

A winning partnership

Indonesian farmers learn how to use agriculture technology to boost productivity through a training initiative funded jointly by CropLife Indonesia and USAID-AMARTA.

They are small-scale farmers in Indonesia each with between nine and 20 years of experience. Yet, they knew little about harnessing agriculture technology to improve productivity until a training course changed their lives.

Ibrani Semdiring, 33, Karya Ketaren, 38 and 37-year-old Ralin Nainggolan from North Sumatra have seen their incomes more than doubled after learning how to use fertilizers and pesticides, pruning techniques as well as dealing with pests and plant diseases. The farmers say the training has equipped them with sustainable solutions toward higher yields and better-quality crops. The program, which started in 2007, is jointly funded by CropLife Indonesia and USAID-AMARTA.

“Before attending the course on Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) last October, I couldn’t manage the pest attacks,” said Semdiring, who grows *Jeruk siam madu*, a tangerine, over three quarters of a hectare in Indonesia’s mountainous Karo Regency. “I also didn’t know how to fertilize my crops, so I ended up with tiny fruits that fetched poor prices in the market.”

The problems spurred Semdiring to sign up for training. AMARTA is a USAID- funded project that helps the Indonesian

government build a robust Indonesia agribusiness system. As part of the partnership, CropLife Indonesia provides experts to train farmers in the country. An estimated 625 farmers benefited in 2008 and the partners are aiming to train 1,000 farmers, or 60 percent more, in 2009.

Thanks to the training, Semdiring noticed changes in his crops three to five months later. Since then, production has more than doubled to 40 tons annually. In addition, he is able to sell his fruits at up to 6,000 rupiah (65 cents) a kilo, up from 3,000 rupiah previously. His monthly income has also expanded by as much as 60 percent to 3 million rupiah while the cost to maintain the farm has dipped 60 percent due to the judicious use of pesticides and fertilizers, he says.

“The training has brought about a significant improvement in my income, says Semdiring, a fifth-generation farmer. “I’d like to learn more and maybe even become a farmer leader one day to help other farmers. Even my wife, who helps out at the farm thrice a week, is keen to participate in the program.”



Ibrani Semdiring's income and productivity improved significantly after being trained on Good Agricultural Practices.

The training provided by CropLife Indonesia and USAID-AMARTA has also benefited Ketaren, who grows potatoes and chrysanthemums on his 1.5-hectare farm in Karo Regency. The father of three children, aged 18, 12 and nine, used to struggle with low crop yields. Pests ravaged his crops, causing his potato output to plunge as much as 40 percent and flower production to fall by half. The problem was worse during the rainy season between January and May, a time when pest attacks typically rise, he says.

To deal with the problem, he used pesticides and fertilizers haphazardly, in vain. Ketaren only realized what went wrong after the training.

“By spraying randomly, I was wasting money as it was ineffective against the pests,” he says. “It didn’t help that I wasn’t using pesticides safely. After the training, I have been spraying once or twice a week using protective gear, not four times like I used to. That has helped me trim expenses by about 60 percent,” he adds.

A few months later, Ketaren produced bigger and more attractive chrysanthemums that sold at 30,000 rupiah a bunch, threefold more than what he was able to charge

previously. The training he received on proper fertilizer and pesticide use also boosted his potato production by about 70 percent to 20 tons annually, he said.



Like Ketaren, Nainggolan struggled with low yields and poor-quality crops, a problem he attributed largely to the improper use of fertilizers. He grows tangerines on his farm of about half a hectare in Northern Sumatra.

“I have 14 years of farming experience, yet I didn’t know how to fertilize my crops,” he says. “My fruits used to be tiny and no matter what I did, I couldn’t make them bigger and juicier.”

After attending a SOP course in 2007, annual production jumped to 10 tons, a 43 percent increase. The fruits were also healthier and sold for an average of 3,800 rupiah a kilo, compared with 2,000 rupiah previously.

He says, happily, “Business has improved and I’m so much more motivated.”

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 over 90 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.

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Ketaren and his wife; growing more crops from the same land with modern agricultural technology.