



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH**

MEDIA RELEASE

**IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND PROFITS
IN THE MEKONG REGION**

Improvements in agriculture practices in the Mekong region and lessons for policy will be discussed at a conference in Phnom Penh this week.

The conference, ‘A Policy Dialogue on Rice Futures: Rice-based Farming Systems Research in the Mekong Region’ was opened today by Australia’s Ambassador to Cambodia, HE Ms Alison Burrows.

“The conference is the culmination of an Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) program that has invested A\$14.8 million since 2009 into farm-productivity and policy-focused research projects,” Ms Burrows said.

“Collectively, the projects span best-practice management, advanced technologies, niche cropping, targeted marketing and extension as well as policy research.”

Around 60 stakeholders from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Australia are attending the conference at the Cambodiana Hotel in Phnom Penh, which will run from 7 to 9 May 2014.

Dr Ouk Makara, Director of the Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), a key research partner, said the ACIAR rice-based farming systems research program is assisting the Cambodian Government improve the living standards of rural people.

“Collaborating with Australian and international scientists is helping Cambodians to build our own research skills and develop strategies to overcome significant challenges.”

Program Co-ordinator Dr Caroline Lemerle said ACIAR’s focus is on the important policy implications of the rice-based farming systems research.

“The conference aims to promote interaction and discussion between researchers, regional policy-makers and influencers. Opening sessions will focus broadly on ‘rice futures’ in the Mekong region before examining the policy implications of the research program.”

The Rice-based Systems Research program is one of four programs developed by ACIAR under the Australian Government’s Food Security through Rural Development initiative. The research was undertaken in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Bangladesh.

*Media Enquiries: Mr Simon Fellows, Deputy Head of Mission
Phone 023 213 470
7 May 2014*