



# Myanmar: Embracing opportunity



Change is coming to Myanmar at a rapid pace. It's location between two of the world's most influential economies – China and India – means it is well positioned, with great potential to become a dynamic player in Asia once again. With rich fertile land and a wealth of agricultural resources, agriculture is at the

heart of the economy. Flagged as a key priority in the nation's development roadmap, the sector employs the majority of the population.

The World Bank estimates that about 43 percent of Myanmar's GDP is derived from agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and forestry. Significant steps have been taken in recent years to improve Myanmar's policy environment and boost agricultural productivity, yet a number of obstacles remain. The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) is committed to aiding Myanmar's vital steps towards achieving sustainable food and livelihood security.

## Linking farmers to markets

Recognizing pro-poor, rural economic development as one of the most effective strategies for reducing extreme poverty and



hunger, CIAT works to ensure that smallholder farmers profit by tapping into emerging market opportunities. Our researchers facilitate strong and sustained market linkages between farmers and buyers, integrating poor farmers effectively with local and regional value chains, with additional benefits including gender empowerment and skills development.

### **Cassava: Cultivating new opportunities**

Among Myanmar's neighbors in Southeast Asia, cassava's transformation from a humble root crop into a dynamic economic player is impressive. The cassava trade is expanding quickly, both domestically and internationally – particularly in response to burgeoning demand for dried cassava chips and starch in China, which is expected to double in the next 5-10 years. Although often considered a secondary staple crop in Asia's rice-centered food system, cassava has multiple uses and markets in Asia. From on-farm consumption as food or livestock feed to large-scale commercial starch processing operations, cassava can provide a lucrative source of income for farmers as well as being a hardy food security crop. Moreover, cassava's highly efficient use of water and most nutrients make it an ideal crop to cultivate in harsh conditions, for example in Myanmar's Dry Zone. Estimates suggest that the area planted to cassava in Myanmar has increased drastically during the last decade.

Improved cassava varieties resulting from CIAT's work are already grown in about 80% of the Greater Mekong Sub-region's total cassava area, where they have doubled average crop yields. The Center's expertise in providing improved cassava varieties and crop management techniques can create new opportunities for smallholder farmers in Myanmar's rural areas to raise their incomes by responding to the increased demand for cassava.







### Boosting existing bean production

Dry beans are Myanmar's largest agricultural export accounting for more than half of total exports, making the country only second to China in exporting beans. With a genebank containing nearly 36,000 samples of beans – the world's largest collection of *Phaseolus* beans – CIAT can provide significant research capacity support in Myanmar to improve the production of important bean species. Our goal is to make bean production more profitable for smallholder farmers and to boost the nutritional value and supply of beans, through large-scale introduction, evaluation, and dissemination of improved beans.

### Forages for a better future

Unlike most other countries in Southeast Asia, Myanmar is a major producer and consumer of cattle and buffalo milk. The country has the highest density of bovines in the region and is also a major producer of ducks, geese, and goats. Despite the importance of livestock in the country, productivity is low and diseases remain a threat. Improved livestock feeding systems and better links to markets will help achieve the full potential of the livestock sector.

Farmers require improved, high-quality forage varieties and management techniques to boost their livestock production and improve animal health. CIAT's research has demonstrated how cultivating improved forages for livestock can save time spent collecting forages or preparing them as feed, and raise incomes by increasing the market value of livestock products. Livestock







feeding systems in Myanmar, especially in the Dry Zone and on the Shan Plateau, have the potential to significantly boost livestock production and rural livelihoods.

### Looking forward

Building on research successes in the region, CIAT seeks to extend the positive impacts of improved agricultural productivity already achieved. In collaboration with local, regional, and international partners, CIAT is well placed to contribute solutions and build opportunities for smallholder farmers in Myanmar.

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