Terms of Reference

Desk review of Sustainable Rice Cultivation Standards & Initiatives and Implications for Small-scale Rice Producers

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TOR author(s): Minh Le, Global Agriculture Advisor
Researcher(s): External commissioning consultant
Client(s): GRAISEA program and OI’s Asia Rice campaign development
Peer Review and Sign-off Coordinator: GRAISEA Programme Manager
Key Words: rice sector, smallholder, sustainability standards, resilience

Background to the Research

Oxfam implements a 3-year regional program in South East Asia “Gender Transformative & Responsible Agribusiness Investments in South East Asia” (GRAISEA). This program is implemented from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2018. It is funded by the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok with smaller grant contributions from other institutions.

The GRAISEA program is based on the recognition that financial viability and gender equitable/sustainable supply chains are not mutually exclusive, and that win-win-win propositions (community/environment wins, women and men small-scale producers win, and larger businesses win) are possible. Building on Oxfam’s pilots in selected commodities, this program utilizes a multi-stakeholder approach, with Oxfam acting as a convener to bring together the diverse stakeholders involved in selected commodity value chains to achieve its overall development objective “Improved livelihoods for women and men small-scale producers in the Southeast Asia region through more responsible and inclusive value chains and private sector investments and where women demonstrate economic leadership”.

In 2016, the GRAISEA program has expanded to incorporate a valuable addition in incorporating a third value chain on rice, which is called “Gender transformative and responsible agribusiness investments in rice value chains”. This programme aims to follow the same GRAISEA intertwined approach and works in three countries (Cambodia, Pakistan, Vietnam) and with 5 companies involved (Axfood, MATCO, SanoRice, AMRU, Gentraco) and is complemented with regional influencing and advocacy work (towards ASEAN, governments and companies, the latter among others via a multi stakeholder initiative, the Sustainable Rice Platform). The implementation period of the rice component will run from January 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018 (18 months) and aligns with existing program principles and structure.

The objectives of the rice programme are as follows:

- Result 1: ASEAN, its member states and Pakistan’s, policies promote responsible practices, which includes attention to gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, in agribusiness and in agribusiness investment, small scale agriculture and social enterprise;
- Result 2: Small scale producers are effectively connected or engaged in agro-commercial value chains in equitable partnerships and women are recognized as central economic actors;
- Result 3: Corporate agribusiness in SE Asia and Pakistan, have adopted corporate social responsibility policies and plans that support responsible practices in the value chains for women and men small-scale producers, as well as including gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in their core business values.

In the three countries small-scale producer led models are developed and demonstrated with all stakeholders including private sector. The regional work will have two key elements:

- Support to the implementation and management of the programme in countries;
- Learn from these and synergise influencing and advocacy activities towards ASEAN, and towards rice companies a.o. via SRP.
As part of the regional work, it is planned to address knowledge gaps on sustainable and inclusive rice supply practices through complementary research. These researches will especially focus on what can be learned from other ongoing initiatives and experiences in order to improve the programme implementation and advocacy.

For this research, we are primarily concerned with taking stock of the existing standards applied in the rice production and value chain; and roles that governments, private sector, civil society, and international development institutions can play to improve income for small-scale women and men rice farmers and contribute to global food security. Therefore, the research is expected to provide a desk review of efficiency and effectiveness of on-going sustainable rice cultivation standards and value chains in practice in relation to empowerment of small-scale women and men producers.

Oxfam will use this review report in order to (1) Support the implementation of the sustainable pilots in the three countries; and (2) Construct an influencing strategy on rice, especially towards the multi-stakeholder Sustainable Rice Platform.

Objectives of the Research

The objective of the research is to build a comprehensive understanding of the standards for sustainable rice and value chains nested in it. This includes an analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of on-going sustainable rice value chain initiatives in relation to empowerment of small-scale producers (men and women) and the key trends in developing and adopting these standards and steps actors can take to mitigate adverse and scale up positive impacts towards small-scale producers, including women farmers in these adoptions. Based on the findings, the research will provide recommendations for best practices and principles to be applied and advocated in the GRAISEA rice programme.

The specific objectives of the study include:

- Take stock of current standards and initiatives applied for sustainable rice;
- Analyse the efficiency and effectiveness of on-going sustainable rice value chain initiatives in relation to empowerment of small-scale producers (men and women);
- Identify key trends, drivers of change and actors for sustainable standards and initiatives in rice production, processing, distribution, and consumption in Asia regional level;
- Characterize what is wrong and/or missing in the regional rice standards with regard to equity (smallholder interests), gender and sustainability (environmental and climate impacts) and suggest appropriate responses to these wrongs and gaps.

It is recommended to take stock and analyse on a number of standards and initiatives, but not limited to:

- A variety of sustainable production standards and initiatives applied in rice value chains, both individual initiatives (led by companies, research institutions or governments) and multi-stakeholder platforms, including Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP), System of Rice Intensification (SRI), Better Rice Initiative in Asia (BRIA), Asian governments national Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for rice, UTZ Certified, RainForest Alliance (RA), Fair Trade (FLO), Sustainable Agriculture alliance standards, Participatory Guarantee System (PGS);
- Organic rice production standards and initiatives such as IFOAM, ECOCERT and Organic Trade guidelines.

Research Questions

The specific questions to be answered include:

- Describe each of the standard and initiative, its history, stakeholders, functions and key activities;
- Describe what definition of each standard and initiative is used for economic, social and environmental sustainability of rice value chain; and summarize how this definition is translated in principles, standards and tools;
- Describe its practical approaches to specific reach-out to smallholder rice farmers, specifically to women, and how to address key social and environmental issues;
- How is gender and/or women’s economic empowerment issues are being addressed by any of these standards?
• Describe the successes achieved, best practices, but also challenges and remaining issues again with specific attention to reaching out to smallholder rice farmers and specifically women;
• Describe differences in approaches and best practices between respective sustainable initiatives and purely “organic” initiatives;
• Identify key trends, drivers of change for sustainable standards and initiatives in rice production, processing, distribution, and consumption in Asia regional level;
• Formulate key lessons to be learned for Oxfam from the analysis, especially with focus on how to assure the GRAISEA programme can be gender transformative and smallholder led, and with specific recommendations towards improvements of respective SRP and ECOCERT principles, standards and tools.

Research Methodology

The research is mainly a desk review that will draw from public, and where possible proprietary data. Interviews with experts in the sector may be required as additional information. It will not involve original field research.

The research will take the form of a mapping and visualization exercise to identify dimensions of the rice cultivation standards, gather existing data that measures indicators of these dimensions, and use descriptive statistics to characterize changes over time as well as relevant relationships. It will involve literature review of documents and initiatives related to various rice standards at sub regional, regional and global levels.

Data collection activities will include:
• Secondary literature on rice standards and initiatives, institutional context of rice including review of regional initiatives related to rice, and national level policies and sustainable rice strategies of a few selected countries;
• Accessing publically available data e.g. FairTrade, GAP/FAO, World Bank, USDA, Oryza, etc. for relevant data for use in descriptive statistical analysis;
• Interviews with experts in the sector if necessary.

Gender analysis: Oxfam hopes that the research will explore and analyse if the rice standards have included gender equality as one of key dimensions; if there are barriers for women and men’s access and adoption of sustainable rice standards; levels of participation and gains are shaped at the household scale by gendered divisions of labour, time budgets, and decision making to adopt or not.

Deliverables and Timeline

The deliverables of the research will include:
• A maximum 20-page discussion paper (excluding annexes, bibliography and executive summary). Data will be presented graphically in the paper;
• A Powerpoint presentation, visually presenting the core findings and data.

The estimated timeline for the deliverables will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Research outline, highlight data sources and suggestions around what revisions to make on questions and assumptions</td>
<td>1 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 1st draft research, essentially graphs presented against stated questions, submitted to Peer Review and Sign-off Coordinator and Head of Research</td>
<td>22 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 2nd draft research, full with a story line, submitted to Peer Review, Sign-off Coordinator and Head of Research</td>
<td>13 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Final draft addressing comments</td>
<td>27 October</td>
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Documentation of Research

In order to use the findings in Oxfam publications and campaigns, Oxfam (GB) must be provided with full information and documentation to substantiate those findings.
• The final report(s) must provide footnote or endnote references for all specific facts and statistics used. The report(s) must also include a bibliography of all references mentioned.
Primary sources must be used wherever possible over secondary sources (for example, the Consultant should provide documentary evidence of a fact or statistic as written in its original report, not as cited by a newspaper)

If internet sources have been used, a printed out page from the website showing the cited facts and statistics must be submitted. The consultant must ensure that the date on which it was printed out is written on the page.

If interviews with experts are used, detailed contacts of the experts (email, phone number, Skype address) must be clearly provided.

If Oxfam discovers any discrepancies with the figures or facts, the consultant will work with Oxfam to resolve the discrepancies.

It is expected that:

- Consultant will write the report into the Oxfam Research Backgrounder template if provided, or Consultant will write according to the Oxfam Style Guide if stipulated.
- Consultant will work with Oxfam’s advisors to determine the appropriate research methods.
- Consultant must make assumptions in research design explicit.
- Work must undergo a review process that includes internal Oxfam review and independent external peer review.
- Consultant is expected to make deadlines outlined above, unless the consultant negotiates alternative deadlines with Oxfam, in which case Oxfam will revise the TOR to express the new deadlines.

Budget and Payment

The total budget available for this desk review research is US$10,000. The consultant is required to develop a budget plan for the research in the Expression of Interest (EOI) to be sent to the recruitment committee for screening and assessment against the selection criteria and requirements.

Payment will be made in 3 instalments upon the receipt of key deliverables. Final payment will be payable when the consultant’s final report has been submitted and when the Research project manager and client have confirmed of the satisfactory completion of the research.

- First payment: 30% of total contracted amount after signing the contract;
- Second payment: 50% of total contract amount upon approval that the second draft report has been satisfactorily completed;
- Final payment: the rest 20% of total contracted amount upon confirmation that full research documentation has been provided.

Drafting, Peer Review and Sign-off Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Date agreed upon by Research Project Manager and Peer Review and Sign-off Coordinator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Research outline, highlight data sources and suggestions around what revisions to make on questions and assumptions</td>
<td>1 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Peer review of draft research outline complete</td>
<td>6 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Revised research outline submitted to Peer Review and Sign-off Coordinator and Head of Research for sign off</td>
<td>8 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1st draft research, essentially graphs presented against stated questions, submitted to Peer Review and Sign-off Coordinator and Head of Research</td>
<td>22 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Peer review of 1st draft research complete</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Final draft addressing comments</td>
<td>27 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sign off of research complete</td>
<td>3 November</td>
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Requirements of Consultant(s)

The consultant(s) must possess the following essential qualifications:

- Advanced degree in Business Administration/Finance/Marketing/Economics or related fields;
- Experience and knowledge on sustainable production standards and initiatives applied in rice value chains;
- Knowledge and experience in women’s economic empowerment and gender equality;
- Experience in project documentation, evaluation and impact assessment;
- At least 5 years of experience working in rural market and value chain development;
- Excellent analytical, communication and writing skills.

Submission of proposal

The consultant(s) are expected to submit the Expression of Interest (EOI) in English, including:

- A proposal that sets out detailed methodology, budget and timeline to undertake this research;
- Up-to-date CV(s) of the consultant(s). In case the applicant is an organization, add an up-to-date portfolio of the organization; and
- Examples of previous research undertaken that might relate to this project.

Selection Procedure

A recruitment committee, composed of the GRAISEA Programme Manager, technical advisors and programme coordinator, will review the EOI and the CV(s) and assess these as per compliance with the criteria and requirements.

If necessary, interviews with one or more potential candidates will be held before final decision is taken. Purpose of the interview is to seek further clarification on the EOI and learn more about the background and previous experiences of the candidate.

Application Deadlines

Interested consultant(s) are requested to submit their EOI demonstrating their ability to deliver this assignment based on their qualifications and experience. GRAISEA’s regional program coordinator for rice will be responsible within Oxfam for managing the research process. He will be the primary point of contact.

The EOI should be sent to pqtrung@oxfam.org.uk with the title “Consultancy for Desk review of Sustainable Rice Cultivation Standards and Initiatives” by 5pm on 14 August 2017.
Annex: Why equitable and sustainable rice practices are important to Oxfam?

Rice is a global food staple consumed by approximately half of the world population. Analysis of FAO data also show that, today, rice represents about 29% of the total output of grain crops worldwide. Although most rice is consumed in the countries where it is produced, a growing demand in some areas is feeding the international rice trade. It remains the single most important source of calorie supply in the Asia region, accounting for up to 45 to 70% on average of daily caloric intake. Its importance as a source of income for smallholder farmers also remains significant despite a trend of income diversification away from rice. Smallholders including women, mostly from developing countries, are an essential part of global rice production, which has historically been excluded in most national and international debates. Addressing the exclusion of smallholders not only improves smallholders’ food security and livelihood but also global food security.

However, there is consensus that per capita rice consumption in Asia is declining; a trend linked to broader societal changes including in particular consumption patterns. Nevertheless, aggregate demand may be rising, at least in the medium term, mostly due to population growth and greater demand from urban centres in Africa.

The trends in rice production and rice productivity have showed that the rice producers over the world are mostly small-scale with an average farm size less than 2.0 hectares. Since the world food crisis in 2008, there has been a trend of increased public and private investment in rice intensification to ensure food security. Thus, rice production has increased in both Asia and Africa. The increase in Asia is explained mostly by yield improvements in the irrigated paddy areas while in Africa the increase is the result of enlarging areas rather than productivity improvement. The average rice yield was continuously improved from 2008 to 2013 but then slowed down. The phenomena of higher temperatures in the short run have not yet had a clear impact on the rice yield in the irrigated paddy areas. The total rice cultivation area was highly different from year to year which was due to diverse factors, including climate-related ones such as water stress caused by El Nino and La Nina. India and Vietnam have scaled down production significantly; however the difference is offset by a large volume of stock release from Thailand. These phenomena contributed to rice oversupply in the world market and caused the lower world rice prices. This continues to put pressure on producers, particularly the small-scale ones, if they want to stay in the rice business.

Oxfam has a wealth of experience in programming around rice – particularly at production level through programs promoting the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). We have contributed to the expansion of SRI in the Asia region, in the Pacific Islands and promotion in West Africa, and Haiti. We are also shifting our focus from field level interventions to a greater focus on policy advocacy and strengthening the position of smallholders in food systems. Similarly, engagement with rice supply chains remains an advocacy priority for Oxfam in a number of countries particularly in the Asia region, including in particular in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka—mainly to enhance participation of vulnerable and poor smallholder rice farmers in the value chains.

Further, rice has gained greater prominence in discussions on climate change globally—both from the mitigation and adaptation angles, and related discussions on financing mechanisms. Rice is a major source of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions among field crops but is also threatened by impacts of climate change. In that context, northern Oxfam affiliates are or may be engaged in monitoring bilateral and multilateral aid, key channels increasingly used to finance adaptation and mitigation in developing countries.

There are also donor, rice specific initiatives, for instance, the Better Rice Initiative in Asia (BRIA), and the Competitive Africa Rice Initiative (CARI) that seek to increase productivity and competitiveness of rice farmers. These and the emerging multi stakeholder initiative, i.e. the sustainable rice platform (SRP) present opportunities but also challenges to influence transformations in the rice sector at both country and regional levels but also at a global scale.

As per Oxfam-commissioned desk analysis of the global trends in the rice sector, the characterization of what are wrongs in the global rice value chain with regard to equity (smallholder interests) and sustainability (environmental and climatic impacts) has showed the following weaknesses: (1) lack of knowledge and information for small farms; (2) the weakness of farmer organization supporting small farms to access markets by engagement (contract farming) in better business relations with the private sector (millers, distributors); (3) lacking the incentive for climatic change adaptation, mitigation measures in and value chain to reduce vulnerability.
There is increasing uncertainty in rice production. Although production is quite intensive in Asia’s major rice producing countries, it is widely recognised that this has offered little economic return to farmers. Many small-scale rice farmers remain poor and are under pressure to find alternative livelihoods. Existing literature emphasize that farmers face structural disadvantages and power asymmetries in many areas to access or expand their participation in markets, and to capture a fair share from the rice value.

The other relevant factor is global climate change both in terms of the impact that climate change will have on rice production, as well as the effect that rice production has on climate change. Rice cultivation contributes to a major greenhouse gas (GHG), methane. Methane emissions from rice fields are determined mainly by water regime and organic inputs, but they are also influenced by soil type, weather, tillage management, residues, fertilizers, and rice cultivar. According to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report, annual total non-CO2 GHG emission from agriculture contributed 10-12 percent of global anthropogenic emissions in 2010, with paddy rice accounting for about 10 percent of total non-CO2 GHG emissions from agriculture. Rice also has a heavy water footprint, which is concerning to some especially major rice-growing areas.

With respect to the impact of climate change on rice production, studies suggest that temperature increase, rising seas and changes in patterns of rainfall and its distribution under global climate changes might lead to substantial modifications in land and water resources for rice production as well as the productivity of rice crops grown in different parts of the world. While temperature increases in certain areas will have negative effects on rice production, it could also improve rice production in Mediterranean areas where cool weather has had negative benefits to date. What is certain is that sustainable increasing rice production will require efforts to enhance the capacity of rice production systems to adapt to global climate change as well as to mitigate the effects of rice production on climate change.

Further, global private sector companies are also showing growing interest in rice, as evidenced by the emergence of the multi-stakeholder platform SRP, and donor initiatives such as CARI and BRIA. While these initiatives may offer opportunities to improve productivity and competitiveness of the rice sector, their potential implications on small-scale producers are often not well understood. An important internal question is how Oxfam can influence these initiatives to deliver appreciable benefits to small-scale farmers and ensure no harm.