



Sesame

Value Chains for Rural Development in Burma

The **USAID-funded** Value Chains for Rural Development project (VC-RD) integrates smallholders and poor rural households into competitive commercial value chains to increase productivity and achieve inclusive agricultural growth. The five-year project (2014-2019) is part of **Feed the Future**, the U.S. Government's global food security initiative.

Strengthening the Sesame Value Chain in the Central Dry Zone (CDZ) — Strategy:

The project's strategy in the sesame value chain is two-fold. First, the project supports improved productivity and quality of raw sesame with the goal of increasing the quantity and price of sesame consumed domestically or exported. Secondly, VC-RD works with private sector firms to explore diverse, high-quality export markets. The project collaborates with an established community-based organization, Sustainable Action for Rural Advancement (SARA) through an Innovative Grant to reach smallholders growing sesame, helping overcome constraints, improve yields and link to new markets to inclusively improve rural livelihoods.

Producers and Target Areas:

Burma is among the world's largest producers of sesame, with about 15% of global production. The Magway region in CDZ is the country's biggest producer. Approximately 45,000 smallholder farmers in VC-RD target areas of Magway possess 3-5 acres of land each. VC-RD and local partner, SARA, are targeting 3,100 sesame-producing smallholders in townships including Magway, Natmauk and Taungdwingyi — those with the highest production in the region. In all, VC-RD and SARA are targeting direct support for a total of 12,000 sesame farmers by the end of the project in 2019.

Sesame Production — Constraints:

Despite high production numbers, sesame farming in Burma is not always profitable for smallholders. Producers profit (on average) only once every three years, leading to increased debt and reduced incomes. Con-

tributing factors include:

- Lack of updated cultivation methods and mechanized technology
- Lack of quality control and standardized practices
- High post-harvest losses and vulnerability to climate changes
- Low quality and production quantity of sesame yield
- Poor management of pest control and soil depletion.

Producer-Level — Innovations and Actions:

- Improving quality of seeds through multiplication
- Developing improved production protocols and capacity building of farmers and local agronomists
- Introducing new production-enhancing technologies and small mechanized machinery and tools
- Training on Good Agricultural Practices, Integrated Pest Management, and soil conservation
- Training on ideal harvest timing and post-harvest handling and storage.

(These actions are supported by SARA's program/field team in CDZ with assistance from TAG International and VC-RD's technical/field and private sector teams.)

Off-Farm Level — Innovations and Actions:

- Improve bargaining power of smallholders through finance and business training
- Improve collective bargaining via access to new marketing platforms
- Create new opportunities for women's leadership and decision-making
- Develop market linkages with global and domestic buyers of sesame products



- Upgrade sesame processing to meet EU/US/Japan demand and capture high value – (possibly for organic)
- Collaborate with partners on food quality lab testing
- Support investment in improved oil processing and refining.

(These actions are supported by SARA/TAG, the VC-RD private sector team, and SARA/Tag with involvement from Burma-based lead firms such as Organic AgroLand (sesame trader/processor); SPSH Co., Ltd. and others..)

Expected Impacts

VC-RD awarded the SARA sub-grant to strengthen the sesame value chain in Year 2 (2016) of the project; since then, **more than 1,000 sesame farmers in 45 villages** in Magway, Natmauk and Taungdwingyi have received training on GAP, IPM, production of bio-fertilizers, good pollination practices, safe use of inputs and other important topics.

Expected LOP impacts include:

- Increase of sesame yields by 15% through introduction of improved technology/tools; irrigation; timing of harvesting; crop management; climate-adapted agriculture and integrated beekeeping
- Reduction in amount of sesame lost post-harvest by 25% through introduction of simple post-harvest solutions and training
- Increase in incremental sales of sesame by 20% facilitating direct linkages with domestic and international buyers and strengthening farmers' bargaining

position and business skills, with particular focus on women

- Improvement in smallholder climate resilience through increased awareness and access to information, including climate specific protocols on smarter soil and water management approaches and multi-cropping appropriate for changing climate patterns.

FAST FACT: 519,000 MT of sesame seed was produced from approximately 1.1 million hectares in Burma in 2014, making sesame the most widely grown and important oilseed in the country.



Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



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