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CAMBODIA

2020



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FISH FARMING IMPROVES FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS ACROSS SAMBO DISTRICT

Five families in Anlung Preah Kur Village in Wattanak Commune, Sambo District, Kratie Province are now raising fish in their own homes. Through fish farming, WWF-Cambodia is improving the livelihoods of local communities in the Kratie Province through sustainable farming.

In August 2019, WWF-Cambodia, with funding support from BMZ and support from the Kratie Fishery Administration, began recommending to villagers the Sutchi, Basa and walking catfish in two types of aquaria-quadrant cement pools and dug ponds, while providing resources including water pumps and pipes, fish feed, pool and pond construction and babe fishes.

In addition to fish farming, the farmers also learn to record statistics on expenses, income, profit, the amount of feed and water use in the practices, as well as evaluate its effectiveness based on first-hand experience and observation.

Just five months after its introduction, this fish farming practice has brought remarkable results and hope to villagers' livelihoods. On top of earning extra profit from selling the fish, farmers also save up on food by eating the fish they raise. And while the profit can seem minor for some farmers during the first five months, they were still content from having an extra stable income source.



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“In the beginning, I put 1,600 baby fishes in one pool, but they didn’t grow well since I used the wrong feed. I didn’t have enough experience at the time,” Mr. Im Yurn, a 62 year-old farmer in Anlung Preah Kur Village said. “But then I used the type of feed recommended by WWF and added 4,800 baby fishes to three other pools—five months later, I sold all the three pools of fish and earned 1,085,000 Khmer riel (US\$270).”

Mr Yurn, Anlung Preah Kur village, Wattanak commune, Sambo district, Kratie province. © WWF-Cambodia / Sina

“I spent 1,330,000 Khmer riel (US\$332.5) total, but it wasn’t a loss since I had more fish in the other pool, worth 500,000 Khmer riel (US\$125), and also more bags of feed left in stock.”

Mr. Yurn also saves at least 4,000 Khmer riel (US\$1) each day by eating the fish he raises. Although his initial profit wasn’t high, he was hopeful and confident that he could make more once he’s gained enough experience. So far, he has learned to better farm fish, both from his own experience as well as other farmers’.

Mrs. Sothy didn’t just sell the fish she and her husband raised at home, but also bought fish from other fish farmers and resold them. With fish trading, she could earn even more money than other farmers, selling up to 25 kg of fish a day by driving her motorbike around the village twice a day and still having enough time to look after her kids.



Ms Ngoun Sothy, a 37 year-old, Anlung Preah Kur village, Wattanak commune, Sambo district, Kratie province. © WWF-Cambodia / Sina

“Since I first started selling fish, I’ve made 2,800,000 Khmer riel (US\$700) in profit. I want more fish to sell to reach a profit of 4,000,000 Khmer riel (US\$1,000),” added Mrs. Sothy, who also received good feedback about the taste and quality of her fish.

“We decided to farm fish because we thought it would improve our livelihoods to a certain level. After beginning, we could really see how profitable it is and how it has greatly improved our quality of living,” said Mr. Pich Samen, Mrs. Sothy’s husband who is mainly responsible for feeding the fish and maintaining the water in the pool.

Unlike using quadrant cemented pools like other villagers, Mr. Choub Choeurn, a 64 year-old farmer in the same village, raises fish in a dug pond and has gained a different experience with different results.

His fishes grew faster and bigger, some up to 300 g within just three months and 400 g within five, in contrast to fish raised in the cement pools which typically would grow only up to 250-300 g. Water was also easier to manage—he didn’t have to change it as often since the earth would naturally purify the water, only requiring him to pump more into the pond when it was low.



With his fish farm and vegetable garden, Mr. Choeurn, who's old and weak from his illness, can still earn enough for his own food, his grandchildren's pocket money, and also medicine to treat his sickness. During the first three months, he was able to sell 100 kg of fish and earn 1,000,000 Khmer riel (USD\$250), leaving 500,000 Khmer riel (US\$125) after cutting expenses.

“I'm happy with this family fish farming. I like doing it because I don't really know what to do besides this. I'm already quite old, so I can't really do other jobs. Now I'm farming fish. I can sit in the shade and just feed the fish twice a day”

“I think other villagers do [fish farming] because they can no longer catch enough fish in the river,” he said, “Last year, they could just quickly go place gill nets and catch enough fish to eat, but now, they can't get any at all.”

Farmers who practiced fish farming in cement pools fill it with water and change it every four or five days. The first fill of water must be purified of the cement substances with salt or water vegetation, to be later pumped out and replaced with new water.

Farmers should feed the fish twice a day, once in the morning and another in the evening, with the feed recommended by WWF, so as to guarantee the standard growth of the fish (weighing at least 350 g within five months). If a fish is injured, farmers can add salt or a vaccine into the water to cure the wounded fish.

Throughout the process, farmers are required to record relevant information about their fish farming practice, such as the number of new baby fishes in the pool, the number of dead fishes, the amount of feed used or left in stock, expenses and income, the number of times water is changed, or any other remarks.

Fish weighing between 300 to 350 g, can be easily sold at a price of 12,000 Khmer riel (US\$3) per kg in retail, while fish weighing between 200 to 250g can be sold for 10,000 Khmer riel (US\$2.5) per kg.

“I think farming fish in the pool is very easy. It's at home, easy to look after, good to consume for food daily, and easy to sell to villagers,” Mr. Yurn said. “For example, villagers returning from work from the paddy fields would usually come to me to buy fish for lunch, so it's easy for me.”

Farmers have to spend only a little time each day feeding the fishes, allowing them to keep their regular jobs. And for farmers who didn't have regular jobs, fish farming has become their main income source. Fish farming allows women and elderly people to earn, empowering them with financial freedom, and also giving elderly people more time to spend with their grandchildren.

“At first, I didn't know what to do for a living, but then I thought I could try fish farming like others, and it has improved the livelihood of my family. Just within four days, I was able to sell out the fishes in one quarter of the pool and earned 750,000 Khmer riel (US\$185.5),” said Ms. Ngoun Sothy, a 37 year-old mother of two children who started fish farming with her husband in August 2019. “Before, I didn't have any fish to sell, and I didn't have any money. But now, I have fish and also money, and I'm happy.”

Besides uplifting farmers' welfare, fish farming can also reduce fishing along the Mekong River, alleviating pressure from the region's fishery. This program, alongside projects on organic vegetable farming and chicken farming, is just one of WWF-Cambodia's initiatives to improve farmers' and community members' livelihoods in Kratie Province.



Mr Choub Choeurn, 64 years old, Anlung Preah Kur Village, Wattanak commune, Sambo district, Kratie province.
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WWF-Cambodia in Numbers

167,000+

number of followers on
WWF-Cambodia Facebook page

27,450km²

Total area of Mekong Flooded
Forest landscape (MFF)

62,863

total area of protected areas in
Sambo Wildlife Sanctuary and
Praek Prasab Wildlife Sanctuary in
the Mekong Flooded Forest landscape.

92

The Irrawaddy dolphin in the
Mekong Flooded Forest landscape
increased from 80 in 2015 to 92 in
2017, the first increase in 20 years
in the history of dolphin survey.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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