

# Case Studies of the 2005 Seed Award Recipients

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## Global Marketing Partnership for SRI Indigenous Rice

*Full Version*



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## About the author

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For a short version of this case study, please consult the Seed Initiative Partnership Report 2006 "Partnerships for Sustainable Development: On the Road to Implementation" at [www.gppi.net/partnershipreport](http://www.gppi.net/partnershipreport).

## Global Marketing Partnership for SRI Indigenous Rice

The Global Marketing Partnership for SRI Indigenous Rice brings together rice farmer organisations in Cambodia, Madagascar, and Sri Lanka and an American university institute to promote production and marketing of traditional rice varieties grown using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). SRI is an environmentally-friendly method for growing rice that uses less water and agrochemical inputs. The partners are supporting each other's efforts at developing national marketing strategies and are devising a common marketing infrastructure for entering international markets. In doing so, they hope to improve the livelihoods of small-scale rice farmers in the developing world.

### BACKGROUND

Small-scale, commercial rice cultivation in the developing world is becoming financially and environmentally unsustainable: Market prices are low. Cultivation practices dependent on petroleum-based chemicals are costly. The spread of 'modern' rice varieties has led to an alarming loss of rice biodiversity. In Asia, for example, where many thousands of indigenous varieties grew in the past, only a handful now account for the bulk of rice production. By the early 1990s, just five varieties of rice accounted for 90% of rice production in Malaysia and Pakistan, and 50% of production in Thailand and Myanmar.

Small-scale cultivation of traditional rice is becoming less and less attractive for farmers in the developing world because market prices are low, while synthetic fertilizers and pesticides are becoming more costly. Traditional rice growing practices often produce little yield while flooded fields require huge amounts of water and release

substantial amounts of the greenhouse gas methane.

One methodology for growing traditional rice varieties that avoids most of these problems is the System of Rice Intensification (SRI).<sup>1</sup> Developed in Madagascar in the 1980s, SRI methods produce "more from less": with 25 to 50% less water, 80 to 90% less seed, and less or no chemical fertilizer, rice yields can be increased by 50 to 100%. The key idea for these improvements is to enhance soil biological communities and processes and thus plant growth by managing plants, soil, water and nutrients differently.

The SRI methodology is to plant individual and much younger seedlings (rather than clumps of older plants) with wider spacing in the field and to keep the soil moist but not continuously flooded to promote aerobic activity in the soil. Not flooding rice paddies leaves more water available for natural ecosystems or for alternative uses. Moreover, unflooded paddies do not produce methane, one of the major

<sup>1</sup> For details on SRI see: <http://ciifad.cornell.edu/sri>

'greenhouse gases' that contributes to global warming.<sup>2</sup>

As rice yields increase, the need for chemical and other fertilizers and pesticides decreases because SRI plants are more robust and resistant to pests and diseases, making agrochemical applications unnecessary or uneconomic. This is particularly important in countries such as Cambodia, where the use of toxic pesticides poses serious threats to the environment and human health.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the low out-of-the pocket costs make the method particularly accessible for small-scale farmers: SRI production methods require less purchaser inputs yet generate greater harvests than traditional methods, because they mobilise endogenous inputs from soil processes.

In a study across thirteen countries, yields of traditional rice varieties increased by 50 to 100%, to an average of 7.3 t/ha when SRI was used, compared with an average of 4.3 t/ha in the (non-SRI) control group. This makes SRI-rice farming an attractive method for improving the livelihoods of rice farmers in developing countries.

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<sup>2</sup> A possible offsetting disadvantage of the SRI method is that un-flooded paddies may produce more nitrous oxide, which would reduce, to some extent, the gains made from reducing methane emissions. However, when less or no nitrogen fertilizer is used, this effect is likely to be small. This is an area where systematic research is needed. SRI certainly has the potential to contribute to GHG reduction.

<sup>3</sup>

[www.ejfoundation.org/pdfs/death\\_in\\_small\\_doses.pdf](http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdfs/death_in_small_doses.pdf)

Initially, SRI does require additional labour input while the methods are being learned, because seedlings must be transplanted individually and when they are still very young and delicate. Also, un-flooded rice paddies require more weeding because weeds are not suppressed by flooding. As farmers gain skill and confidence in SRI methods, labour input usually decreases and may eventually become the same or even less than for conventional rice-growing methods. Accordingly, the benefits – higher crop yields and therefore higher income – that farmers achieve through SRI far exceed the costs.

A promising method alone is not enough: Local, small-scale farmers need markets for their produce. Both in rice-producing countries and internationally, in North America, Europe, and in Japan, the demand for 'exotic' and healthy foods is on the rise. Small producers who grow indigenous rice varieties have something to offer to sophisticated local and international niche markets. The higher prices commanded by organically-grown traditional rice varieties may give farmers in developing countries a new opportunity to compete in the global economy. The Taiwan-based Food and Fertilizer Technology Center makes the following argument:

"In those countries which are being forced to open at least a percentage of their rice market to imports, producers may be best protected by policies which emphasize rice quality, including organic farming methods, as well as flavour. This will promote the development of a domestic rice market of diverse and distinctive rice varieties which fetch high prices and are more

distinguished by their quality than by their agronomic characters."<sup>4</sup>

How can consumers in domestic and international niche markets be made aware of SRI-grown traditional rice? What is needed is a marketing strategy that links local SRI farmers with national and international consumers who value quality and health considerations and who are able and willing to pay for these advantages.

## PARTNERS

As many as 200,000 farmers in more than 20 countries are currently using SRI methods to grow rice. As more and more farmers begin harvesting surpluses, farmers need to find markets for the rice. A promising strategy is to market SRI-grown traditional rice varieties with novel and better eating qualities to high-end, environmentally and health-conscious consumers. The higher prices warranted for organically grown traditional rice will give farmers in developing countries motivation and reward, improve livelihoods and convert more farmers to this sustainable agricultural practice. Cambodia, Madagascar, and Sri Lanka are three countries in which the SRI method is well established.

### Madagascar

In Madagascar, where SRI originated, approximately 100,000 rice farmers are now using some combination of SRI methods, growing over 100 traditional varieties of rice.

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[www.fft.c.agnet.org/library/article/ac1993a.html#6](http://www.fft.c.agnet.org/library/article/ac1993a.html#6)

The national partner of the initiative in Madagascar is the National Federation of Koloharenas. It is the national umbrella body of the Koloharenas farmer cooperatives, which promote sustainable agriculture and seek to conserve Madagascar's precious environment. 29,000 farmers in three large rice growing areas are organized within the Koloharenas. The SRI method has been promoted in Madagascar by the NGO *Association Tefy Saina* and the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture, and Development (CIIFAD). The Malagasy specialty is red and pink rice.

Efforts at marketing SRI rice have already begun in Madagascar. The National Federation of Koloharenas has a full-time coordinator, Hasina Ramparandrandrana, for marketing products produced by the Koloharenas, including rice. The Federation is currently focusing its attention on export projects, as various opportunities have come up as a result of the marketing initiative. In the medium term, the national market will be targeted as well. Although Madagascar has no market for organic rice, because agrochemical use in the country is rare, the standard market price is fairly high, especially if farmers manage to market to supermarket directly.

In eastern and central Madagascar in the provinces of Tamatave and Fianarantsoa, the USAID-funded Landscape Development Initiative (LDI) project—now succeeded by the Ecoregional Initiatives (ERI) and Business and Market Expansion (BAMEX) projects—was encouraging the development of Koloharenas and SRI rice production, working closely with *Tefy Saina*.

In 2004, Slow Food awarded *Tefy Saina* its Award for the Defense of Biodiversity for its work with the KHs to produce traditional Malagasy red rice, called *Vary Mena*. LDI's Glenn Lines enabled the KH farmers to participate in Slow Food's international food fair, the Salone del Gusto, in Turin, Italy, in October 2004. Here, they sold bags of Vary Mena for US\$6/kg – more than 20 times the local market price in Madagascar. Red rice has since been taken into the SlowFoods Arc of Taste Foundation, which supports rare local food varieties, and is now being marketed in Europe.

Slow Food has made an in-kind equipment grant to the *Hanitriala Koloharena* cooperative to help improve rice milling, packaging and quality control. But this is only the beginning. The KH require further expertise and assistance in marketing and selling large quantities of *Vary Mena*, as well as other rice varieties. After a pilot export of 2 tons of rice to Switzerland in September 2005, SwissRe, the large international reinsurance company, and the Zurich Zoo have placed initial orders of *Vary Mena* to serve in their dining cafeterias.

### **Cambodia**

In 2005, over 40,000 Cambodian farmers are now using SRI methods. The high adoption rate could be achieved through the extension work of a national NGO CEDAC (Centre d'Études et de Développement Agricole Cambodien) and its head Yang Sang Koma as well as, since 2005, of the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, which has made SRI extension part of its long-term strategic plan.

CEDAC is becoming increasingly concerned with marketing SRI rice as farmers produce more than their households require. CEDAC has organised a working group to drive the marketing efforts and is developing a strategy to market SRI rice both within Cambodia and abroad. It is working closely with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to explore issues related to organic certification and marketing of SRI rice, in which the GTZ has expertise. CEDAC also opened a small store to sell rice from SRI farmers to urban consumers, with Oxfam assistance. In December 2006, CEDAC will organize a national rice fair to promote the many traditional rice varieties.

### **Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka, there are currently, between 5,000 and 10,000 farmers using SRI to grow rice both for food and for seed. Sri Lanka is home to more than 2000 traditional varieties of rice. Sri Lankan rice farmers are comparatively poorly organised for marketing purposes.

Gamini Batuwitage, the head of a World Bank-funded Gemi Diriya program aimed at reducing poverty in 5,000 Sri Lankan villages, and H. M. Premarathna, an organic farmer-leader and SRI trainer, have recently made efforts to remedy this situation. In the summer of 2005, they created SRI Eco Friends, a loose network that brings together approximately 5,000 SRI farmers with a view to building marketing opportunities.

In Sri Lanka, SRI rice is currently sold on the village level, and some small amounts are marketed to Europe through an organic trading

company, BioFoods. The focus of the Sri Lankan marketing activities is building up independent national marketing channels to avoid exploitation through traders. CAA/Oxfam Australia has supported these efforts by providing parboiling facilities, a high quality processing mill, and a vacuum packing machine. Efforts to further market SRI rice have been hampered by the poor organisation of SRI farmers and the absence of an experienced marketing coordinator. Also, the December 2004 tsunami, which devastated Sri Lanka, has significantly slowed work.

## CREATING THE PARTNERSHIP

In these and in other countries, the spread and adoption of SRI is largely a grass-roots movement. The Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture, and Development (CIIFAD) is the principal catalyst for research and development related to SRI, having first brought it to international attention in the late 1990s. CIIFAD's engagement has allowed organisations in various countries to exchange their experiences on using SRI. This was mainly done via the internet: A SRI website maintained by CIIFAD provides information on SRI efforts in over 30 countries.<sup>5</sup> Occasionally, SRI practitioners and researchers have been able to meet in person, for example at an international SRI assessment conference in China in April 2002.

In a number of countries using SRI methods, farmers have begun harvesting surpluses that exceeded quantities that could be eaten at home or sold to neighbours and local communities. In some countries,

<sup>5</sup> <http://ciifad.cornell.edu/sri/>

facilities to process, package, transport, and sell rice in national and even international markets are in place.

However, what is absent is a central coordination and market development capacity that could help the production-oriented, farmer-based organizations in the different countries tap into new markets. As SRI spread, with yield increases confirmed in many countries, this need became more apparent.

On learning about the SEED Awards, CIIFAD decided to bring together a number of farmer-based organisations to create an informal partnership for marketing SRI rice. "The national partners' strengths related to rice production and farmer-training," says Norman Uphoff, then director of CIIFAD. "They did not have much marketing expertise, and the SEED Award was an opportunity to get support for strengthening a network that would enable partners to build up and share marketing know how, to jointly approach donors for marketing support, and eventually to collaborate in marketing SRI rice internationally."

Such a self-held network could have the additional effect of encouraging collaboration among farmers in poor countries, in turn improving their livelihoods and generating incentives for further farmers to take up SRI.

CIIFAD recruited its partner organisations in Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Cambodia for the effort, because these organisations had reached a production level required for larger-scale sales and marketing and had already demonstrated some experience in

marketing SRI rice. Further, in the three countries, SRI farmers are organised in some way or are represented by an organisation with extensive grassroots contacts. For example, an initial proposal to include the Philippines in the initiative was abandoned (for the time being) due to the absence of a representative organisation.

In collaboration with the partners in Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Cambodia, Norman Uphoff and Olivia Vent, a Cornell colleague who had been urging CIIFAD to play a more active role in marketing, drew up a proposal for a Marketing Partnership for SRI Rice, which was submitted to the SEED Awards. The SRI Rice Marketing Partnership has as its mission to improve the environment and the livelihoods of SRI farmers by providing them with marketing channels to sell their rice at a fair price, both domestically and internationally. The planned activities are to:

- develop national marketing strategies for domestic markets in the participating countries
- build a community of practice among the partners in order to exchange marketing knowledge and access to resources, information, and partners
- create, in the medium term, a common international marketing infrastructure, including a common name, logo, and communications materials in order to develop international markets
- promote the network and its products externally, e.g. at conferences and trade fairs, with retailers and potential partners.

CIIFAD's role is to coordinate the marketing activities of the partners in the three countries, to investigate international marketing opportunities and build the central marketing infrastructure, including communication material and research into the environmental and nutritional benefits that SRI rice offers.

## **DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP**

The partnership has set up a mailing list that facilitates communication among the three partner organisations, CIIFAD, and others interested in SRI marketing issues. Through this, the partners share progress reports on marketing and selling SRI rice and exchange ideas about possible marketing efforts.

One idea has been to convene an international workshop on SRI rice marketing and export. This would bring together farmer organizations from Cambodia, Madagascar, and Sri Lanka, and private sector stakeholders from rice-importing countries (e.g. Whole Foods, Lotus Foods, Alter Eco, Trans Fair), as well as representatives from donor organisations. The workshop's aim would be to evaluate current marketing practices, to explore how to best pool resources, and to set out practical collaborative steps. A possible outcome of the workshop would be the formal establishment of a consortium of interested donors.

There have also been first efforts to market SRI rice internationally: The SRI Marketing Partnership presented information about SRI rice and its objectives at the 3rd World Environmental Congress in Bangkok (2004) and the European Forum on

Agricultural Research and Development in Zurich (2005). A representative also attended the natural products trade fair, Expo East, in 2005, making contacts with potential buyers.

In October 2006, SwissRe, a corporate sponsor of SEED, organised a special luncheon showcasing Malagasy SRI rice to representatives from the major Swiss grocery chain Migros, the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC), the Swiss development NGO Intercooperation, the a fair trade organisation Max Havelaar, and Slow Foods. The event generated substantial interest in SRI rice and has resulted in sales to SwissRe and the Zurich Zoo. Contacts with a U.S. distributor of exotic rices, Lotus Foods, were also made at the 2005 Natural Products Expo East, and the relationship is evolving.

Yet, progress in realising marketing ideas and capitalizing on existent synergies has been slow. Lack of human resources, both in terms of available time, capacity and expertise, is the main constraint for the development of the initiative. Necessary activities, such as contacting potential buyers, participating at trade shows, developing attractive print and web materials, arranging for the shipment and distribution of samples, or gathering concrete data from partners, involve coordination and money.

The heads of the field-partner organisations have little time next to their regular jobs to devote to marketing efforts. "I am also project director of the Gemi Diriya project, a World Bank-funded project aimed at reducing poverty in 5000 Sri Lankan

villages," says Gamini Batuwitage of SRI Eco Friends. "That leaves me with less time for the SRI Marketing Initiative than I'd like."

At present, only the Koloharena Association in Madagascar has an employee who is responsible for marketing. At CIIFAD, Olivia Vent has been coordinating the SRI marketing partnership activities on a volunteer basis. Moreover, efficient virtual collaboration is hampered by a lack of personal relationship between the partners. So far, the key members of the initiative have not had the chance to meet in person.

The complexity and cost of certifying rice as organic or "fair trade" for export is a further challenge to the partnership. None of the three countries has an existing national standard for organic agriculture. Member organisations in the three partner countries would have to put their own quality control systems into place and possibly engage in third-party inspection in the future. Cambodia is moving in this direction and Madagascar has an eco-label that could be potentially used for SRI rice.

The absence of standards means that the countries do not have accredited national certification agencies. As a result, the partners would have to rely on more costly international agents for organic certification. The cost of certifying just one farmer's group and their mill in Waragapola (Sri Lanka) by SKAL, the only agency offering international certification in Sri Lanka, would amount to at least US\$1,500. Certification of producers in two provinces, their mills, and their export agencies in Cambodia

through the GTZ would cost around US\$10,000.

Fair trade certification is slightly simpler, as labelling organisations are more willing to help farmers' organisations with the progress. The Kolohorenas in Madagascar made some first contacts with Max Havelaar and AlterEco France, yet here too costs are an impediment: Initial certification costs are 2,000 Euro for organisations with less than 500 members and 3,600 Euro or more for organisations with more than 1,000 members. The certificate has to be renewed every year at a price of 500 Euro plus 0.45% of the FOB product value.

In June 2005, the Seed Initiative enabled CIIFAD and the partnership to enlist the services of a management consultant, Christina Gradl, from the strategy consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Christina Gradl spent three months in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Madagascar evaluating the partners' capacity to market SRI rice, after a week of intensive meetings with CIIFAD staff and others at Cornell University.

"In general," Christina Gradl found, "all facilities are in place in the three countries to produce, process, package, transport and sell the rice in satisfactory quantity and quality. Yet, a large amount of coordination effort is still needed as well as sufficient business knowledge. Thus, the lack of human resources to support the marketing initiative and the lack of marketing and business knowledge are the major constraints for a successful implementation of the program."

Gradl's final Marketing Strategy paper proposes that the partners first

on building up national marketing initiatives as urban markets for healthy food are emerging rapidly in all three countries. For example, in Madagascar, rice prices are already very good (though there is no premium market for organic rice) and the Kolohorenas should use their existing contacts and experience to establish direct with supermarkets. Partners in the three countries (and more in the future) should support each other in these efforts through a "knowledge network".

Once such infrastructure is in place, the organizations can focus on building a marketing strategy to approach international markets. Existing opportunities for export sales should be used and expanded step by step.

Another recommendation was the creation of a SRI rice brand, including a brand name, logo, and information material. The brand would help importers or consumers to identify indigenous rice varieties that are produced using eco-friendly SRI methods and fair-trade principles. Under this "umbrella label," the producing organizations would still be able to create distinct products. A website should provide information on available rice varieties to potential purchasers. In the future, the website could potentially be expanded to allow "e-trading", allowing rice to be purchased online. A mock-up website has since been created by Darian Stibbe of the Seed Initiative.

In establishing national and international marketing strategies, partners should also draw on the expertise of those development agencies already supporting SRI in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and

Madagascar. For example, Oxfam has assisted CEDAC to establish an outlet that sells eco-friendly SRI rice and other agricultural products to consumers in Phnom Penh.

Interest in marketing issues is growing among the donors currently supporting SRI production and extension in the partner countries. For example, in Madagascar, BAMEX has hired a U.S. consultant, who will be available to help with international rice marketing. It is hoped that this will improve the partners' ability to respond to buyer interest and tackle some of the many challenges such as fair trade certification, quality control, packaging, and transport. It may also enable the partners to support a central coordination function that focuses on services required by all of the partners to promote international marketing.

Many of the development agencies currently supporting SRI in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar have considerable knowledge about agricultural marketing and export, which the partnership needs to draw on. Oxfam, a contact in Sri Lanka, is an expert on fair trade issues. Chemonics, which leads the USAID-funded BAMEX project in Madagascar, is working with the Rutgers Business School to set up quality control labs for high-value products; knowledge which might be applied to guarantee quality standards of SRI rice. GTZ, a partner in Cambodia, has staff knowledgeable in agro-enterprise. JICA, which supports the CEDAC office in Phnom Penh, has expertise in organic agriculture and certification.

Further plans include holding a partnership workshop in the near

future. This would bring together the partners to discuss priorities, and donors and potential buyers could also be invited to attend. In 2006, the partnership would like to present itself at an international food fair (TerraMadre Slow Foods Fair), in order to facilitate joint export projects.

Whether the partners can realise the goals set forth in the Marketing Strategy paper largely depends on adequate funding and human resources. "We continue to work collaboratively but it's difficult to be pro-active without at least a small budget", says Olivia Vent. To provide some start-up funds and leverage other support, Swiss Re (a capital risk management firm and Seed supporter) and the Seed Initiative have agreed to pay for part-time coordination of the partnership for six months. This position will be assumed by Olivia Vent of CIIFAD. Her efforts make it possible to begin implementing some of the recommendations in the Marketing Strategy paper.

## **PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE**

### **Structures**

At present, the SRI Rice Marketing Partnership is not constituted as a legal organisation. The individual national partner organisations, which are already legal entities (except in the case of Sri Lanka), can sign individual contracts for export projects. Steps are being taken to get the Sri Lankan organization registered. In the medium run, it may be beneficial to incorporate the operational network as a non-for-profit organization, to allow the initiative as a whole to receive donations and enter into contracts.

## Procedures

Partners have been communicating by email and by means of the CIIFAD's SRI rice website, with CIIFAD doing much of the coordination. The commitment and contacts between the heads of the Kolohorena Association, CEDAC, Sri Eco Friends and Olivia Vent and Norman Uphoff at CIIFAD are crucial factors in driving the initiative. Christina Gradl also continues to play an important role even though her consulting assignment has been completed. This informal structure has many benefits, because it allows partners to pursue mutual learning while they continue the ongoing activities in their respective organisations.

In order to drive the national marketing efforts and to approach international purchasers, however, it will be necessary to formalise the partnership, especially with regard to the working teams. For example, each country will have to clearly define a contact person responsible for the marketing initiative. This person's task would be to communicate and coordinate with the marketing network, linking international efforts with national marketing projects, coordinate export projects, and represent the network in the country and at international events.

## Finances

The SRI Rice Marketing Partnership does not currently receive any funding as a partnership, with the exception of Seed and Swiss Re funding for Olivia Vent's position as network coordinator for a duration of six months (part-time). It had been particularly difficult to attract funding

for such a U.S.-based position, as most development donors will not or aren't interested in financing a US-based position. The individual partner organisations receive funding from various international donors (USAID, GTZ, etc.), and more of these funds are expected to be designated for marketing in the near future. CIIFAD has only modest funds that it can use to support research and evaluation of SRI around the world. Some research into the nutritional qualities of SRI rice is a priority.

Within Cambodia, funds are already being generated from the sale of 'natural' SRI rice that should within four years make that operation fully self-sustaining. Similar opportunities exist in Madagascar. No financial support is available in Sri Lanka and no revenues have been generated for the national network so far.

Based on the Marketing Strategy paper, the partnership should seek a grant of US\$ 85,000 from international donors to launch its marketing efforts over a period of twelve months. This funding would cover the salary of the part-time network coordinator for a further period of time (US\$36,000), the network development workshop (US\$25,100), presentation of the SRI rice products at a major international food fair (US\$12,500) as well as brand and website development activities and the production of information material.

There are several possible sources of funding: Initial funding might come from a consortium of donors, which would provide a start-up grant for 3 to 5 years on a pilot basis. This would allow the Marketing Initiative to develop a clearer sense of

direction and strategy, to assemble a small group of core staff and a larger group of external consultants, working together to plan and meet country-specific and overarching needs and objectives.

In the future, the international activities of the network should be financed sustainably, through revenues of rice exports. Another option is to charge membership fee for participating in the marketing partnership (as trade associations do). Alternatively, a not-for-profit business component could be created to support centralised services (e.g. charging a small fee for rice exports facilitated by the marketing network).

## **DEFINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS**

The SRI Rice Marketing Partnership aims at promoting SRI rice production, marketing, and sales and to meet both the demands of wholesalers in producing countries and importers in developed countries. One key measure of the initiative's success are the rice sales generated through its activities in terms of revenues for the farmers. A second important indicator is the

conversion of traditional farmers to SRI practices.

The SRI Rice Marketing Strategy Paper creates a schedule of partnership activities to institutionalize these efforts. This includes creating a brand name, a logo, information material, and website, as well as carrying out the first export activities. As part-time partnership coordinator, Olivia Vent will pursue these activities for at least six months in an effort to establish the benefits of the partnership.

Once the partnership has demonstrated its value and has succeeded in facilitating rice sales nationally and internationally, the partnership will invite SRI organisations in other countries to join. SRI organisations in the Philippines, Nepal, India, and Indonesia have already indicated readiness to join. Marketing prospects in all four of these countries are promising: In Indonesia, for example, there is already a network of 3,000 farmers producing organic SRI rice, which is being sold locally for twice the price for standard rice.

*(Information as of April 2006)*

## About GPPi

The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) is an independent, non-profit think tank located in Berlin focusing on global governance. We receive project funding from foundations as well as our project partners from the public and private sectors.

GPPi engages in three lines of work:

**Research.** GPPi explores new approaches to effective and accountable governance. Our topics include the reform of international organizations and public-private partnerships.

**Consulting.** GPPi advises governments, international organizations, foundations, NGOs, and companies. We assist them in developing effective strategies for operating in the new governance environment.

**Debate.** GPPi engages the broader public in a debate on new governance approaches through workshops, conferences, and publications.

For more information about our work, please visit our website at [www.gppi.net](http://www.gppi.net).

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## About the Seed Initiative

The Seed Initiative (Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development) is a global network for action on sustainable development partnerships. The Initiative aims to inspire, promote and develop the capacity of locally driven entrepreneurial partnerships that contribute to the agreed goals contained in the Millennium Declaration (MD) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

The Seed Initiative responds to the challenges that many sustainable development partnerships face, including the need for both technical and financial support in the early stages of developing and building partnership until it enters into implementation, a need to focus on the wide variety of small initiatives, driven by local actors, in addition to large-scale partnerships, and the need for effective "communities of practice and knowledge" that allow mutual learning, support and collaboration.

In order to accomplish its goal, the Seed Initiative has chosen three main areas of focus:

- Promote partnerships (through a biennial international award scheme; events and publications): Encourage small scale partnerships that exist on the ground and that directly benefit local communities; mobilize collective action that provides practical interventions in environmental, social and economic development in developing countries; and demonstrate that the wide variety of small partnerships driven by local actors make a positive contribution to sustainable development;
- Support nascent partnerships (through offering tailor-made support services for winners of the Seed Awards): Deliver bottom-up demand driven partnership support by

responding strategically to the need of locally driven partnerships for technical and financial support in early stages of development, mitigating the potential risk of failure;

- Increase the understanding of partnerships (through research activities and developing learning tools): Capture, profile and disseminate information on exemplary partnerships that could be used for sustainable development elsewhere; advocate the need for effective communities of practice and knowledge that allow mutual learning, support and collaboration; and integrate best practice examples of successful local partnerships into high level decision making processes.

The Seed Initiative delivers these actions through a lean operational structure that aims to deliver this focus by coordinating and partnering with likeminded organizations and networks that are delivering - or are willing to engage in - promoting, supporting and understanding of sustainable development partnerships.

Since its launch in January 2004, the Initiative has broken ground in revealing the wealth of entrepreneurial partnership activity taking place on the ground. During the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) of the United Nations in New York held during April 2005, five winners were announced that were selected by an international jury to be the recipients of the first cycle of Seed Awards, awarded biennially by the Seed Initiative. The award scheme provides dedicated institutional capacity and support to partnerships in the alpha stage of development - focusing on maximizing the opportunity for these partnerships to succeed during the more difficult development and early implementation phases.

Furthermore, it has effectively publicized the partnership approach to sustainable development, given advice to over seventy new partnerships and extensive support to twelve, supported five

winning partnerships on the ground and engaged in a cutting-edge programme of research and learning to track the evolution of new partnerships to assist both policy makers and practitioners.

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#### Supporting Organizations and Members of the Board:

The governments of Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, the UK, the US; and Swiss Re.