CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FLOATING RICE BASED AGROECOLOGICAL FARMING SYSTEMS

IN THE MEKONG DELTA

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FORWARD

In response to global and regional shifts in agroecology, a series of research projects on conservation of floating rice-based agroecological farming systems in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta were undertaken. Project activities were conducted between 2013 and 2016 and were co-designed by scientists from An Giang University, and local decision makers, private sector partners, business leaders, and farmers. Research activities were led by Dr Nguyen Van Kien from the Research Center for Rural Development (RCRD). Subsequently, RCRD received funding to edit this book from three sources. Over ten small supported by a research grant from An Giang Department of Sciences and Technology. Five international research agencies: Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PAN AP), Rufford Foundation, Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) and Agro-ecological Learning Alliance in South East Asia (AliSEA) provided research funding. Further support to produce and publish this book was from on going collaboration between RCRD researchers, local governments of Tri Ton, Cho Moi Districts of An Giang province and Thanh Binh District of Dong Thap province, Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Gratitude is expressed to the several hundred farmer sproducing floating rice and who contributed greatly to the knowledge presented in this book.

As a multi-disciplinary research project, social, economic, and ecological scientists were all part of this team. Projects studied different aspects of the floating rice agroecological farming systemsby investigating: the biophysical condition of each farm (soils, minerals, and waters), socio-economic conditions of farm households and the value chain for farm products. Areas of research included: several crops (floating rice, cassava, leeks), common pests, adaptation to climate change (floating rice varieties), and assessment of agrobiodiversity. An important finding was that the economic, social, ecological and biodiversity richness of floating rice-based farming systems provided far greater benefits than the economic returns of mono rice cropping systems. In fact, floating rice systems exhibited greater flexibility, diversity, and adaptive capacity and resulted in more sustainable outcomes than conventional intensive rice cropping systems.

This book is a systematic presentation of a collaborative multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional study and informs the development of future policiesin agriculture conservation and development. The intention is to provide readers, especially our international colleagues in agriculture research, scientific data

on agroecological farming systems in the upper floodplain of the Mekong Delta. This book is also a reference resource for university students from the fields of agricultural sciences, agroecology, food systems, human ecology, sociology, environmental management and climate change. Hopefully, this book will initiate more sustainable agroecological farming system research and further uptake in Vietnam and Mekong countries.

We wish to acknowledge the significant contributions of the many scientists involved who together produced high quality research. Special thanks to donors at An Giang Department of Sciences and Technology, Department of Finance, SEARCA, SUMMERNET, Rufford Foundation sau PAN AP and AliSEA for funding the research, and our International Relations and Scientific Research Office of An Giang University for support to establish the scientific committee to defend the projects. Our thanks to Dr Charles Howie, for co-editing the entire of manuscript, Dr. Kim Alexander, Ms Sarah Huang, and Ms Phuong Nguyen for proof reading of chapters, and Ms Truong Ngoc Thuy to arrange logistics with the contributors. We are grateful to the Vietnamese funders and international donors who provided financial support for these projects Finally, we give special thanks to AliSEA to fund the printing costs and to the Agriculture Publisher for their keen interest in publishing this book.

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