

Growing more food, protecting the environment

Reaching out to China's farmers with training on Good Agricultural Practices has boosted growers' productivity and income



Liu Suhua: "Once I learnt how to use the right pesticides on my vegetables, I just couldn't seem to sell enough to the county."

Chinese farmer Liu Suhua, 40, dreams of sending her 17-year-old daughter to university to study physiotherapy. The teenager's goal is to work in hospitals for the elderly. "A girl must have a vocation of love so that she can receive love," said Liu, who tends the family farm in Qingming village of Guanghan in Sichuan province.

And she has been actively saving for that dream for the past five years. Although Liu started farming 17 years ago, it was only from 2004 when she learnt how to protect her harvests that her finances improved.

"Once I learnt how to use the right pesticides on my vegetables, I just couldn't seem to sell enough to the county. Before 2004, our household income was RMB3,000 (US\$440) a month. Now, I am getting about RMB4,600 (US\$674).

Even rice, grown traditionally for the past 30 years for her family's consumption, can now be sold as the quality of the harvests is better. Last year, Liu's rice yields grew by 20 percent.

And Liu, who runs the household while her husband works as a migrant worker in a factory, has earned enough to start a piggery in 2008 with 380 pigs. She now sells pork to the rest of the county. Her earnings have allowed her to renovate her house, buy four TVs, a motor bike, three mobile phones and a fridge.

Liu was driven to learn more about Good Agricultural Practices after an adverse incident.

"I never used gloves in the past," she said. "Then one day, my skin swelled and I had to go to hospital. I took six months to recover, during which I had to find work in the town."

She added, "After I went for responsible pesticide use training, I realized the importance of wearing face shields and gloves. I also learnt how to check product expiry dates, identify plant conditions and choose the appropriate products to deal with them."

Liu has attended six sessions on Good Agricultural Practices since 2006. Moved by her results, she has been training fellow farmers



The fruit of training

In China's Yunnan province, growers of *yang mei*, also known as Chinese red bayberry, have been enjoying bigger harvests after being trained on the judicious use of pesticides.

Yang mei is a juicy and fibrous fruit which has been grown in China for over 2,000 years. In recent years, it has been marketed in countries such as the US as a juice. The fruit can also be eaten raw and used to make candy, jams, wines and syrups. It is mainly cultivated in humid and subtropical climates in Yunnan, Zhejiang, the south of the Yangtze River, including Hainan and Taiwan.

Chinese farmer Wu Chaoxiang, 40, grows *yang mei* and rice on his family farm in Yunnan. A training session in 2008 has equipped him with knowledge about choosing appropriate products and responsible use practices, to enhance food safety.

"I would apply too much pesticide, which affected my ability to sell the fruit," Wu said. "After learning about Good Agricultural Practices, I have cut pesticide usage and my fruit commands higher prices these days."

Prior 2008, Wu said sales averaged RMB150,000 (US\$22,000) annually. These days, with higher yields and better quality fruit, annual sales average RMB250,000 (US\$37,000), with net income at RMB70,000 (US\$10,000).

He added, "To sell our fruit further afield these days, we no longer have to go through middlemen. Now my fruit is sold in Fujian and Zhejiang, not just in Kunming, which is just four hours away."

And he is keen to grow his business.

"I hope to find more collectives to sell to. With pest infestation under control, I have more time to do look beyond farming for other business opportunities."

in Guanghan county. Indeed, the county has seen remarkable efforts in agricultural development between 2006 and 2008, thanks to the work of CropLife China, the National Agro-Technical Service and Extension Centre (NATESC), the Sichuan Plant Protection Station and the Guanghan Women's Association.



Improving the welfare of Hunan's farmers

CropLife China launched its latest training program in April 2009 in Hunan's Ningxiang county. The project, jointly organized by NATESC, CropLife China and the Hunan Plant Protection Station, targets specialized pest control operators.

Hunan is a major rice exporter with millions of farmers, 3 million hectares of rice fields and a complex pest situation. Yet until recently, farmers were still spraying insecticides in an indiscriminate manner. Promoting the use of specialized pest control operators – professionals trained in methods to target pests with specific products and right amounts – is believed to be one of the most effective ways to minimize the risk of exposure to pesticides.

For farmers, it also lowers costs and improves crop quality. Growers in China are making great strides in minimizing pesticide residue on crops and contributing to food safety, thanks to the work of CropLife China and its partners. The project upholds regulations governing the quality and safety of agricultural products, the No-Pollution Food Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Highly Toxic Pesticide Replacement Project. Working within these regulatory frameworks is helping to keep China's food supply – and that of the world which imports its products – safe and secure.

About CropLife Asia:

CropLife Asia promotes the benefits and responsible use of crop protection and plant biotechnology products, as well as sound regulatory frameworks in support of sustainable agriculture in the Asia Pacific region. As a regional unit of CropLife International – a global federation of the plant science industry in 91 countries – CropLife Asia supports the work of 15 member associations and is led by member companies at the forefront of crop production research and development.

www.croplifeasia.org

This publication is produced by CropLife Asia (S975S0018F). Copyright of the materials contained in this publication belongs to CropLife Asia. Nothing therein shall be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written consent of CropLife Asia. Views expressed are not necessarily those of CropLife Asia and no liabilities shall be attached thereto.

© 2009 CropLife Asia. All rights reserved.

Printed on recycled paper