



Partnership Ready Cambodia: Agriculture and Food Processing

Current situation

Cambodia has enjoyed over two decades of economic and urban development, with an average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 7.59% between 1994 and 2017. Cambodia's agricultural sector, with a 23% share in GDP in 2017, has been a key driver of this growth, contributing significantly to poverty reduction and making huge leaps in the production of most crops. 77% of the Cambodian population still live in rural areas, with the majority relying on agriculture as their primary source of food and income. The percentage of the total workforce engaged in agriculture was 26.7% in 2017, down from 73% in 2008.

→ CROP PRODUCTION

Crop production in Cambodia makes up 60% of agriculture's contribution to GDP. The country's crops are recognised as some of the best in the world, as evidenced by its award-winning rice and geographic indicator (GI) status for varieties of pepper, durian, pomelo and sugar. So far, however, Cambodia's crops have not met their full production and export potential. Cambodia has approximately 4.3 million hectares of cultivated land. Major crops include paddy rice, maize, cassava, sugar cane, vegetables, peanut, soybean, sugar cane, jute, tobacco and rubber as well as a multitude of perennial crops. There are several other crops that deserve a mention because, although not widely cultivated in Cambodia, their unique therapeutic/health properties and relative scarcity make them a valuable, sought-after commodity for the European market. These include (but are not limited to) eucalyptus, frangipani, sandalwood and the mineral-rich moringa tree. There seems to be potential for increased Moringa exports, with leading companies Baca Villa and RingaCam enjoying healthy business growth.

Export growth has matched the increase in production. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) reports that 4,709,453 tonnes of agricultural products were exported in 2016, a 21% increase compared to 2015. Export growth has since slowed somewhat in recent years. Germany is a major importer of Cambodian agricultural products, especially Cambodian rice, importing 16,616 tonnes in 2016. In 2018, Germany also imported

Cambodian pepper (worth USD 997,000), bananas (worth USD 348,000), fresh berries (worth USD 23,000), rice noodles (worth USD 135,000), wood products (worth USD 30,000) and paper packaging materials (worth USD 19,000). Exports to Germany for all these products have increased significantly since 2017.

Cambodia's push to diversify its agricultural production has led to a boost in the output of subsidiary and industrial crops which now represent the largest share of crop exports. Most of this rise is due to the increased production of cassava, which has overtaken rice to become Cambodia's most produced and exported crop. Crop production is reliant on seasonal rains. Dry season farming is more challenging as it requires well-functioning irrigation as well as larger investments in technology.







Cambodia produced 1,965,480 tonnes of perennial crops in 2016. Crops such as coconut, jackfruit, banana, custard apple, longan, papaya, mango, cashew nut, durian, pepper and moringa are recognised for their quality and are increasingly pegged for international export. GI status has been awarded to Kampot durian, Kampot pepper, Koh Trong pomelo and Kampong Speu sugar, demonstrating their quality. Exports of Cambodia's perennial crops are expected to grow further - a 2017 agreement between MAFF and the Chinese firm Weighai Dragon Union Agriculture to supply USD 50 million worth of mangoes to South Korea and Japan is just one example.

Many of Cambodia's crops are grown on some 273 industrial-scale economic land concessions (ELCs), covering 2,135 million hectares (12% of Cambodia's land area). Direct land ownership by foreigners is not allowed in Cambodia. However, before 2012, local and foreign businesses wishing to engage in local production could apply for an ELC, granting them the right to use land for agricultural purposes. A moratorium on new ELCs in 2012 means that anyone wishing to obtain an ELC will now have to acquire one from a current ELC holder. The ELC mechanism was especially useful for investors wishing to set up a plantation for crops such as fruits, vegetables, cassava, rubber and sugar cane. It is worth noting that ELC holders also represent the largest potential clients for agricultural machinery sellers. European rubber producers SIAT and SOCFIN have invested in Cambodia via this mechanism.

→ FISHERIES

The fisheries subsector makes up 22% of agricultural GDP and is thought to permanently employ around 420,000 people. Cambodia has one of the highest per capita fish consumption rates in the world, and fisheries are integral to Cambodia's food security. Today, most fisheries production comes from freshwater sources (59%), but there are limits to the country's wild inland fish stocks. For this reason, although the marine capture (14%) and aquaculture industries (27%) are relatively small at present, both have great potential to increase their contribution to national income and export revenue in the future.

Annual freshwater capture is somewhat volatile and reliant on the flood seasons. Water resources such as the Tonle Sap Lake, Mekong River, Bassac River and their associated floodplains support substantial inland capture fisheries in Cambodia, which account for most of Cambodia's fisheries production. For example, in 2018, freshwater capture amounted to 536,990 tonnes, while marine capture was 127,421 tonnes. Freshwater capture is dominated by small-scale fisheries. Only around 20% of freshwater capture occurred at commercial-scale fisheries in 2012. This figure is likely to be lower now, following the 2012 abolishment of all commercial lots on the Tonle Sap - a move by the government to reduce pressure on inland fish stocks.



Cambodia's coastline boasts a high diversity of species and is over 400 km long, with an Exclusive Economic Zone of 55,600 km². Despite this, marine capture remains relatively low. The sector is not developed commercially, and most fishing activities are conducted on a small-scale by members of local communities.

Official exports of fishery products (fresh and processed) are low in Cambodia, and most fish consumption is domestic. Fish exports have been decreasing since the early 2000s; from 56,400 tons in 2003, to 30,000 tons in 2009, and to just 14,300 tons in 2016. Fish products (mainly live fish, frozen shrimp, fish fillet) are typically exported in a chilled or frozen form, and around 36% of exports were processed in 2016. The primary export destinations are Vietnam and Thailand, with others including Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, Japan and Australia. Actual exports are likely far higher; large quantities of freshwater fish are traded informally with Thailand and Vietnam. For marine capture the prevalence of unlicensed foreign vessels operating in Cambodia's Exclusive Economic Zone, as well as the practise of vessels trading catches at sea rather than at port means official capture is under-reported. This became such a problem that in 2015, the EU adopted a restriction on the import of fisheries products from Cambodia as the country failed to address issues regarding illegal fishing.

There have been successes and failures in Cambodia's aquaculture sector, which holds great potential but remains underdeveloped. It increased production to 245,741 tonnes in 2018, up from 74,000 tonnes in 2010. In addition, fish seed production has also grown from less than 20 million seeds produced per annum in the late 2000s to 190 million in 2016. Common aquaculture practices include cage culture, pond culture and rice field fisheries. Freshwater cage farming accounts for the largest share of total aquaculture production. On the failure side, Cambodia had a rich history of shrimp farming with an output of 700 tonnes in 1995, but this decreased sharply due to disease and pollution. At the same time, marine cage farming started in Kampot and Koh Kong in the 1980s, focusing on seabass, grouper and cobia, but today remains insignificant. On the other hand, there is a surprisingly successful crocodile farming industry, which had grown to 410,000 head in 2018 (compared to 17,223 in 2017). Crocodiles are usually raised to adulthood, so that their hide can be used to manufacture leather products. However, Cambodian crocodile farmers find it more profitable to sell the hatchlings, while they are still young, to foreign buyers (mainly Vietnamese intermediaries) since it is too expensive to raise them themselves. Investors have begun to take note of Cambodia's underdeveloped aquaculture sector: largescale aquaculture investment plans include the Lush Food fish farm project, a USD 100 million project by Chinese-owned Jin Yu Tang and a proposed USD 24 million marine fish farm developed by the Norwegian firm Vitamar.

→ LIVESTOCK

Demand for livestock and meat has increased along with improving living standards and greater dietary diversification. Demand reached 320,000 tonnes in 2017, significantly higher than the 300,000 tonnes MAFF had forecast for 2020. With this growing market, production has begun to shift from backyard farming to larger-scale, commercial businesses, with a greater focus on better health and animal husbandry practices. Today, domestic production is seeing growth, but exports are limited and illegal imports still disturb the market.

Total livestock production in 2017 was 42.8 million head, growing by around 1.5% compared to 2016. Production has remained stable for cattle, buffalo and pigs, with the greatest increase seen in poultry. It is estimated that 70% of cattle and buffalos reared are used for farming (ploughing and manure), with the remaining 30% meeting market demand for beef.

The number of commercially produced pigs has doubled over the last five years, and commercial pig farms now account for almost a quarter of total production. Commercial poultry makes up around a fifth of total production. On the other hand, commercial cattle raising remains almost non-existent due to the higher costs associated with large-scale cattle farms and low feed availability in general. Around 20,000 head of cattle (less than 1% of total production) were reared commercially.

Local livestock demand has grown rapidly, but so far domestic production has kept up; covering at least 80% of domestic demand within each category. Cattle and buffalo production met 99% of domestic demand with pork meeting 87%. The remaining demand was supplemented by imports, for instance, round 400,000 live pigs were brought to Cambodia in 2017. Pig imports still pose a concern to Cambodian farmers and local markets. Illegal imports from Vietnam have created price fluctuations discouraging local farmers from competing in or entering the market. For cattle, Cambodia is not just competing with its regional peers, but also with beef imported from Australia, which is used for Western restaurants in Phnom Penh, and which enjoys significant demand from Vietnam, Cambodia's largest livestock trading partner.

→ AGRO-PROCESSING

Cambodia's agro-processing sector is today underdeveloped, but the country holds considerable potential to position itself as an agro-food supplier for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, China and India, where most of future global food demand will be generated. Promotion of the agro-processing sector is now a priority of the government and key to its strategy of diversifying the Cambodian industrial base and promoting higher value-added exports.



Today, sandwiched between the more developed agro-processing nations of Vietnam and Thailand, Cambodia is a net importer of processed food. A strong local agro-processing sector could reverse the flow of Cambodian exports of raw materials and generate significant value added.

Cambodia's agro-processing industry is predominantly made up of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) producing primarily for the domestic market and located close to production zones. There were 31,400 SMEs processing food and beverages in 2012 – 84% of all formally registered SMEs in the country. Access to finance continues to be a barrier to the expansion of these formally registered SMEs, and there are many more informally operating MSMEs that have difficulty registering.

There are several examples of large-scale food processing in Cambodia, such as rice snack manufacturer and exporter Lyly. Other enterprises are successfully manufacturing milled rice, beverages (beer, wine and water), tobacco, sugar, rubber, fish products and processed vegetables. There have also been several investments in feed mill processing, drawing upon Cambodia's vast cassava production. Even in the case of the larger processors, processed food products are mostly for the domestic market although there are exceptions. Indeed, milled rice, palm oil, tobacco, rubber and cane sugar are today some of Cambodia's most important processed food exports. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of food processing plants (including rice mills), breweries, and tobacco factories doubled, and the number of paper products factories increased from just 17 to 46.

Constraints to the development of agro-industry include low quality production, underdeveloped transport and logistics infrastructure, and high electricity costs. Investors have raised concern regarding the cost, quality and stability of electricity, which is consistently ranked as a challenge for the agro-processing sector (particularly regarding the perishable nature of its products), and indeed investors in general. There are frequent outages and power cuts when power supply cannot meet demand - typically during the dry season when Cambodia's hydropower plants cannot operate at full capacity. Weak infrastructure affects the agro-processing sector in two ways: It limits the consistency, availability and quality of raw agricultural inputs, integral to agro-processing factories (e.g. raw products cannot reach processing factories in time). And, it increases the costs of logistics. Today, the cost of export remains high. For international shipping for example, Cambodia's costs to export per container was USD 795 while Vietnam was just USD 610. For these reasons, it is often more cost effective to export raw products to Thailand and Vietnam.

Policy and regulation

Today, agriculture remains at the core of Cambodia's development strategy. 'Promotion of the Agriculture Sector and Rural Development' forms a key pillar in the country's overarching rectangular strategy (Phase IV). The government has set the ambitious goal of increasing agriculture sector growth to 5% per annum and raising the share of exports that are processed to 12% by 2025. This target is to be achieved via strategies that promote crop diversification, productivity improvements, increased commercialisation and sustainable land management.

Several programmes aim to disseminate more efficient farming techniques and to increase access to new crop seeds. Many of these initiatives have been set up by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Contract farming, led by the private sector, has also seen some success (although its uptake has been slow), particularly in discouraging the use of certain pesticides so that domestic produce can meet the chemical residue standards needed to export internationally. MAFF has produced guidelines to support compliance with Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) under the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) approach. Government regulations and strategies focus on improved management of animal production in terms of safety and quality as well as a shift towards commercial-scale livestock farms. Government policy also lays out objectives to promote research and development via public-private partnerships and increased regional cooperation.

The government has been working on trade facilitation and transport improvement, with a Logistics Master Plan being developed with support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the World Bank. Cambodia's Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025 details plans to improve agricultural logistics and establish 'agro-processing zones' which will likely take the form of SEZs. Specialised banks have begun to offer agricultural loans and microfinance schemes, often in collaboration with international development organisations.



→ INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

The Government of Cambodia has been actively promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) in the agriculture sector. The Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) recorded USD 25.9 billion in approved investment in Cambodia from 2011 to 2016. Approximately 14.3% was for agricultural projects. Historically, most FDI in agribusiness has been through ELCs.

Under the Law on Investment (1994) and the Law on the Amendment to the Law on Investment (2003) – which together form the Consolidated Law on Investment (2003) – foreign investors can apply to have their project treated as a Qualified Investment Project (QIP) to benefit from investment incentives. QIPs in agriculture and the agro-industry may obtain incentives in the form of a profit tax exemption for a priority period of three years. The list of eligible activities for the advantageous QIP status is shown below.

Category	Requirement for investment
Crop production	Paddy farming on areas greater than 1,000 ha
	All types of cash crops on areas greater than 500 ha
	Vegetables on areas greater than 50 ha
Livestock production	Livestock farming with more than 1,000 head
	Dairy farming with more than 100 head
	Poultry and egg production with more than 10,000 head
Fisheries	Hatcheries of more than 2 ha
	Shrimp farming and other aquaculture facilities of more than 10 ha
Manufacture and	Investment capital greater than
processing of food	USD 500,000
Manufacture of paper and allied products	Investment capital greater than USD 500,000
Manufacture of rubber and miscellaneous plastic products	Investment capital greater than USD 500,000



Regarding agricultural products, importers must obtain a license from MAFF to import products such as fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, seeds, livestock, animal feed and livestock. The government has also implemented several tax incentives to promote imports of inputs and machinery with a view to modernising the sector, e.g. as VAT exemption on imports and supplies of various agricultural inputs, including fertilisers, plant seeds, veterinary medicines, animal feeds, breeding stocks, small tractors and spare parts as well as miscellaneous agricultural machinery.

The most important business associations are the Cambodia Livestock Raisers Association, the Cambodian Brahman Breeders' Association, the Cambodia Timber Industry Association, the Federation of Cambodian Rice Millers, the Cambodian Organic Agriculture Association, the Kampong Speu Mangoes Association, and the Kampot Pepper Promotion Association.

Business opportunities

Opportunities for German companies in the Cambodian agricultural sector are tied to the government's key objectives: modernisation, mechanisation, diversification and promotion of exports.

There are prospective opportunities for German companies in Cambodia in supplying machinery, seeds, pesticides and fertilisers. The demand for agricultural machinery and equipment in Cambodia is increasing every year. The provision of support services for agro-processing, such as cold chain logistics and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) auditing and certification, may also hold potential.

→ EXPORTS FROM GERMANY TO CAMBODIA

Crop seeds

Crop diversification and productivity improvements can be supported by improving the supply of high-quality crop seeds. Currently, access to crop seeds is challenging, and their supply is somewhat reliant on imports, the high price of which prevents many farmers from using them. This market could hold potential for German companies that supply quality seeds. A good example is the Dutch firm East West Seed (EWS), the first international seed company to move into Cambodia (2017). EWS offers opportunities for farmers to diversify their production by supplying them with new varieties of top-quality seeds, which enables them to increase their productivity and returns.

Machinery

Machinery is increasingly used throughout the production process, and Cambodia's nascent food processing industry is reliant on machinery imports. Rice harvesting is now largely mechanised, and the most tangible example of this is the use of machinery (mainly two-wheel tractors and power tillers) to replace cattle in ploughing operations. However, the use of some machines, such as seeders, reapers, sprayers or harvesters, is still limited.

Competition has been rising among exporting countries to supply machinery to the booming Cambodian market (the domestic market is estimated at around USD 1 billion), spurred by various international programmes. In this regard, European companies have the technology to compete with their Asian and North American counterparts. However, most of the machinery imported into Cambodia does not arrive directly from the country it was produced in. Thailand has traditionally acted as a hub for agricultural machinery in the Southeast Asian region. In view of this fact, there is an opportunity for German exporters to partner with local importers to supply the growing Cambodian market, potentially using Thailand as a point of entry.

Irrigation

As Cambodia seeks to increase the productivity of its land, access to water has become a critical issue. Most crops in Cambodia are rain-fed and need to be resilient. Foreign development aid and international expertise will be needed to help construct wells, dikes, check dams and reservoirs.

Regarding rice cultivation, dry season irrigation investments present potential, as a lack of irrigation infrastructure means dry season production consists mostly of commercial crops. With the growth of the horticulture sector, drip irrigation is the fastest-growing irrigation technology in Cambodia, while the development of sprinkle irrigation and double cropping is slower. More complex water management schemes could also be introduced to boost the country's dry season production; solar-powered pumps, for instance, could be particularly interesting, given the high cost of energy.

→ IMPORTS FROM CAMBODIA TO GERMANY

Thanks to its geographical situation, Cambodia has favourable conditions for growing a wide range of tropical fruits. Some of these fruits are already well known in Europe. For instance, the mango production market is extremely dynamic, and 2018 was the third year of large-scale exports. However, in general, the scale of such exports is limited. There is an opportunity for Cambodian exports to grow, avoiding common mistakes made elsewhere in the past, for example, by focusing on quality, phytosanitary standards and the use of sustainable inputs. Certification and labelling indicating local production, quality and organic practices may also be used to promote Cambodian products.

Other local fruits available in Cambodia are mostly unknown in Europe. However, there may be interest among distributors to introduce them in what is perceived as an untapped market. Indeed, European consumers are increasingly fond of diversity and eager to discover new products. Exotic fruits (rambutans, durians) and new varieties (yellow passion fruit, green bananas) could be appealing.

Organic products

Although Cambodia is not able to compete with neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam in terms of the scale of production and processing, there are signs that it is increasingly taking notice of its potential as an organic food producer. One such indicator is increasing demand for organic projects and certification services. Cambodian products are recognised for their high quality, and the country could take advantage of its historically low chemical use and the higher margins associated with organic products. German specialist food importers could source niche products from Cambodia to complement Germany's well-developed domestic organic market.



→ PROCESSING

Agro-processing

The diversity of commodities produced in Cambodia offers a variety of investment options in the food processing sector. There are relatively few sizeable commercial companies involved in agroprocessing, aside from a few family businesses that mainly supply local markets. Examples of possible activities include, but are not limited to, the processing of: dairy products, cashew nuts, sugar, fruits, fish products, meat and cassava. For example, cassava starch is integral to the animal feed industry. Non-food agricultural products (tobacco, rubber, wood) could also be transformed locally. Rubber, for instance, is a raw material which can be processed into a wide range of products (industrial hardware, tyres, gloves). Yet, most of the country's rubber exports (128,000 tonnes in 2015) are exported as graded dry blocks.

Support services

Apart from direct investment in the processing plants themselves, there may be opportunities in activities that support and facilitate agro-processing, for example, post-harvest sorting, conditioning and packaging. The demand for certification and auditing services is also likely to grow, creating opportunities for those able to assess whether companies have met GMP or HACCP standards. In addition, veterinary services, animal medicine suppliers and quality testing laboratories will grow in importance as Cambodia develops.

Animal feed

Cambodia's agricultural exports are currently limited by the countries inability to meet international SPS standards. However, for now, this could lead to opportunities for domestic production. For example, agricultural produce that cannot be exported can be converted into animal feed and thus support Cambodia's developing livestock sector. Feed mill companies, for example, could take advantage of Cambodia's growing demand for meat and its current abundance of high-quality natural resources (such as cassava), many of which it is unable to export. However, it should be noted that, although expected to grow, the Cambodian animal feed market remains limited (around 1 million tonnes/year) and is already well supplied. Currently, at least fifteen animal feed factories are in operation (CP, Betagro, Greenfeed, Agrimaster, CJ, etc.).

Best Practice

Organic Kampot Pepper for Germany

In January 2016, a development partnership with the private sector (develoPPP.de) was launched between the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German company Kreativmarkt Handels GmbH and The Pepper Hill, an organic farm in the Southern Cambodian region of Kampot that cultivates the region's traditional spice, pepper. A training programme for the farmers of the region to prepare for the certification of the organic cultivation of pepper was supported within the project. The promotion of the organic cultivation of pepper is intended to boost development in Kampot.

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Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5 65760 Eschborn, Germany T +49 6196 79-0 F +49 6196 79-11 15 info@giz.de www.giz.de

Project Global Business Network (GBN) Programme

Author EuroCham Cambodia

T+855 23 964 141

info@eurocham-cambodia.org

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