Many school children suffer from various forms of malnutrition. It is important to address their nutritional status given that it affects their health, cognition, and subsequently their educational achievement (Grantham-McGregor & Olney, 2006). Schools are recognized as excellent setting for promoting lifelong healthy eating and improving long-term, sustainable nutrition security. They play a vital role in the effort to overcome malnutrition and hunger among children, and school gardens are simple yet effective ways of improving nutrition and education of children and their families.

School gardens are linked to many functions and dimensions—education, home, school feeding and home and/or community food production. As such, school gardening is viewed as a viable, sustainable, comprehensive, and replicable approach as component of nutrition education. This is considered as a paradigm shift from institutional frameworks to one that has increased engagement of home and/or community in school activities and promotive of acquiring proper nutrition behavior.

Recognizing the benefits of school plus home gardens for improving nutrition, education and economic well-being of school children and their families, and the many working models and initiatives around the world, a knowledge sharing event is deemed timely and in order. Lessons can be drawn from this wealth of experience, recurring and emerging issues can be identified, and a common ground for addressing these issues especially in Southeast Asia can be developed. Scaling up/out strategies and elements of sustainability can be discussed towards improving the uptake of school gardens.

**RATIONALE**

The Conference aims to provide a venue for sharing the different models of school plus home gardens within and outside the Southeast Asian region, with emphasis on lessons, impacts, commonalities, strengths, diversity in methodologies, and issues and challenges. A better understanding will be fostered of how school gardens in different settings can help improve nutrition, education, and economic well-being of children, their families, and the communities they live in. Specifically, the Conference seeks to:

1. Present different models of school gardens including those with links to home gardens as these relate to improving education, nutrition and community participation;
2. Draw lessons from country experiences to inform scaling-up and sustainability strategies;
3. Identify pressing and emerging regional and global issues that impact on school plus home gardens and set a common ground for addressing these issues; and
4. Provide a set of recommendations and strategies for more effective use of school-based gardens leading towards better nutrition, education and economic well-being of school children, their families, and their communities.

**OBJECTIVES**

The Conference aims to provide a venue for sharing the different models of school plus home gardens within and outside the Southeast Asian region, with emphasis on lessons, impacts, commonalities, strengths, diversity in methodologies, and issues and challenges. A better understanding will be fostered of how school gardens in different settings can help improve nutrition, education, and economic well-being of children, their families, and the communities they live in. Specifically, the Conference seeks to:

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INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

Total of 80-100 participants from 11 SEA member states and SEAMEO Centers as follows:

- Training of Trainers (TOT) on Scaling up the School Plus Home Gardens Model in Southeast Asia participants
- Representatives from partner organizations
- School administrators and teachers from DepEd, Philippines and ministries of education across SEA
- Representatives from Local Government Units
- Other interested parties

PROGRAM

The three-day conference will cover the four major sessions on the first two days and a field trip on the third day. The sessions are as follows:

SESSION 1 will discuss the global and regional perspectives on the multi-functionality of school gardens.

SESSION 2 will be a panel discussion on the multiple dimensions of school gardens. Among these dimensions are the promotion of agrobiodiversity and increasing awareness of climate change, social relevance, available technologies and needed research, and the links between school gardens with homes and communities.

SESSION 3 will be presentations of selected country experiences in the implementation of school gardens in both Southeast Asia and beyond.

SESSION 4 will be a panel discussion on scaling up strategies and sustainability. This session will consider factors towards improving uptake of school gardens and elements that can contribute to their perpetuation.

A field trip is scheduled on the third day to relevant places/areas.

RESOURCE SPEAKERS

- Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)
- University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)
- International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR)
- Department of Education
- Food Security Center, University of Hohenheim (FSC)
- Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Secretariat (SEAMES)
- Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Tropical Biology (BIOTROP)
- Regional Centre for Food and Nutrition (RECFON)
- SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Center (SEAMOLEC)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- World Food Program (WFP)
- Selected schools and universities across Asia and beyond
- Local agencies working on school gardens and nutrition

PARTNERS

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