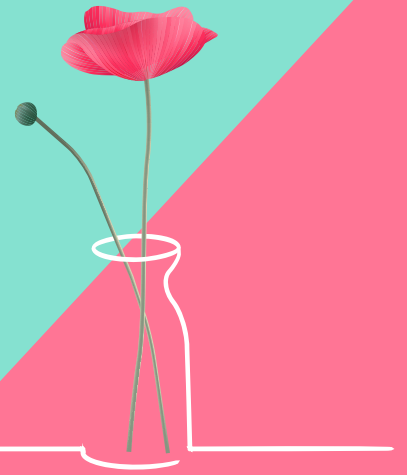


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AN E - MAGAZINE ON
RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE

Issue_02 April 2019

Inspiring Story

the breezing wind of change
is coming to thailand's rice field

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Inspiring Story

THE BREEZING WIND OF CHANGE IS COMING TO THAILAND'S RICE FIELD



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FROM THE EDITOR

I Salute You, all lady Farmers



It's long been said that farmers represent the backbone of Thailand. Both male and female farmers alike work so hard under the sun for so little return. The softer skins are no exception.

When I visited the field, I found out that the lady farmers work throughout the day in the rice field and do most of house chores. Raising children, cooking for all family members and taking care of husbands are also their daily tasks.

Yet, I still see their smiling faces. Duangjan Wichalin, Boonterm Luandee, Lampiang Suikong and Kannika Boonrod. These are the female farmers from Ubon Ratchathani and Roi Et provinces in Northeastern Thailand, whose beauty lie in their strong and tender hearts, who quietly and patiently put in the hard work to earn a living, improve lives and produce rice for the nation together with their male partners.

The female farmers - the wives, and the mother - faced a fear to make ends meet for the household while worrying about their children's future. In the mean times, through

their conventional farming methods they overspent on farming inputs. The backbone ladies knew they had to change.

As time goes by, they have gained skills and knowledge in responsible and sustainable farming to produce better rice and the result exceeded their expectations. Besides improvement in rice production, income, and well-being within the family, the lady farmers built up their confidence to inspire other farmers to follow suit.

We just celebrated International Women's Day on March 8 and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all female farmers for inspiring other women and proving that women can do anything (if) they want.

To all female farmers, I love and salute you.

Naylinya Chappanapong (Oh)

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Inspiring Story



It is less than a year since **Louke Koopmans**, Global Sustainable Sourcing Manager for Mars Food first visited Thung Kula Rong Hai or field of the crying Kula in Northeastern Thailand. Today, she is back again to meet farmers' groups and witness a change she does not expect.

"I see the power shifting. Farmers can make suggestion to the millers. Farmers are speaking up what they want and what their opinion are. It is a breakthrough moment," **Ms. Koopmans** told Agriculture and Food Cluster's communication team.

After seeing several sensitive issues are openly discussed between farmers and the millers during their meeting, **Ms. Koopmans** could feel the breezing wind of change is coming. **"Farmers' groups were very keen to hear that consumers are now interested to know where their rice is grown."**

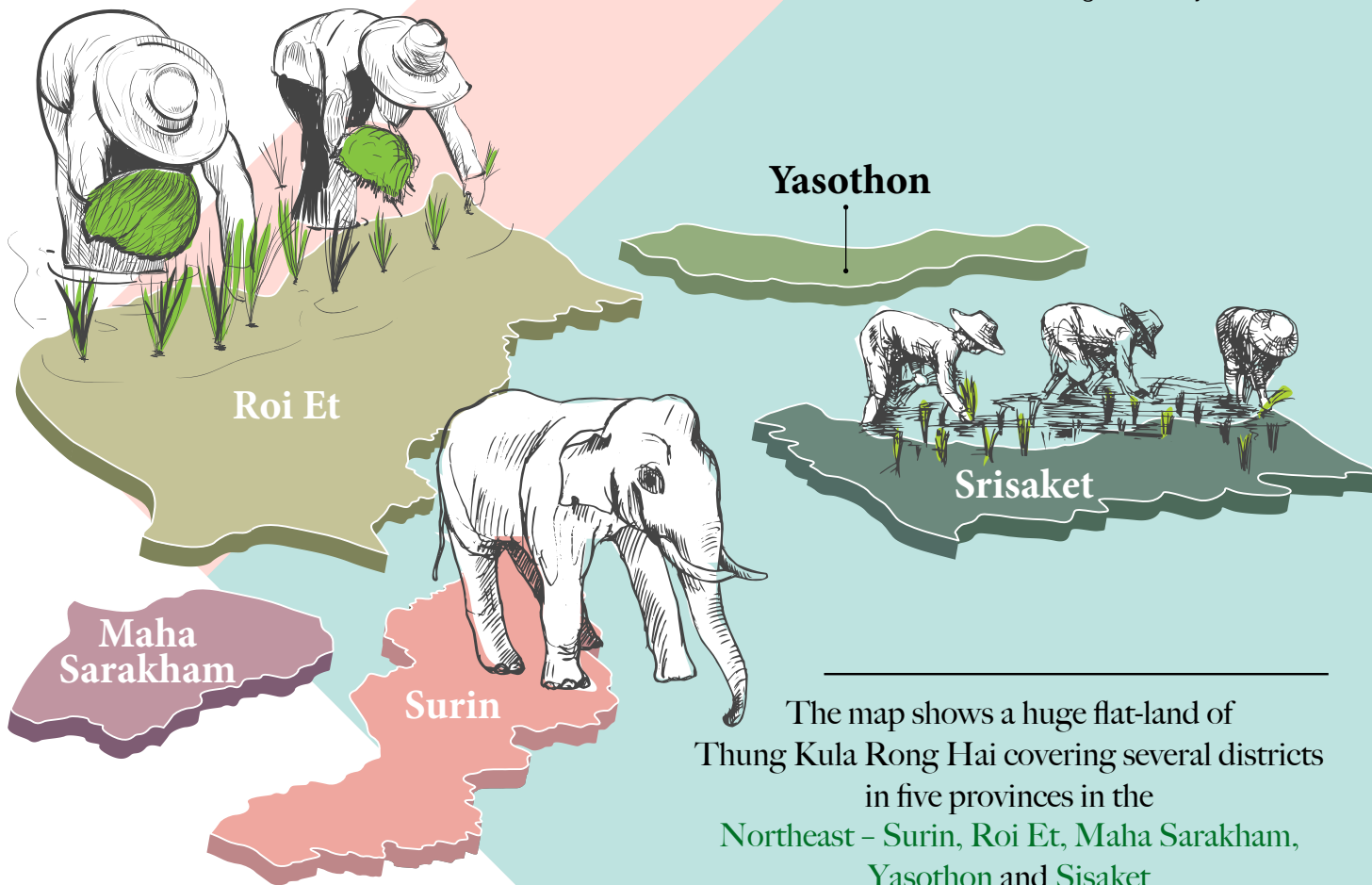
THE BREEZING WIND OF CHANGE IS COMING TO THAILAND'S RICE FIELD

Story and photos by : **Naylinya Chappanapong**, Senior Communication Officer and **Prangthong Jitcharoenkul**, Junior Communication Officer at Agriculture and Food Cluster, GIZ Thailand





Inspiring Story

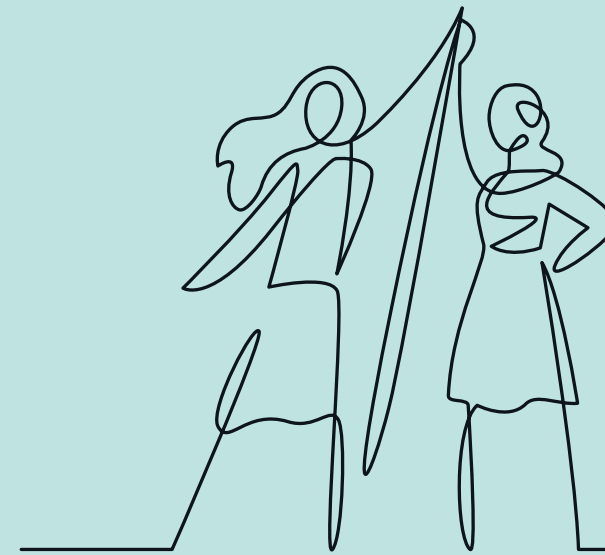


The map shows a huge flat-land of Thung Kula Rong Hai covering several districts in five provinces in the Northeast - Surin, Roi Et, Maha Sarakham, Yasothon and Sisaket with an area of about two million rai.

Thung Kula Rong Hai was once a desert-like land which stretches across several districts in five provinces in the Northeast - Surin, Roi Et, Maha Sarakham, Yasothon and Sisaket with an area of about two million rai. Today, this region has become Thailand's well-known source of growing Hom Mali rice.

Joining the field trip is also **Fatima Laffitte Solis**, Sustainability Manager at Herba Ricemills, who wants to see lives of farmers improve in all aspects.

After working with farmers in Thailand for a year, **Ms. Laffitte's** determination to help them survive climate change has only increased.



I am very happy to hear about this.



As extreme weather intensifies and so do the lives of farmers, Mars Food and Herba-Bangkok (Ebro Foods) team up with Thailand's Rice Department and German International Cooperation (GIZ) through a joint project called Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative (SARI) - Thailand to provide local farmers the skills and knowledge to develop high-quality and sustainable rice.

Unlike some other Asian countries where women working in the rice field do not get half the credit of the real work they do, Ms. Laffitte spoke with the village's female head and learned that roles of Thai women in the rice field here are not invisible and women's voices are central to decision-making on any matter.

"I am very happy to hear about this," Ms. Laffitte said.

Ms. Koopmans and **Ms. Laffitte** draw inspiration for staying focused on their works from the smiles of the hundreds of farmers their companies have been working with through the SARI - Thailand project, which was introduced to northern Thailand in July 2018.

Lives of farmers inspire them. And the two ladies hope Lives of farmers will inspire you too.



BETTER RICE
FOR BETTER LIFE

A thought

We're not alone in our planet



Around 7.7 billion people living on earth are consuming natural resources more than our earth can replenish. Unavoidably, rice is now facing a challenging time. Many have started to question how far rapidly depleting foods can keep next generations alive another day.

Just be reminded that there ain't no such thing as a free lunch. To have enough food on the table, we must invest in land, water and environment. Unfortunately, natural resources have been overused countless times and make climate change even worse.

But we are not alone in this fight.

We - Thailand's Rice Department, Olam, Mars Food, Herba Bangkok SL (Ebro Foods SA) and Livelihoods Funds, together with GIZ and many other partners - share our best people to build inclusive and sustainable rice value chains. Along these chains, every single player counts and adds values to friendly agricultural products and environment.

In 2019, many rice-related projects have entered the second year. The good results of collaborative works

bear fruit. We are happy that farmers can enjoy higher rice crops while production costs are slashed by adopting practices of the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) into their farms and selling their environmental-friendly rice.

We are also gladly delight that Mrs. Duangjan Wichalin, one of our farmers from the Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) project in Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand received the national award for the "yummiest non-glutinous rice" at the Thai Rice Festival December last year. The award has inspired other farmers in her community to produce rice more sustainably.

As the wet season is just around the corner, it's time for every one of us to regenerate sustainable rice farming in Thailand and everywhere else in the world.

Dr. Atthawit Watcharapongchai (Bank)
Project Director
Regenerative Rice Farming in Thailand
Better Rice Initiative Asia II - Thailand
Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative - Thailand

Wonder Women





"Farmers need to change farming practices because the world is changing. We need to apply what we learn from the training alongside our traditional cultivating methods."



Lampiang Suikong

38 years old

Suvarnabhumi district, Roi Et
Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative (SARI) - Thailand project

Lampiang has long overused fertilizer in her rice farming. She had misunderstood that, to boost rice production, a maximum amount of fertilizer is the easy way out. She never realized her practice was not the right solution until she joined the SARI - Thailand project and learned to apply appropriate fertilizer instead. Her rice yield jumped by 40% from 2017. Now, she lives happily with her family and enjoys producing rice of consistent quality and superior taste that she also eats.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/rice-farmers-from-kula-crying-field-smile-bigger/>

Boonterm Luandee

50 years old

Nayear district, Ubon Ratchathani
Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) project

Boonterm has grown rice for more than two decades but couldn't make any profit from it. She struggled to sell rice at a better price and was getting into more and more debt. Later, she chose to try different farming technics such as the so-called alternative wetting and drying with the support from the BRIA project. In the blink of an eye, she started to see positive changes in her rice farming and was able to sell her rice for good return.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/hom-mali-rice-farmers-in-northeastern-thailand-enjoy-sweet-smell-of-success/>



"Cost of rice production was slashed by half after I reduced use of fertilizer and pesticide. I was able to repay debt to the bank and save more money for my family."



Kannika Boonrod

52 years old

Suvarnabhumi district Roi Et
Sustainable Aromatic Rice Initiative (SARI) - Thailand project

Kannika is a farmer from childhood and a leader of one of eight villages in Suvanabhumi district, Roi Et province of Thailand, where the SARI - Thailand project is active. She couldn't be happier to see stronger cooperation among men and women in her community since the day the project arrived. Farmers in her community have gradually picked up skills to develop high-quality and sustainable Hom Mali rice without causing additional climbs in temperatures.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/rice-farmers-from-kula-crying-field-smile-bigger/>



"Nearly 100 percent of the participating farmers from her village are women. They work alongside men."



Duangjan Wichalin

55 years old

Samrong district, Ubon Ratchathani
Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) project

Duangchan is a leader of farmers' groups that works towards sustainable rice cultivation in Ubon Ratchathani province. She grew up with farming in her blood with a firm belief that conventional farming methods are the best. But when she took part in training course offered by the BRIA project, she started to have a broader spectrum of sustainability and saw learned that there are technologies that help to improve quality of rice and profitability. Her rice production is now twice the usual amount and her input costs are cut by 15%.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/hom-mali-rice-farmers-in-northeastern-thailand-enjoy-sweet-smell-of-success/>



"I bought more lands and I do not worry about education for my four children anymore because I have enough savings."



BRIA IN VIETNAM

RICE FARMERS IN VIETNAM GUARANTEED A MARKET SHARE IN SUSTAINABLE RICE PRODUCTION

Written by **Nguyen Ngoc Son**, project officer for Land and Agriculture, GIZ Vietnam
Photos by **GIZ Vietnam**

About 10,000 farmers with standardized rice in Vietnam will have their share in a global market through a joint project between public and private sectors.

“There will be promising markets where rice from Vietnamese farmers who work towards the SRP [Sustainable Rice Platform] standard will be introduced to the consumers,” said Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Tram from Olam International.

Olam International is one of the active private partners in the project called: Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA).

Through a joint initiative, about 50 potential trainers from four provinces - Can Tho, An Giang, Bac Lieu and Dong Thap - have been intensively trained to become master trainers to extend mentoring and transfer knowledge about the SRP standard which covered occupational health and safety to other trainers and farmers locally.

A recent training on topics related to the concept of SRP, which is the world's first sustainability standard for rice production, was given to the trainers under support of the Vietnamese Government.



02

“The SRP is a high standard of rice cultivation, so we should pay attention on each requirement, which reflects the current techniques of Vietnam's rice farming,” said **Mr. Le Quoc Cuong**, Director of Southern Regional Plant Protection Center, Plant Protection Department.

41 criteria of the standard are built around eight main goals which are improved productivity, food safety, effective use of water, nutrients and pesticide, biodiversity, community, greenhouse gas emission, labour rights and ethics.

In responding to market demand in Europe and the United States,

Mr. Tran Dinh Dung from the Department of Cooperative Economy and Rural Development emphasized the needs of



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the sustainable practices that will help Vietnamese rice farmers produce good quality rice.

As the impacts of climate change are expected to reduce yields and nutritional value of rice, hitting farmers particularly hard in regions such as Southeast Asia, shifting to climate-smart and sustainable rice farming practices is urgently needed and requires best cooperation between public and private sectors.

The training was organized between January 13-19 on Phu Quoc island in Kien Giang province.

The 50 trainers will later manage and deliver training to at least 10,000 rice farmers locally.

01. Master trainers discuss the different requirements of the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standard during a training held between January 13-19 on Phu Quoc island in Kien Giang province, Vietnam.
(Photo credit: GIZ Vietnam)

02. A plan for sustainable crops is openly discussed among the trainers.
(Photo credit: GIZ Vietnam)

03. Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Tram from Olam International gives the opening speech and introduces the Olam Farmer Information System (OFIS) to the participants.
(Photo credit: GIZ Vietnam)

04. About 50 master trainers are divided into four groups to practice the training with comments and advices provided by consultant team.
(Photo credit: GIZ Vietnam)



04

BRIA IN INDONESIA

NEVER TOO OLD TO STUDY RICE

Story by **Nurhayati Lubis**, Junior Professional for Public Relation, Monitoring and Evaluation GIZ Indonesia - Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) Project
Photos by **BRIA - Indonesia Team**

A 60-year-old farmer in Simalungun district, Indonesia thought it would be strange to return to school at her age and studied about rice. But with her curiosity and open mind, **Mrs. Rustaida** Sianturi from Simpang Pane village seems to enjoy it so far.

“At first, I was not interested in the farmer field school activities. I thought it might be weird for an old woman like me going to school, learning, and memorizing things again,” said **Mrs. Sianturi** from North Sumatra province.

“But then, I found out there are so many new things I didn't know, even though I had been farming for almost half of my life.”

Mrs. Sianturi is one of thousands of farmers in Simalungun district who attended the Farmer Field School (FFS) supported by Better Rice Initiative Asia (BRIA) project in making rice farming more sustainably. During the first planting season from December 2018 to March this year, she had participated in a series of classes.

In classes, field facilitators introduced the use of soil testing kits, selection of the right seeds and their treatment, integrated pest management, and an adaptation of Jajar Legowo planting system.



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01. Local farmers pose for a photo before they started planting the rice on the demo plot of the Farmer Field School (FFS) at Raja Maligas village, Indonesia in November 2018. (Photo credit: BRIA - Indonesia Team)

Jajar Legowo is a recommended cropping patterns that bridge between two or more rows of rice plants and one empty row. As a result, plants and production will be boosted, making it easier for farmers to apply fertilizer and control pests, diseases and weeds.

While **Mr. Modipa Siahaan**, 59, a farmer from Panambean Marjanji village said he had just realized that importance of seed selection and treatment when taking the classes.

“I am very happy I participated in this field school,” said **Mr. Siahaan**, also from Simalungun district.

Each school consists of at least 25 student farmers, including senior farmers, female farmers, young generation farmers, and community leaders. The class lasts for about two to three hours.

The student farmers meet periodically based on the growth of the rice plants in a demo plot. For instance, when it is time for fertilizing, the participants will meet to discuss and learn about fertilizing-related activities.

There will be 360 field school classes conducted within the next three years, benefiting at least 9,000 Indonesian farmers nationwide.

Through BRIA project, various generations of farmers in Simalungun district are changing the future of rice farming and themselves with their open mind and the welcoming of new sustainable rice farming practice and technology.

BRIA - Indonesia project is now on its second phase.

02. A group of local farmers test their soil nutrients and pH with the guidance from the field facilitator at Pematang Panombean village, Indonesia in January 2019.
(Photo credit: BRIA - Indonesia Team)

03. Female farmers learn to observe different kinds of pests and diseases that attacked their rice fields by identifying the symptoms during the class of the Farmer Field School (FFS) with the topic of integrated pest management at Simpang Pane village, Indonesia in January 2019.
(Photo credit: BRIA - Indonesia Team)



03

NEWS



01

NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF: A STEP TO MAKE LIFE FRIENDLIER FOR RICE FARMERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Natural disasters are unavoidable in several parts of Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, but with a recipe of local wisdom and new technologies and an additive of crop insurance, farmers will get recovered more quickly from loss for the next planting season.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/natural-disaster-relief-a-step-to-make-life-friendlier-for-rice-farmers-in-southeast-asia/>

03

THE SUSTAINABLE RICE PLATFORM CALLS FOR PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SECURE SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL RICE SUPPLY

Urgent action is needed to improve the sustainability of the world's rice supply, in the face of mounting impacts of climate change and water scarcity on the world's 144 million rice smallholder farmers.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/the-sustainable-rice-platform-calls-for-private-public-partnerships-to-secure-sustainable-global-rice-supply/>

02

THAI ROBUSTA COFFEE INDUSTRY CAN BE LESS BITTER BY HAVING COOPERATION HANDS FROM ALL PARTIES INVOLVED

In pushing Thailand to become one of Southeast Asia's major exporters of Robusta coffee, involved stakeholders in the industry have called for stronger collaboration among public and private sectors.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/thai-robusta-coffee-industry-can-be-less-bitter-by-having-cooperation-hands-from-all-parties-involved/>



04

INCENTIVE BONUSES MOTIVATE THAI FARMERS TO GROW TASTY AND EARTH-FRIENDLY RICE

Incentive bonuses totaling more than 300,000 baht (or about 8,000 euros) have put a smile on the face of more than 400 farmers.

<https://www.asean-agrifood.org/incentive-bonuses-motivate-thai-farmers-to-grow-tasty-and-earth-friendly-rice/>

Contributors



**Nguyen Ngoc Son
(Son)**

*Project Officer for Land use and Agriculture
GIZ Vietnam Agriculture team*

With passion for green landscape, rice fields and nature, Son has worked for the agriculture development in the Mekong Delta at GIZ Vietnam for more than 4 years since 2015.

The sustainable agriculture sector is an important field that is supported by Land use and our agriculture team. He was responsible for the Integrated Pest Management between 2015-2017 and is right now working hard for the Better Rice Initiative in Asia Phase II project that encourages sustainable rice farming in Vietnam.



**Nurhayati Lubis
(Nunk)**

*Junior Professional for Public Relation, Monitoring and Evaluation
at GIZ Indonesia - BRIA II Project*

Truly a newcomer in writing world. Used to be a field and admin staff for almost 18 years at several INGOs projects - EU Leuser Management Unit, JICA, USAID, and GIZ in Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Always eager to expand her knowledge on new and challenging issues. Love spend most of her spare time travelling with her children and actively involve on social activities taking care of kids with cancer.



**Naylinya Chappanapong
(Oh)**

*Senior Communication Officer
for Agriculture and Food
at GIZ Thailand*

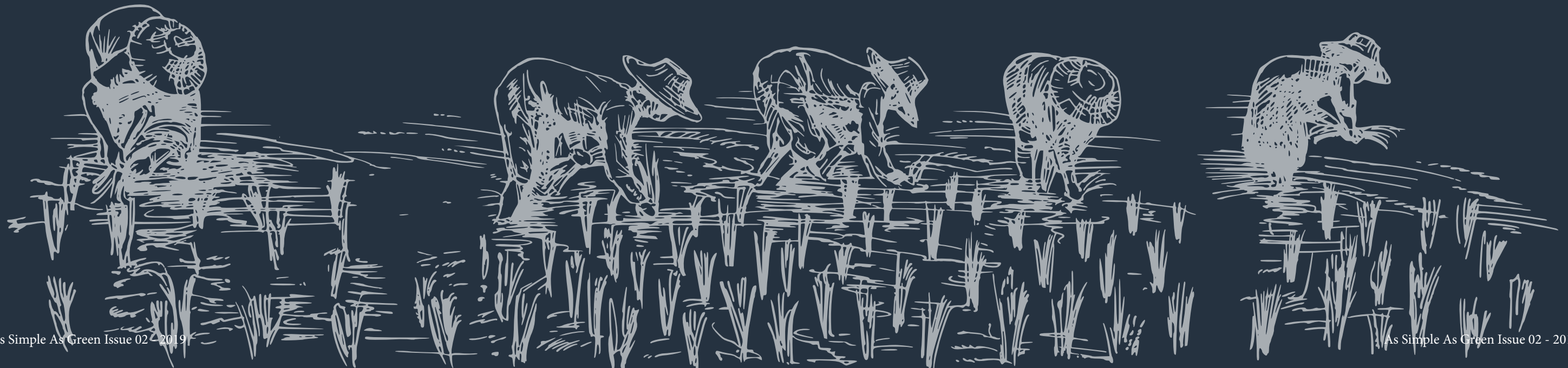
Spent several years in creative communication and fundraising at different leading organizations - Oxfam, Habitat for Humanity Thailand, Plan International Thailand, and Action Aid Thailand. Nothing satisfies her more than creating new activities for the cluster, contributing the overall growth of the organization and a cup of Caffè Cappuccino every day.



**Prangthong Jitcharoenkul
(Maprang)**

*Junior Communication Officer
for Agriculture and Food
at GIZ Thailand*

Former journalist recently joined GIZ Thailand in November 2018, bringing along with her five years' experience of reporting, writing and interviewing. Her articles - straight news and features - on varied topics appear in Bangkok Post and Kyodo News. She secured a full scholarship from the Indian government to study for a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) with a triple major in history, economics and sociology and had lived in Southern India for 3 years.





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