal dilemma & trade access
 - Informs national policy & scaling
- Carries impact into policy***

Integrated innovations from breeding to policy improved grain quality, resource-use efficiency, and value across the rice supply chain

A photograph of a middle-aged man with dark hair, smiling and looking towards the camera. He is wearing a short-sleeved polo shirt with horizontal stripes in white, light blue, and grey. He is standing in front of a dense, green, leafy bush. The lighting is bright, suggesting it is daytime.

Project impacts



Increase farmers' income and reduce input costs

Indicators	Average (non -project)	Project farmers (difference from average)	Implication
Key farming economic indicators per ha			
Profit (AUD/ha)	\$1,181	\$123	Increase profit by 10.5%
Total Cost (AUD/ha)	\$1,328	-\$74	Decrease production cost by 5.6%
Revenue (AUD/ha)	\$2,755	\$65	Increase revenue by 2.4%
Exploratory indicators			
Yield (t/ha)	6.44	0.04	No difference in yield
Paddy Price (AUD/t)	\$368	\$9.8	Increase selling price by 2.65%
Fertiliser Cost (AUD/ha)	\$594	-\$84.5	Decrease fertiliser cost by 14.2%
Pesticide Cost (AUD/ha)	\$222	\$21.4	Increase pesticide cost 9.6% due to higher price of quality pesticide
Seed Quantity (Kg/ha)	210.4	-21.3	Decrease the quantity of seed by 10.1%

- **DS1** contracted farmers earned **19.5% higher profit/ha** than **DT8** contracted farmers

Note: The Stepwise and Generalised Regression models were built independently for each row in the table, n=220 (DS1 and DT8 farmers), surveys conducted in 2023 (after 1 year of project)



Before and after



Young farming couple: Before



Young farming couple: After

Mr Nhan farmer Group: Before



Mr Nhan farmer Group: After

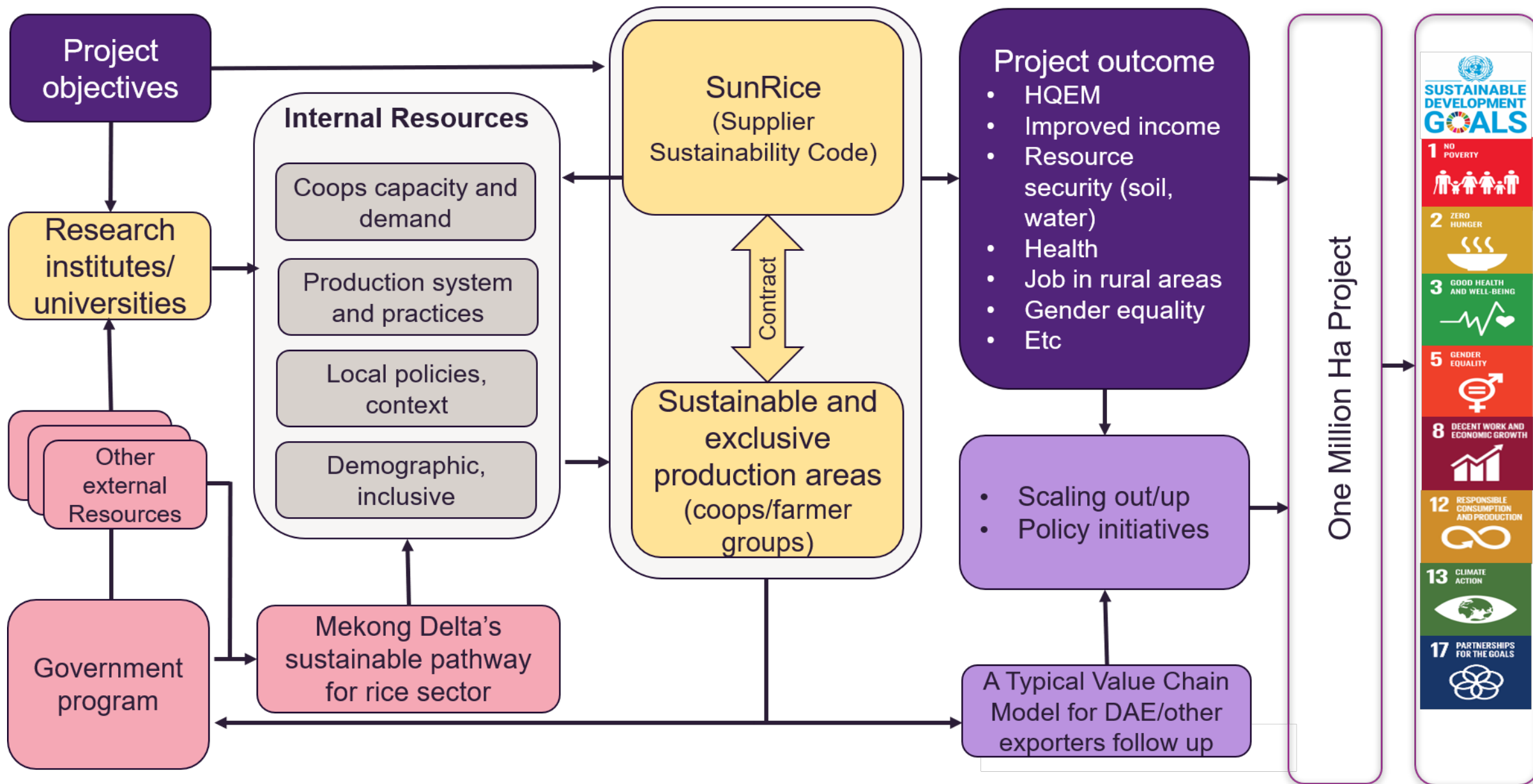


Hiep Loi Cooperative: Before



Hiep Loi Cooperative: After

The sustainability pathway and impact plan





From the Mekong: lessons to action

Key message: Market-led, systems approaches create shared value.

Amplifying community voices, while building climate-smart, profitable, inclusive rice value chains that strengthen food security.

Practical recommendation: Invest in trusted partnerships focused on cooperative-centred contract farming strengthening relationships across the value chain

Regional priority: Scale low- emission, high-quality rice systems across Southeast Asia

Build on proven low-emission, high-quality rice models through shared platforms, standards, and investment.



“By aligning markets, partnerships, and people, we can build the resilient food systems needed to feed a growing world sustainably.”

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Smallholder farmers and all value chain actors engaged in the project

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SunRice Group

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