

SNAPSHOT

Drum Seeder Transforms Rice Planting

Drum seeders are helping farmers reduce production costs and improve yields



Photo: Fintrac Inc.

A farmer pulls a drum seeder, which can plant up to 16 rows simultaneously.

“After seeing the results, my customers are now interested.”

Tan Ngork, farmer and input supplier

Cambodia HARVEST is introducing the drum seeder through input suppliers. The cost-effective product cuts down on input costs and ensures farmers get the most out of their fertilizer.

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Farmers in Cambodia have been planting rice the same way for generations: tossing handfuls of seed into a field until it is covered. But the method is inexact and can lead to problems, such as clumping, bare spots and over-planting. Transplanting, a time-consuming and labor-intensive alternative, is not ideal for most small-scale farmers.

To address this problem, Cambodia HARVEST is introducing a modest piece of technology that could transform the way Cambodians sow their fields. The drum seeder allows farmers to plant crops in evenly spaced rows, ensuring that they get the most out of their fertilizer and avoid wasting seeds. Farmers or farmer groups can either purchase this unit, which costs between \$30 and \$50 depending on the length, or rent it for \$5 per planted hectare.

The design is simple and easy for farmers to use. A series of plastic drums containing seed is linked horizontally and bookended by wheels. The farmer stands in a harness and pulls the unit behind him, dispensing seed up to 16 rows at a time.

Cambodia HARVEST is spreading the word about the drum seeder through agricultural input suppliers. These small businesses have hundreds of customers in nearby villages. When customers come in to the shop to buy fertilizer or pesticide, input suppliers can explain the benefits of using a drum seeder, and give interested farmers the option to buy or lease one from their shop.

One such input supplier is Tan Ngork from Pursat Province. He adopted the technology eagerly, but had a difficult time convincing his customers to do the same. “People laughed at me. They said it would never work,” Tan said. Undeterred, he came up with an ingenious way to demonstrate the effectiveness of the product. Working in adjacent plots, he used the drum seeder in one field but not the other. Several months later, the results were evident for everyone to see: healthy, well-spaced stalks in one field and irregularly spaced stalks with a much lower seeded plant population in the other. “After seeing the results, my customers are now interested,” Tan said.