

PROJECT BRIEF

IFS-SEARCA Collaborative Research Grants Pilot in Southeast Asia

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia faces complex challenges amid emerging opportunities. Foremost of these are its continuously increasing population with increasing and changing food and nutrition needs coupled with decreasing land area available for agriculture and food production; water and natural resources constraints exacerbated by climate change and unpredictable weather patterns; periodic and unpredictable food shortages and price volatility; and lingering rural poverty. In the midst of these challenges is the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which started in 2015 and the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) that could potentially usher in regional supply chains inclusive of small-scale farms in rural areas. Addressing these challenges and opportunities requires policies and programs that are informed by science, which highlights the need for strong research capacity in the countries of Southeast Asia.

The International Foundation for Science (IFS) contributes towards strengthening the capacity of developing countries to conduct relevant and high quality research on the sustainable management of biological and water resources. In Southeast Asia, the developing countries that IFS serves include Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. IFS provides support to scientists in their early careers to pursue high quality research on relevant problems of their countries within the three thematic clusters of biological resources in terrestrial systems; water and aquatic resources; and food security, dietary diversity, and healthy livelihoods.

Meanwhile, the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) works to strengthen institutional capacities toward inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development (ISARD) in Southeast Asia through graduate education, research and development, and knowledge management. Its priority themes include social inclusion and environmental sustainability focused on climate change adaptation and resiliency, and natural resources management.

Given their aligned themes on food and nutrition security and environmental sustainability, and a shared desire to strengthen their respective parallel efforts in building research capacities in Southeast Asia, IFS and SEARCA have agreed to jointly implement the **IFS-SEARCA Collaborative Research Grants Pilot** in Southeast Asia.

The IFS-SEARCA partnership commenced on 1 August 2015 and will run until 31 December 2019.

OBJECTIVES

The IFS-SEARCA partnership aims to strengthen research capacity in food and nutrition security and environmental sustainability toward inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia.

Specifically, this collaborative research grants approach is expected to strengthen collaborative research capacity of young researchers and scientists in the field of Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (CChAM) as it relates to agriculture and rural development in the region.



ABOUT SEARCA

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) is one of the 21 regional centers of excellence of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Founded on 27 November 1966, SEARCA is mandated to strengthen institutional capacities in agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia through graduate scholarship, research and development, and knowledge management. It serves 11 SEAMEO member countries, namely: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. SEARCA is hosted by the Government of the Philippines on the campus of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in Laguna, Philippines. It is supported by donations from SEAMEO member and associate member states, other governments, and various international donor agencies.

ABOUT IFS

The International Foundation for Science (IFS) is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to supporting and empowering young scientists in the developing world. It provides competitive research grants on biological, water and energy resources to individual scientists and to those collaborating in small teams. In addition, IFS helps to build capacity to apply for research funds, conduct research and report science. IFS comprises a Secretariat supported by a Board of Trustees and a growing alumni network, and draws on 1,400 experienced Scientific Advisers who rigorously review each research proposal and provide their feedback to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

CONTACT SEARCA

Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture

College, Los Baños
Laguna 4031, Philippines
Phone: +63-49-536-3459
Fax: +63-49-536-2283
Email: post@searca.org

RESEARCH THEMES

The pilot project is focused on research on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (CChAM), which is based on the ***Umbrella Program on CChAM for Southeast Asia*** developed by SEARCA and partner institutions in consultation with other stakeholders in the region. In particular, the priority thematic areas of the grant are:

- Assessing climate change impacts and risks for policies, plans, and investments;
- Advancing low-carbon agricultural and rural development;
- Enhancing pro-active adaptation to climate change variability and extremes;
- Enabling policies and governance for climate-resilient agricultural and rural communities.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Considered eligible for the grant were young scientists from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam with a Masters or PhD degree (or equivalent academic degree); attached to a university, national research institution, or a research-oriented NGO; willing to undertake research on CChAM; and not more than 35 years of age for men and 40 years of age for women (for first time applicants).

PROPOSALS, GRANT APPLICATIONS, AND REVIEW PROCESS

Eligible scientists who expressed their interest were invited to an IFS social networking platform to interact with other prospective applicants and form research teams of three to five individuals each, decide on their research topics, and develop proposals aimed at providing science-based solutions to current issues and concerns in climate change adaptation and mitigation. The proposals were subjected to rigorous review by an international Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). Grant administration and research implementation have started in May 2017.

STATUS OF THE PROJECT

Eighteen (18) collaborative research teams progressed beyond the pre-screening stage of the review process and participated in a capacity building workshop hosted by SEARCA.

The Workshop on Collaborative Research, which was jointly organized by IFS and SEARCA, took place from 30 August to 1 September 2016 at SEARCA, Los Baños, Laguna, involving 55 of the 64 eligible scientists and researchers from eight Southeast Asian countries, with six mentors from the first and second pilots of the IFS collaborative research grants program in Africa.

The 18 research teams submitted their improved proposals in September 2016. After the rigorous review by the SAC, 12 teams were awarded with the grant and are now implementing their respective collaborative research.

Mentors, subject matter experts, and those well-versed in collaborative research were shortlisted and are available to the teams for consultation in the course of the actual research and project implementation.

For more details about the Collaborative Research Grants, please visit: <http://ifs.se/ifs-programme/collaborative-research-approach.html>

For details of the SEARCA Umbrella Program on CChAM, please follow this link: <http://www.searca.org/phocadownload/brochures/climate-change-adaptation-andmitigation-umbrella-program.pdf>