

The Story of **Thoeun Tola** a Youth Farmer

CASE STUDY

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH
RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT IN
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS



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STAKEHOLDERS

At the nearby Kampong Speu Institute of Technology, **Thoeun Tola** received his agricultural training. Tola did not hunt for employment like other young people after graduating.

As he began studying at the Kampong Speu Institute of Technology in 2019, Tola expanded his early farming and animal husbandry techniques by starting a farm on his parents' vacant land.

Tola subsequently became a member of the young agri-entrepreneur platform supported by the Cambodia Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas Association (CambodHRRRA).

To prevent migration, the Farmer, and Nature Net Association (FNN) established the Young Farmers Network in collaboration with CambodHRRRA to encourage local youths to invest in agriculture.

As a result of its involvement with the Young Farmers Network, Tola has benefited from intensive training and capacity building from FNN, Agricultural Cooperative, Kampong Speu Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Commerce, and Living With Dignity



GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The agricultural industry has contributed significantly to the growth of the Cambodian economy, and agricultural output is a significant export. More than 85% of Cambodia's population works in agriculture, which has a sizable agrarian region. Most youth, the strength behind the agricultural sector's growth and ability to give the populace safe food, are leaving agricultural land by moving to urban areas, particularly Phnom Penh. Some of them are migrating to find employment abroad.

For example, some youth from **Omlaing commune, Thpong district, Kampong Speu** province, have migrated to Phnom Penh, went abroad, and others work in nearby sugarcane factories. Still, others engage in agriculture, like 25-year-old Thoeun Tola, who grows vegetables, raises animals, and grows mushrooms.



CONTEXT

Most young people in the network of young farmers need to gain knowledge of agricultural practices and constantly adhere to family customs, which causes their output to fall short of market demands.

Given the market potential in the region and the fact that most vegetables are imported, there is a high demand for them. Tola also grows vegetables in a net house and the field. Tola said that the switch to safe vegetables grown in the greenhouse since it is simple to apply chemicals to prevent pests that harm crops and to obtain high yields that can sufficiently supply the market and be cultivated all year round.

Tola has difficulty producing vegetables in the field because of problems with flooding during heavy rains and water shortages during the dry season. As a result, he can only do it two or three times a year.



PROCESS / METHODOLOGY

Tola received extra training and capacity building, such as youth and land ownership, youth and chicken and cricket raisings, supported by CamboDHRRA, FNN, and his education from the Kampong Speu Institute of Technology.

Tola has also taken part in organizing other young people who have left their homes to migrate to farming through the Youth Farmer Network, and he has attended numerous youth forums to exchange new agricultural technologies and market information among young people from different areas.



TARGET BENEFICIARIES

Tola's Youth Network Community contains 30 young people between 18 and 36, including ten women and 20 males. They primarily raise animals, tubers, and green crops. To support diverse technologies, the network of young farmers in Omlaing commune, Thpong district, and Kampong Speu province has collaborated closely with the farming community.



OBJECTIVE

Tola's specific goal in investing in agriculture was a love and agriculture mastery, as he wanted to turn his parents' land into a large farm with leafy vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, chickens, and pigs.



RESULTS / PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Tola's agricultural investment has changed due to interaction with a network of young farmers and Agricultural Cooperative, as yields have improved by 60% to satisfy market demand. Tola collects vegetables in the net house in one session (1 month and 50 days), earning between 900,000 and 1.2 million riels (US\$ 225 and US\$ 300). At the same time, he also harvests an average of 20 kg of mushrooms each month, earning between 1.5 million and 2 million riels (US\$ 375 and US\$ 500).



IMPACT

The long-term benefit is that Tola can invest in his agricultural sector, including farming methods, production planning, and market research, with the help of relevant partners, especially the network of young farmers and local agricultural cooperatives.

However, Tola is also negatively impacted by the weather, such as the drought in the dry season, and the area of crops owned by his parents is small; he cannot expand the area due to a lack of capital.





SUCCESS / FACILITATING FACTORS

Tola had a painful experience growing vegetables. Even though the yield was good, the price was low, and there was no market because local farmers grew the same vegetables in excess, such as leafy vegetables, which were simple to grow in the winter. As a result, the farmers grew only green vegetables, which caused the price of the leafy vegetables to drop and caused them to be thrown away.

With the knowledge gained from this lesson, Tola started to schedule his planting following the weather and consumer needs. He also started growing leafy vegetables in the net house, which allows him to produce them throughout the year and uses less water.



CONSTRAINTS / CHALLENGES

Along with the above success, Tola also faces unresolved challenges, such as changing the soil for growing vegetables in the greenhouse. Tola said that the soil must be changed after two to three planting terms as it makes the soil unproductive.

Tola has a hard time solving it because the entrance to the greenhouse is narrow. The old soil cannot be removed, and the process needs a lot of capital. As a result, he turns a profitable investment into growing mushrooms that are more profitable than growing leafy vegetables.



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