



SEAMEO SEARCA

ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2024-2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture

www.searca.org



Executive Summary

Fiscal year 2024/2025 was the capstone of SEAMEO SEARCA's 11th Five-Year Plan, which aimed to **elevate the quality of life of agricultural families through sustainable and resilient livelihoods and access to modern networks and innovative markets**. In strong alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and focused on **Accelerating Transformation Through Agricultural Innovation (ATTAIN)**, SEAMEO SEARCA's strategic approach was anchored on three core programs: **Education and Collective Learning, Research and Thought Leadership, and Emerging Innovation for Growth**. These programs were designed to target seven priority areas and propel coordinated action to deliver five transformative outcomes: 1) Stakeholders embodying mindset transitions; 2) Enabling policies and regulatory frameworks supporting ARD at the local, national, regional, and international levels; 3) Wider access to innovative products and services and business models for increased productivity and income; 4) Increased investment in the agriculture and rural sector; and 5) Food and nutrition security from a range of choices ensuring well-being in an evolving lifestyle.

172 scholarships managed

Education and Collective Learning

In FY 2024/2025, SEAMEO SEARCA awarded 27 new **graduate scholarships** covering a wide range of disciplines from genetics and biochemistry to practical applications in agronomy, aquaculture, and food production alongside agribusiness, community health, and extension education. This year, SEAMEO SEARCA extended its scholarship program's reach to Liberia in support of its host government's commitment to inclusive development across the Global South. Altogether, in FY 2024/2025, the Center managed 172 graduate scholarships, 52 of which were completed during the year. In addition to these scholarships, **academic support grants** managed by the Center as secretariat of the **Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC)** and six new **Regional Professorial Chair Grants** nurtured the next generation of leaders in the agriculture and education sectors.

27 new scholarships awarded

6 Regional Professorial Chair grants



Furthermore, 27 **high-impact trainings and learning events** focused on the Center's priority areas upskilled 2,975 agriculture stakeholders across Southeast Asia during the fiscal year. These learning events included six hybrid sessions at the **Agriculture and Development Seminar Series (ADSS)** and three **SEARCA Online Learning and Virtual Engagement (SOLVE)** webinars. SEAMEO SEARCA scholarship alumni and training beneficiaries are now thought leaders in their respective countries, forming a vital and strategic part of the region's needed cadre of highly trained agriculture professionals.

27

regional and national learning events conducted

Research and Thought Leadership

During the fiscal year, SEAMEO SEARCA implemented 17 **collaborative research and technical assistance projects** that contributed to cutting-edge innovation, evidence-based policy, and value chain development to drive agricultural transformation. By promoting agricultural biotechnology, optimizing resource use, and deploying comprehensive educational frameworks, these initiatives fostered sustainable and inclusive agricultural systems to enhance nutrition security, expand economic opportunities, and reinforce governance in the sector. Through its **Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT)**, the Center also funded five new studies that investigated supply chain efficiency, climate resilience, socio-environmental factors, and livestock health in key Southeast Asian countries to advance sustainable and innovative agricultural practices across the region. Overall, SEAMEO SEARCA's strategic research projects were geared towards increasing agricultural competitiveness and fostering climate-smart and resilient agri-food systems in Southeast Asia.

17

research projects implemented

5

Seed Fund for Research and Training awarded

Emerging Innovation for Growth

SEAMEO SEARCA's agri-innovation framework combined open innovation and agri-incubation with targeted knowledge and technology transfer. Within this ecosystem, the Center's **Grants for Research towards Agricultural Innovative Solutions (GRAINS)** supported four agri-tech projects focused on nature-based methods, waste-to-resource systems, and youth-led innovations that aim to improve farm profitability and climate resilience. Through GRAINS and its work with two **social impact accelerators**, SEAMEO SEARCA moved agri-tech prototypes to commercialization and scalable deployment. At the same time, its **projects focused on renewable energy from agricultural waste, innovative farm equipment, and education in precision agri-robotics** rolled out resource-efficient agricultural solutions.

4

Grants for Research towards Agricultural Innovative Solutions (GRAINS) awarded

Knowledge Sharing

In FY 2024/2025, 46 SEAMEO SEARCA **publications**, including the **Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development (AJAD)**, broadcast research insights on sustainable agri-food systems and waste utilization; climate change adaptation and resilience in agriculture; food security, nutrition, and consumption; agricultural technologies and innovations; agricultural economics, policy, and value chains; biodiversity, genetics, and breeding; livestock and animal production; and innovation systems and capacity building. At the same time, 38 **research dissemination and travel grants** enabled agri-food system champions to amplify their findings globally. Moreover, 44 **conferences, workshops, and other knowledge events** convened by SEAMEO SEARCA, many in collaboration with partners, ignited local and region-wide dialogues across its seven priority areas—from smart value chains to climate resilience.

46 publications produced

38 grants for research dissemination awarded

Solid Resource Base

The dedication and proficiency of SEAMEO SEARCA's **staff, consultants, and Senior Fellows** were key to these accomplishments. The Center's success was empowered by the its robust foundation, built on **sound fiscal management and efficient procedures**, complemented by a growing **network of strategic partners** as evidenced by **34 formal agreements signed with 34 partners** (15 academe, 6 government, 9 industry/private sector, 4 international organizations). These new partnerships are primarily South-South alliances within Southeast Asia in addition to strong ties with institutions in France, Japan, South Korea, Spain, and Taiwan.

44 conferences, workshops, and other knowledge events convened

34 formal agreements signed with 34 partners



Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla (right), SEAMEO SEARCA Center Director, presents a miniature replica of the Growth Monument, to H.E. Sonexay Vannaxay, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Lao PDR to the Republic of the Philippines, during his visit to the Center on 15 April 2025. SEAMEO SEARCA's Growth Monument is a sculpture featuring 11 interlinked human figures on a square base, embodying regional unity and development.

Future Outlook

With a year of remarkable achievements in FY 2024/2025, SEAMEO SEARCA made tangible strides, gearing up to push forward **sustainable transformation of agricultural systems through innovation** to make Southeast Asia a region where agriculture is resilient, inclusive, and future-ready.