

Contributed event title:

Diversifying rice agri-food systems

Wednesday, Oct 17, 2018, 14:30 – 16:00

Orchid Rm4202, Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore

Abstract

In the wake of climate change, rapid population growth, and the loss of arable land to urbanization, Asia faces a tremendous food security challenge. Meanwhile, intensification of cultivation in existing arable land is leading to negative effects on the environment and provision of eco-system services. Globally, Asia also has the highest concentration of poverty. For instance, India and Bangladesh are jointly home to some 300 million people living on less than US\$ 1,90/day in 2012. In addition, Asian economies, farming systems, and diets depend on a few commodities — mainly rice and wheat. The economies are also experiencing the double burden of malnutrition. Especially women and children under five are affected significantly by undernutrition and limited dietary diversity. India and Bangladesh report among the highest levels of infant and maternal morbidity and mortality.

Diversification of rice agri-food systems has recently gained popularity being an important element of sustainable intensification. The promise is the production of more yields on same area of land while minimizing the negative environmental externalities. Traditionally, rice is cultivated with a fallow period in between two rice cycles. In many Asian developing countries, this cropping system is still prevailing. The fallow period is long enough to introduce alternative crops, such as potatoes, pulses, or vegetables, leading to a diversification of the entire cropping system. Usually farmers also tend to include fish and livestock in their farming systems.

However, trade-offs and synergies of diversifying rice agri-food systems for positive environment, livelihoods, and nutrition outcomes are not well understood and empirical evidence is scant. In this contributed event, we bring together a pool of expertise from public and private sector to discuss (1) the potential of diversifying rice agri-food systems in Asia, (2) the environmental, socio-economic, and nutritional trade-offs and synergies, and (3) the conditions that would enable positive outcomes from diversifying rice agri-food systems, reducing negative trade-offs and harnessing synergies.

Event plan:

1. Introduction to the event and the topic (5 min)
2. Farming systems diversification and SDGs (10min) **Dr Jon Hellin** (Platform Leader, Sustainable Impact, IRRI)
3. Potential and Trade-offs of Sustainable Intensification of Rice-Potato Systems in Asia (10 min) **Dr Sam Mohanty** (Regional Director, Asia – CIP)
4. Synergies and Trade-Offs for Sustainable Intensification of Rice and Fish Systems (10 min) **Dr Michael Phillips** (Director, FISH CRP, WorldFish)

5. Panel discussion

Moderator: Ranjitha Puskur, IRRI

2-3 min intervention by each panelist, no powerpoint (20 min)

- Cecilia Acuin (Nutrition and Health, IRRI) – why is diversification important from a nutrition and health perspective?
- Raman Babu (Technology Deployment Lead, Asia-Pacific, Corteva) – what is the private sector view on diversification of farming systems?
- Md Arifur Rahman (Director General, Ministry of Food, Bangladesh) – what are the policy dimensions that come into play when we consider farming systems diversification?
- Mao Sugita (Project Manager, Food and Nutrition Security, Cambodia) – what equity considerations should research, development and policy actors consider while promoting diversification strategies?

Q&A with panel & open discussion with all – 20 min

6. Wrap-up – 5 min