



SEAMEO SEARCA

ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2023/2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture

www.searca.org

Executive Summary

In the fourth year of its **Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2020-2025)**, SEAMEO SEARCA intensified its focus on **Accelerating Transformation Through Agricultural Innovations (ATTAIN)**. SEAMEO SEARCA's work is driven by three core programs: **Education and Collective Learning, Research and Thought Leadership, and Emerging Innovation for Growth**. These programs, acting as the engines of ATTAIN, target seven priority areas aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These combined efforts, carried out largely in collaboration with partners, will pave the way for achieving five transformative ATTAIN outcomes that will elevate the quality of life for agricultural families through sustainable practices and access to modern markets.

ATTAIN Outcome 1: Stakeholders embodying mindset transitions

SEAMEO SEARCA focused on providing **scholarships and training** to cultivate leaders in agriculture and rural development (ARD) with combined funding from SEAMEO SEARCA and partner institutions. SEARCA organized 54 regional and national learning events, alongside the SEARCA Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS) and SEARCA Online Learning and Virtual Engagement (SOLVE) webinars, as key avenues to encourage mindset transitions. Furthermore, we facilitated **institutional development in higher education**, most notably through two major capacity building projects, of which **Leveling-up Philippine Higher Education Institutions in Agriculture, Fisheries, and Natural Resources (LevelUPHEI AFAR)** had many tangible outcomes that **benefitted 612 faculty members** of 60 members of State Universities and Colleges Association of Colleges of Agriculture in the Philippines, Inc. (SUC ACAP) located in 16 regions of the country.

SEAMEO SEARCA not only strengthened **internationalization of higher agricultural education** through multi-country networks, foremost of which is the **Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC)**, but also sparked **youth engagement in agriculture** by leveraging its **Youth in Agri Talk Show**, conducting **Sowing Seeds: Careers in Agriculture Orientation** for pre-college students in Malaysia and the Philippines, **funding agriculture board exam reviews** of graduates, and educating members of the **SEARCA Youth Ambassadors Platform (SAYAP)** in tracking carbon footprint and applying the ESG Sustainability Framework. The Center also conducted the three-month **Young Agripreneurs Building Opportunities, Nurturing Growth (YABONG) Bootcamp** to enhance youth farmers' expertise in vegetable production and entrepreneurship.

188

SEARCA
SCHOLARSHIPS
MANAGED

33

NEW
SCHOLARS

18

JOINT
SCHOLARSHIPS
PROJECTS
IMPLEMENTED

30

REGIONAL AND
NATIONAL LEARNING
EVENTS CONDUCTED

8

SEARCA AGRICULTURE
AND DEVELOPMENT
SEMINAR SERIES
(ADSS)

112

UNIVERSITY
CONSORTIUM
GRANTS MANAGED

ATTAIN Outcome 2: Enabling policies and regulatory frameworks supporting ARD at the local, national, regional, and international levels

With a focus on **research that shapes policy**, SEAMEO SEARCA implemented research projects that focused on **agricultural management systems, sustainable food systems, climate resilience**, and **evolving agricultural education**. Moreover, the Center conducted research aimed at **enhancing existing mechanisms, pathways, and frameworks** and began developing the **Consortium for Agricultural Development, Research, and Extension in Southeast Asia (CADRE)**.

SEAMEO SEARCA also **crafted roadmaps for the calamansi industry in Oriental Mindoro and coconut growth areas in Quezon Province**, both in the Philippines, to ensure clear plans, alignment, priorities, resources, and continuous improvement within supportive policies. The Center was also at the forefront of a **targeted outreach geared toward shaping a supportive legal framework for agri-biotech**.

ATTAIN Outcome 3: Wider access to innovative products and services and business models for increased productivity and income

To enable wider access and boost agricultural productivity, SEAMEO SEARCA **funded six innovative solutions** in aquaculture, crowd-farming, and decision support in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand. The Center also implemented **agri-mechanization initiatives** and **agri-robotics education** with universities in Cambodia and the Philippines, and developed two digital platforms to drive collaborative innovation in agriculture, namely, **SEARCA Platform to Attain Agri 4.0 through Collaboration and Engagement (SPACE)** and **Southeast Asia Agri-Technology Transfer (SAATT) Hub**.

Meanwhile, SEAMEO SEARCA's two-pronged approach to climate action consisted of **promoting carbon neutrality** through its **WISE Carbon Farming Program** and **Carbon Footprint Project** and continued **implementing climate resilience projects**, namely, the UK Innovation-funded **Rice Straw Biogas Hub** and the Asian Development Bank-funded project on **Accelerating Climate Resilience on Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment**.

ATTAIN Outcome 4: Increased investment in the agriculture and rural sector

SEAMEO SEARCA's financial investments in ARD in FY 2023/2024 included support for **GRAINS, Regional Professorial Chair Grants, Seed Fund For Research, and Training; IFS-SEARCA Collaborative Research Grants**, travel grants, new and ongoing graduate scholarships, scholars' training, **research dissemination** grants awarded to scholars, and other academic enrichment, all aimed at empowering agricultural innovators, educators and education leaders, researchers, and other key contributors to ARD.

12

RESEARCH PROJECTS
IMPLEMENTED

6

NEW GRANTS FOR
RESEARCH TOWARDS
AGRICULTURAL
INNOVATIVE
SOLUTIONS (GRAINS)
AWARDED

5

NEW SEED FUND
FOR TRAINING
AND RESEARCH
(SFRT) AWARDED

5

NEW PROFESSORIAL
CHAIR GRANTS
AWARDED

15

NEW RESEARCH
DISSEMINATION
GRANTS AWARDED

11

NEW TRAVEL GRANTS
AWARDED



ATTAIN Outcome 5: Food and nutrition security from a range of choices ensuring well-being in an evolving lifestyle

SEAMEO SEARCA also led projects that fostered diversified production systems and encouraged healthier dietary habits. The **Food is Life Exemplified: Mobile App Development Competition for Planetary Health Diet (FLEXPHD)** for Filipino innovators created mobile applications that empower consumers to make informed food choices aligned with the PHD model. Moreover, SEAMEO SEARCA conducted knowledge sharing through a conference on **School-plus-Home Gardens with Biodiversity Enhancement Enterprise (SHGBEE)** in both Palawan, Philippines, and training to promote **integrating SHGBEE in the establishment of Agricultural Technology Parks (ATPs) and Mini-ATPs in Cambodia**. The Center also stepped up activities on the ground under the **School Edible Landscaping for Entrepreneurship in the Philippines**.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

To foster knowledge exchange and expertise sharing in Southeast Asia, SEAMEO SEARCA organized **54 conferences, roundtables, workshops, and technical meetings** while also publishing **244 press releases** and producing **35 new publications** to disseminate knowledge gleaned from these events and the Center's research findings. SEAMEO SEARCA also continued to refine its digital **Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources (AFNR) Knowledge Platform**, which will serve as a valuable resource for agricultural stakeholders.

SOLID RESOURCE BASE

Recognizing the power of collaboration, in FY 2023/2024, SEAMEO SEARCA prioritized working in partnerships to implement development solutions and signed **54 new formal agreements with 52 partners** in FY 2023/2024. These partners come from the academe (15), industry (8), government (4), civil society organizations (23), and individuals (2).

Further bolstering this success was the exceptional commitment and expertise of SEARCA's staff, consultants, as well as **Adjunct, Senior, and Visiting Research Fellows** along with 24 dedicated interns.

Fueled by **responsible financial management, streamlined operations, and a network of ever-expanding and robust partnerships**, SEAMEO SEARCA pushes forward in helping transform agriculture in Southeast Asia towards a BETTER, BIGGER, and SMARTER future.

54

NEW AGREEMENTS
SIGNED WITH
52 PARTNERS

35

PUBLICATIONS
PRODUCED

54

CONFERENCES,
WORKSHOPS, AND
KNOWLEDGE EVENTS
CONVENED

103

STAFF

219

CONSULTANTS

21

SENIOR FELLOWS

4

ADJUNCT & VISITING
RESEARCH
FELLOWS