

News

New Bachelor of Science in Agroecology at the National University of Battambang

The Cambodian economy is dependent on agriculture and most of the country's population is engaged in the sector. One third of the kingdom's population is aged between 14 and 30 years old, making these and the educational system an important entry point to extend target technologies to farming families. To ensure the country's future competitiveness, skilled graduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) fields and agricultural technologies are crucial to transition the national economy to higher-skilled and more productive industries.

A new curriculum on Agroecology has been developed by the National University of Battambang through a higher education improvement project, with technical support from the University of Sydney (Australia) and a variety of experts from France, USA and Cambodia. The BSc in Agroecology is the only academic programme of its kind in Cambodia and offers comprehensive education and training on sustainable farming methods that work with nature.

The BSc in Agroecology is future-focused to support the development of sustainable farming practices that integrate with natural systems and reflect important ecological principles and applied agriculture concepts. The program resonates strongly with the UN Sustainability Goals and One-Health principles in championing:

- farming practices that reduce emissions, recycle resources and prioritise local supply chains;
- biodiversity conservation, aiming to increase reliance on approaches such as integrative pest management and practices that improve soil health including the microbiome; and
- approaches led by local people and adaptive agricultural techniques to suit local contexts i.e. providing solutions for specific social, environmental and economic conditions.

The programme is designed to meet the needs of the labour market in Cambodia and stakeholder feedback was employed to define its intended learning outcomes. The BSc prepares students to become agroecologists, with comprehensive and contemporary knowledge of food systems which are critical for employment in private enterprises, government institutions and non-government organizations. These have an important role to play in moving Cambodian agriculture from mono-cropping to agrobiodiversity practices to improve the yields of staple crops and environmental health in the country. Further information can be obtained by contacting the first author below.

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