



Melon

Value Chains for Rural Development in Myanmar

USAID's Value Chains for Rural Development project (VCRD) integrates smallholders and 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.

The Melon Value Chain — Strategy:

VCRD's strategy in the melon value chain focuses on building efficiencies and relationships to strengthen market channels and increase incomes for melon farmers in the Central Dry Zone (CDZ). This means improving practices to increase sustainability and meet Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) criteria, reducing excessive use of pesticides, ensuring appropriate fertilizer applications and establishing sound crop rotation strategies. On the market side, the project supports the Myanmar Melon Producer and Exporter Association (MMPEA)—a nationwide melon trade/advocacy group—on initiatives including establishment of melon grades and standards to enable more consistent, fairer pricing for producers, especially for melons destined for cross-border trade. VCRD partners with a national horticulture association, the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association (MFVP) through an Innovative Grant to strengthen the melon value chain and build the Association's capacity to provide training, services and outreach.

Producers and Target Areas:

Melons account for significant export earnings in Myanmar, with exports to China alone totalling about 600,000 tons/year. In all, about 150,000 farmers produce melons in Myanmar. Major production areas targeted by the project are Sagaing and Mandalay in the CDZ, where both watermelons and muskmelons are grown; smallholder cultivation accounts for about 80 percent of production. VCRD is targeting 10,000 direct beneficiaries over the life of project.

Melon Production — Historic Constraints:

- Farmers' limited access to quality inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides); lack of understanding of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and GAP;
- A high percentage of in-field produce is damaged by pests and diseases, compounded by lack of knowledge of field monitoring techniques and timing of proper mitigation/actions;
- Low investments in farm-level technologies;
- Problems negotiating fair prices with traders due to longstanding lack of grading/pricing standards and the way transactions are handled at the border trading center; and
- High on/off-farm losses, especially during transport.

On-Farm — Innovations and Actions:

- Engage lead farmers and MMPEA to advise farmers about the long-term effects of low-quality inputs on productivity and soil health, and the importance of proper inputs application techniques;
- Collaborate with MMPEA to offer training on proper use of IPM and GAP, toward wider adoption and implementation of Myanmar GAP standards;
- Enhance producer knowledge of farm management and disease control practices; train farmers on practical (non-chemical, IPM) approaches to pest/disease control; and
- Improve post-harvest handling and grading.

(These actions are supported by MFVP, MMPEA, and private sector firms including input suppliers and service providers.)

Off-Farm — Innovations and Actions:

- Improve access to markets; develop mechanisms to better control and regulate product supply to markets, including access to higher quality seeds;
- Build market awareness of improved quality of Myanmar melons at trade shows and Business-to-Business events (domestically and regionally);
- Work with MMPEA to link smallholders directly to



- private sector inputs and equipment suppliers through demonstrations and field activities;
- Coach MMPEA leaders on effective group coordination and management to leverage bulk purchases of inputs and help melon farmers begin to access microfinance, loans and transport insurance;
 - Provide support for establishment and fine-tuning of new grading standards to help smallholders earn better prices at the border.

(These actions are supported by VCRD; MFVP, MMPEA and private sector firms including Syngenta, Yara International, JJ-PUN, Alliance Microfinance, IKBZ and others.)

Selected Impacts To Date

MFVP's work under the Innovative Grant awarded by the project began in 2016. Impacts thus far include:

- MFVP has reached nearly 6,230 melon farmers with vital agronomic information on improved practices including pest and disease management, plant and soil nutrition, and harvest and post-harvest best practices;

- Melon farmers experienced **increases in yields (up to 15 MT/acre) in 2017** after adopting improved technologies introduced by MFVP (though yields declined in 2018 for muskmelon growers, some of whom switched to watermelon production);
- MFVP worked with diverse stakeholders to finalize **new national grades and standards for melon production** (passed in 2019) and is establishing the first GAP Melon zone in Chaung Oo Township;
- By working with MFVP, MMPEA and community-based extension leaders, the **first melon farmers received Myanmar GAP certification from the Department of Agriculture in 2018**, while nearly 100 other farmers submitted applications for GAP certification of their farms;
- As a result of MFVP and MMPEA advocacy, Myanmar melon farmers in 2018/19 **began benefitting from transport commodity insurance** provided by a national insurer, protecting growers against losses incurred during transport.

FAST FACT: *Of around 600,000 tons of melons produced annually in Myanmar, approximately 88 percent are exported to China; the balance is consumed domestically.*



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