TRANSFORMING RICE STRAW INTO OPPORTUNITY: A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION FOR VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

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Vietnam and Cambodia, crucial in the Mekong region's food security, face many challenges in rice farming. Climate change pressures and the need to improve productivity make farming tough. But there's a big problem often overlooked: burning rice straw.

Burning rice straw is common because it's hard to collect after harvest, there's not enough labor, and it's not worth much. But burning has serious consequences. It harms the environment, depletes soil nutrients, and affects people's health.

That's where the Rice Straw-Based Circular Economy for Improved Biodiversity and Sustainability (RiceEco) project comes in. The project works to support to change how we see rice straw. an innovative endeavor that seeks to redefine the narrative surrounding rice straw and its potential. At its core, RiceEco envisions a circular economy model centered on rice straw utilization.

Through sustainable rice contract farming, coupled with the development of cutting-edge technologies like bio-fertilizers and bio-plastics derived from rice straw, the project aims to not only mitigate the environmental impact of rice production but also bolster farmers' incomes.

Guided by established business models and targeted behavior change interventions, RiceEco represents a holistic approach to transforming agrifood value chains. By promoting sustainable practices, the project endeavors to enhance biodiversity conservation, fortify ecosystem resilience, and elevate the socio-economic well-being of farming communities.
In Vietnam, collaborative efforts between the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Can Tho Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) are laying the groundwork for sustainable rice straw management. Through capacity-building workshops and practical demonstrations, stakeholders are empowered to adopt mechanized rice straw composting techniques, thereby mitigating the need for harmful burning practices.

Mr. Dong Van Canh, Director of the New Green Farm Cooperative in in Can Tho, Viet Nam says the project is making a big difference. Farmers can now use rice straw to grow mushrooms, giving them extra income. This project, funded by MKCF, isn't just about farming better; it's about creating a sustainable future for everyone in the Mekong region.

Rice-straw compost

"By capitalizing on rice straw for mushroom cultivation and bio-fertilizers, farmers not only diversify their income streams but also contribute to environmental sustainability" said by Mr. Dong Van Canh.

"Experimenting with Life-Cycle Analysis and GHG Assessments of Various Rice Straw and Water Management Techniques."

Funded by the Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF), RiceEco transcends the realm of agricultural innovation; it embodies a paradigm shift towards a more sustainable and inclusive future. From straw mushrooms to bio-fertilizers, the project unlocks the latent economic potential of agricultural residues, heralding a new era of resilience and prosperity in the Mekong region's agricultural landscape.