

# TACKLING THE SECURITY OF ENDANGERED SPECIES THROUGH ECONOMIC INCENTIVES IN CAMBODIA



Credit: [www.foundationensemble.org](http://www.foundationensemble.org)

## PROBLEM

- As with many locations worldwide, the northern plains of Cambodia have seen increasingly sporadic patterns of the rainfall that they require to feed their rice paddies. Unsustainable farming practices are preventing farmers from storing excess water when it does rain.
- The wetlands and forests of the region are home to over 50 endangered species, including the Giant Ibis, Cambodia's national bird. Conversion of these species' habitats to farming lands are the greatest threat to the biodiversity of the area and their survival

## SOLUTION

- The IBIS rice programme was set up by the Cambodian organization Sansom Mlup Prey (SMP) and the Wildlife Conservation Society
- Rice farmers were approached at the household level, and if they signed up to the IBIS rice initiative, then they were given high quality jasmine rice seeds to plant, as well as being guaranteed a minimum price for their product that came in at around 40% higher than the local market value
- In return the farmers agreed not to expand any of their farming areas into forests or natural wetlands that were housing the endangered species!

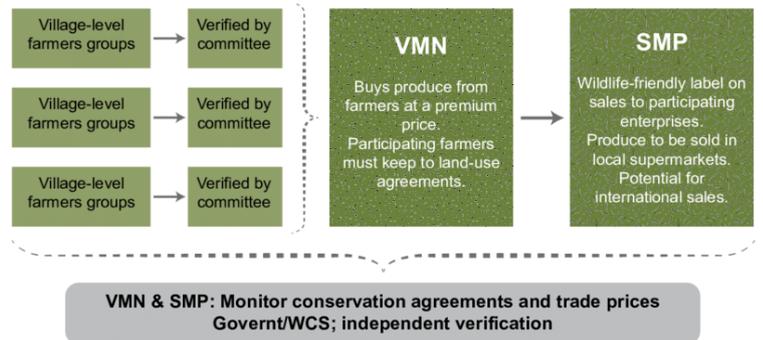
## IMPACT

- It has been found that participatory farmers are now four times more likely **not** to expand areas of agriculture or to clear new areas of forest, than those who aren't part of the scheme
- Overall, participating farmers now receive a higher price for the rice that they produce, have greater productivity levels off their land, and are approaching their farming activities with an environmental and conservation mindset
- The programme now has over 700 participating households, protecting over 500,000 hectares of wetlands and forests

## AT A GLANCE

- Rice farmers in northern Cambodia have been expanding into forests and wetlands that protect endangered species
- A scheme has been set up to give the farmers greater productivity and bigger profits in return for agreeing not to expand their current land usage
- The programme targeted farmers on the household level and relied on word of mouth

Ibis Rice: Helping Farmers and Protecting Wildlife, Cambodia



The endangered Giant Ibis is Cambodia's national bird and has benefited from the greater protection to its habitat

Credit: [www.samveasna.com](http://www.samveasna.com)

## COMMUNICATIONS

- By targeting farmers at the household level, word about the benefits of the scheme is spread organically through conversation and observation by neighbouring farmers
- Whilst this low level targeting has seen much success, larger more sophisticated messaging and information campaigns could gain more support and participation at a much quicker rate
- On the other hand, the project has strong transferable qualities to other small scale locations, particularly if there are areas housing other endangered species that are under threat from expanding rice paddies
- With IBIS rice being a consumer product around the world, awareness for sustainability and conservation within rice production is gaining global attention