# Agricultural Learning Exchange for Asian Regional Networking

*Farmers in Baliakandi, Bangladesh learn how to use low-cost, organic pesticides that save money while protecting crops and the environment.* *(Photo credit: Kipp Sutton, USAID)*

The U.S. Agency for International Development's Agricultural Learning Exchange for Asian Regional Networking project brings smallholder farmers together to learn about innovative technologies that help increase crop production. The three-year, approximately $1 million project is a part of the Feed the Future Initiative, which aims to reduce poverty and malnutrition through improved agricultural and nutritional practices.

## USING LOW-COST, INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

The project uses the wide range of agricultural technology available within the Asia region, particularly from India, Thailand and the United States, to introduce proven tools and practices to smallholder farmers in the Feed the Future focus countries of Bangladesh, Cambodia and Nepal. The farmers test the new technologies in their field and record data to judge the cost effectiveness. Examples include: bicycle irrigation pumps that reduce labor from hand pumps or cost from engine pumps; indigenous micro-organisms as fertilizer supplements; conserve tillage, which reduces cost and labor, carbon emissions and the need for irrigation.

## PROVIDING FIRST-HAND TRAINING

Farmer internships and international exchange programs train lead farmers in innovative agriculture centers in Chiang Mai and at Kasetsart University. Participants can use the ideas that are most interesting to them and experiment in their fields back home, serving as trainers themselves who organize events for other local farmers. Successful technologies are recommended for wide use while others are adjusted and re-tested to try to improve their performance.

## BUILDING RESOURCES FOR A NETWORK OF FARMERS

The project manages "The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Agriculture Practices and Food Security (www.ag-learn.org)," which acts as a virtual database of experiences, available technologies and other information. It is led by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers affiliated with several academic programs of the Asian Institute of Technology and partner institutions. Three Ph.D. students are being funded to conduct research on the agricultural and socio-economic factors of the technologies being taught and promoted as part of their dissertation work.

## PARTNERS

**Lead Partner:** The Asian Institute of Technology
**Bangladesh:** Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute and International Development Enterprise; **Cambodia**: Royal University of Agriculture and the Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture; **Nepal:** Nepal Agricultural Research Council and the Forum for Rural Welfare and Agricultural Reform for Development; **India:** Society for Integrated Land and Water Management; **Thailand:** Kasetsart University and Chiang Mai University; and in the **United States:** University of California at Davis.

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