

Pitch Perfect: The Starch Value Chain Conference

a #thaiRAIN Success Story



RAIN forecast across the region

The USDA-funded Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (#thaiRAIN) started building a reputation for its innovative methods. For example, to achieve the goal of promoting climate-smart innovation to 30,000 farmers, #thaiRAIN is focused on building effective business models and encouraging early adoption through existing supply chain actors. While it might have been easier to just give the technology directly to the farmers, #thaiRAIN's approach promises to have a more lasting impact.

As part of outreach efforts, #thaiRAIN is working to build regional connections for CSI dissemination as part of its 5th activity, Share. In August 2023, #thaiRAIN collaborated with the USDA-funded Creating Linkages for Expanded Agricultural Network (CLEAN) project, to introduce a Thai climate-smart innovation (CSI) for

early detection of cassava mosaic disease to the cassava sector in Lao PDR. This initial collaboration led the way to discussions on how #thaiRAIN can introduce more cassava focused CSI to Laos and across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Two USDA projects unite

Following this collaboration in August 2023, the two USDA-funded projects identified an opportunity for international exposure at the 12th Annual Starch Value Chain Asia Conference, which was being organized for February 2024 in Vientiane, Laos. This event would bring together industry leaders, researchers, and stakeholders in cassava and other starch value chains. Notable conference attendees included: Thai Wah (Thailand's largest exporter of tapioca), CGIAR (global research institution for agriculture), and Emlands Group (Germany's largest producer of potato starch and other refined starch products).

CLEAN and #thaiRAIN collaborated with the event organizer, Center for Management Technology, to support and shape the agenda. As a result, USDA Food for Progress, and the two projects, were highlighted as official sponsors and were responsible for organizing key components of the event. CLEAN facilitated a field trip to enable participants to see innovations at Lao's National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute and a high-quality starch factory facility. #thaiRAIN hosted an AgTech Pitch Event and Partner Roundtables

for eight CSi innovators from Thailand.

Linking Research to Private Sector

Two #thaiRAIN partners came to showcase their CSi. The National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), a Thai think-tank with a renowned capacity for the development of technology for industry, agriculture, natural resources, and the environment and Kasetsart University, celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, which produced generations of agricultural practitioners and policymakers focused on researching innovations for agriculture.

In #thaiRAIN's session each innovator from NSTDA and KU had the opportunity to present a five-minute overview ("pitch") of their CSi technology. After the presentations, RAIN hosted business roundtables for private sector partners to discuss opportunities for CSi scaling with the innovators.

To ensure that the presentations were concise and straightforward, #thaiRAIN worked with the researchers to prepare their pitches, making sure that each five-minute presentation was crisp and delivered a clear message. They explained why industrial leaders should be interested in their technologies, both scientifically and economically. In their sessions, the researchers captured the audience with their presentations. This was evident in the Q&A sessions for each presentation which covered a range of topics from costs to practical use to sustainability impacts.

"NSTDA has many innovations, but we rarely have as a great an opportunity to communicate directly to potential users," - Dr. Alongkorn Amnuaykanjanasin, Principal Researcher.

#thaiRAIN used Slido, an interactive app, to enhance the engagement of the participants with live questions and participant ranking. This, along with the short tech pitches and the subsequent business roundtable session, provided an enhancement from the traditional conference format. The result was improved interaction

among the participants, resulting in great feedback from business leaders to the researchers.

Leaving the mark as #thaiRAIN

The organizer expressed gratitude that the #thaiRAIN and CLEAN projects added new energy and interactivity to the dynamics of the conference.

"The Thai RAIN and CLEAN projects injected new energy and interactivity into the dynamics of the conference." - Li Ming, Regional Conference Director, Centre for Management Technology

This event provided an opportunity to gain experience in sharing relevant technologies with an international audience. As a result, #thaiRAIN and partner researchers are known actors in the cassava sector in the region. These events can contribute significantly to the final goal of the #thaiRAIN project: establishing a regional hub for climate-smart innovations.

FAST FACTS

RAIN IS FUNDED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD FOR PROGRESS PROGRAM, WITH PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE FROM 2022 – 2027.

THE 12TH STARCH VALUE CHAIN CONFERENCE 2024 WAS ORGANIZED BY THE CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY PTE. LTD. (CMT).

THE EVENT BOASTS OVER **100 PARTICIPANTS** FROM **OVER 20 COUNTRIES**. NOTABLE ATTENDEES INCLUDE;

- **LAOS:** MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, CGIAR RESEARCH CENTER, NATIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, LS TAPIOCA STARCH FACTORY 1, THE LAOS CASSAVA ASSOCIATION, LAO DEVELOPMENT BANK, SKY VISION, KT AGRICULTURE, GREENFEED LAO
- **THAILAND:** MITR PHOL GROUP, BIOTRIX ASIA, CONTROL UNION, THAI WAH PLC, INGREDION, SMS CORPORATION
- **INTERNATIONAL:** G. LARSSON STARCH TECHNOLOGY AB, COMMODITIA, SHIVANGAN FOOD & PHARMA PRODUCTS, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL SINGAPORE, SINO GERMAN TECHNOLOGY, BOSIDA STARCH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT