



Sustainable Rice Production in Thailand

Working in collaboration with the Rice Department (RD), BRIA selected and trained approximately 10,000 farmers from 200 Community Rice Centres (CRCs) who grow rice in large fields. This is in line with the government's mega-farm project and involved farmer groups in four provinces in the northeast of Thailand. Together with its partners, BRIA trained smart farmers, CRC representatives, using the Training Transfer Model, which teaches farmers how to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of their groups and to improve and integrate proper rice cultivation knowledge with their existing activities. This has led to a transformation of their agricultural practices, which are now more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Smart farmers support their group members in terms of fertiliser and nutrient management, planting methods and quality seed management and the farmers have been able to successfully apply the knowledge gained from the BRIA training to improve their crops, production and livelihoods.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was introduced to pilot sites to help with data assessment and reduce communication distance. Instant messaging is widely used by project farmers. The messaging application makes communication more active as it is in real-time. Farmers are now able to exchange ideas, information and farming techniques within their groups without having to ride a motorcycle to their Community Rice Centre. The RD and BRIA Thailand have encouraged farmers to use this mobile application not only within their groups but also to submit inquiries to RD experts so they can get responses within a few minutes.



More importantly, this public-private-partnership (PPP) collaboration has introduced the world's first sustainable rice standard to Thai farmers. This pilot project was initiated in 2016, focusing on two CRCs in Detudom district, Ubon Ratchathani province. In cooperation with the RD, Bayer, and Olam, BRIA developed a sustainable rice training concept based on the Sustainable Rice Platform standard developed by IRRI (the International Rice Research Institute). The training approach was tailored to Thai farmers' needs. One of the requirements for farmers' compliance with the SRP standard is assessment through a third-party audit. This is to ensure that farmers follow the procedures and standard requirements to achieve the best quality of their crops. Last year, 10 farmers from two CRCs (Klang and Bua-Ngam) were randomly selected for assessment. The fact that all successfully passed the audit proves that the learning content has been well understood and actually applied. The farmers were also able to sell their crops at a higher price than they have in the past.

The strong level of cooperation between the key partners and farmers allowed BRIA Thailand to effectively organise smart farmer trainings and simplify training processes. This was successful thanks to the expertise and commitment demonstrated by both the partners and farmers. Awareness of the new techniques and application of the gained knowledge increases the acceptance by more and more farmers. The increased confidence will lead an increasing number of farmers integrating this knowledge with their traditional agricultural production systems, and thus ultimately help them to improve their own living conditions.



'Farmers Love Series' TV Programme

For three years, BRIA Thailand has successfully been raising awareness through public television broadcasts. BRIA worked closely with BASF and the RD on the 'Farmers Love' TV series, using it as a platform to provide knowledge about rice farming practices in Thailand. In 2015, 'Farmers Love Safety' was aired with the objective of informing farmers about crop protection products (CPPs) and covered the risks and effects of improper CPP use as well as proper field CPP application. This aimed to change farmer behaviour from traditional farming to more efficient practice. A total of 276 farmers joined the training session on safe and effective use of CPPs. Ninety-seven percent of farmers who watched the FLS were willing to share their knowledge with others and 96% were willing to change their behaviour.

Following the success of the 'Farmers Love Safety' TV contest, 'Farmers Love Soil' was aired on television later that same year. The show provided knowledge and skills to farmers on how to manage their soil more sustainably. The United Nations declared 2015 as the International Year of Soils. BRIA supported the TV programme to promote better soil management, production, cost reduction, good agricultural practices, and preservation of fertile rice fields for future generations. The show received support from the Land Development Department, Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives in addition to the RD.

In 2016, as part of the 'Farmers Love' TV series, BRIA launched 'Farmers Love Seed'. In June, the programme encouraged Thai farmers nationwide to adopt good quality seeds and seed management to raise productivity and rice quality. Compared with the two previous years, the 2016 programme attracted a larger audience as it was aired on a public TV with a wider

range of target groups. Technical knowledge on how good quality seeds are produced, insight into different varieties of quality seeds, and where to buy quality seeds were also featured.

In 2017, the TV broadcast 'Farmers Love Sustainable Rice' with the objective of encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable farming. With BRIA's success in implementing a sustainable rice pilot site in northeastern Thailand, sustainable rice farming was introduced on the central plain. A farmer group from Ayutthaya was selected to compete with another farmer group in Nakhon Sawan. These groups of farmers were expected to contribute the knowledge received from RD experts to their communities. BRIA in cooperation with BASF, Olam, and the RD developed a training manual for farmers in irrigated areas, where rice cultivation is different from that practised by farmers in the Northeast of Thailand who rely on rain.

To conclude, farmers have said that the 'Farmers Love Series' offered them good opportunities to learn appropriate farming practices. With the support of BRIA, farmers have the opportunity to learn new techniques that help them reduce costs and increase yields. Farmers now know how to cope with issues likely to arise on their farms. BRIA has constantly supported and promoted sustainable agriculture across the country and hopes that one day not only will rice farming become sustainable, but other crops and commodities can also be produced sustainably to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

