



# The Role of Vegetable Production as a Key Factor in Enhancing Cambodian Agriculture: A Systematic Review

**Tan Mengly**

Graduate School, Royal University of Agriculture, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

**Serey Mardy**

Faculty of Agriculture, Svay Rieng University, Svay Rieng, Cambodia

Email Correspondence: [menglytan1@gmail.com](mailto:menglytan1@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** *This systematic review examines the contribution of growing vegetables to effectively strengthen the Cambodian agriculture sector by enhancing food security and uplifting rural communities while promoting economic growth. This study sheds light on how cultivating vegetables impacts nutrition and income in areas by improving food availability and reducing poverty levels. Furthermore, it delves into aspects influencing vegetable cultivation in Cambodia, such as weather conditions, soil quality, input supply access, access to markets, and governmental regulations. The suggested measures include boosting funding for research efforts, improving infrastructure facilities, encouraging the processing of value-added products, supporting farmer groups, and embracing farming practices in Cambodia to develop a robust and thriving agricultural industry that ensures food security, fosters rural advancement, and drives economic progress.*

**Keywords:** *Agricultural development, Food security, Rural livelihoods, Vegetable production*

## INTRODUCTION

Farming supports many people's livelihoods in Cambodia's economy (World Bank, 2018). Despite its importance, the agricultural sector faces obstacles such as low productivity and difficulties reaching markets due to climate change impacts (Asian Development Bank, 2020). People view growing vegetables as a solution to address these issues and propel agricultural development in Cambodia.

Vegetables play a role in ensuring food security and providing essential nutrients that help enhance health outcomes. They are especially beneficial for populations like children and expectant mothers. Additionally, diversifying diets can enhance health outcomes. Furthermore, growing vegetables locally also helps to promote food sovereignty by reducing reliance on imported goods (Heng et al., 2023).

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\*Tan Mengly, e-mail address: [menglytan1@gmail.com](mailto:menglytan1@gmail.com)

Vegetable farming does not only provide essential nutrients but also boosts the economy of rural areas by offering financial opportunities to small-scale growers (Chheang et al., 2019; Sok et al., 2022). This practice opens employment prospects. This practice enhances local economies by providing support to a variety of businesses. Its impact on reducing poverty and advancing rural areas is vital for improving the quality of life in rural communities (World Bank, 2020).

While there are benefits to vegetable farming in Cambodia, it also encounters obstacles like market reach, lack of proper infrastructure, and susceptibility to climate shifts. We need a holistic strategy that involves funding for research and development, improving infrastructure, encouraging value-added processing, empowering farmer groups, and embracing farming methods to effectively tackle these hurdles.

## **METHODS**

This review employs a rigorous methodology to identify and analyze relevant literature on the topic of vegetable production in Cambodian agriculture. By systematically searching key academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, we were able to uncover a comprehensive collection of research articles. Our search strategy focused on specific keywords that emphasized the importance of sound research methodology, ensuring that the included studies met high standards of quality and reliability.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Vegetable production and food security**

Cambodia's agricultural sector plays a pivotal role in its economy, providing livelihoods for a significant portion of the population. Within this sector, vegetable production has emerged as a crucial component in enhancing food security and promoting rural development. This essay will explore the significance of vegetable production in Cambodia, highlighting its contribution to food security, nutritional well-being, and economic growth (MAFF, 2021).

Food security is a fundamental human right, ensuring access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and affordable food. In Cambodia, where a large portion of the population relies on agriculture for sustenance, vegetable production plays a vital role in addressing

food security challenges. Vegetables are nutrient-dense foods that provide essential vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, contributing to a balanced and healthy diet. By promoting vegetable production, Cambodia can ensure a more diverse and resilient food system that can withstand shocks and stresses, such as climate change and economic fluctuations (World Health Organization, 2022).

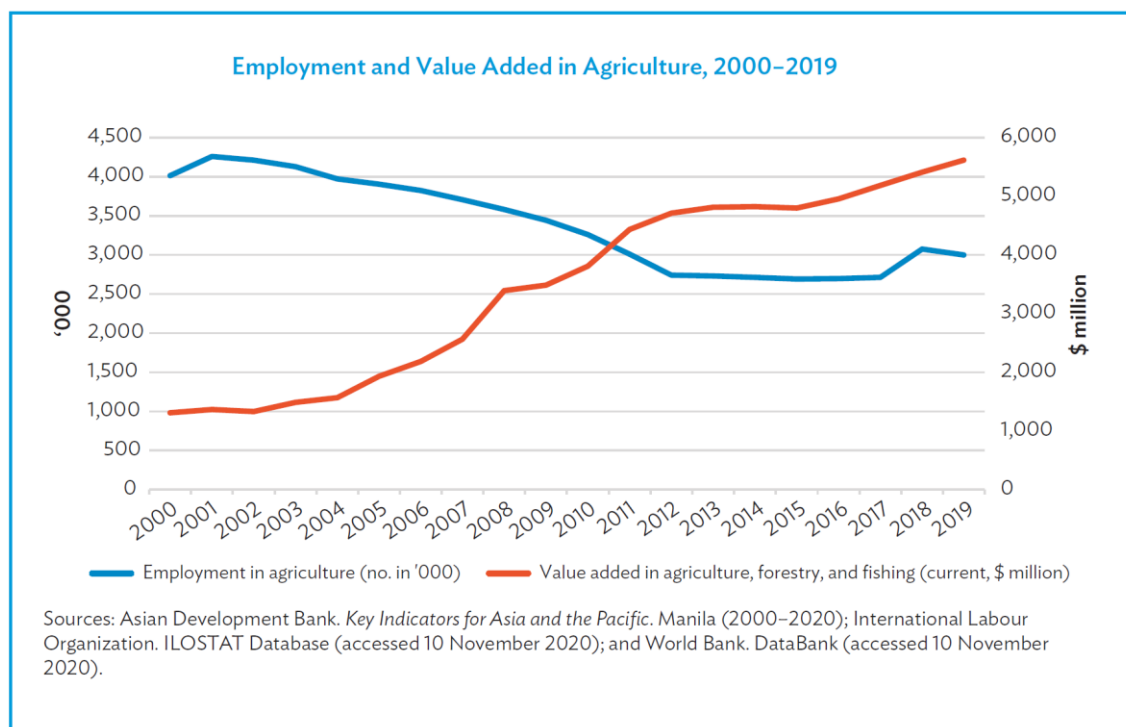
Moreover, vegetable production can contribute to rural development and poverty reduction. Many Cambodian farmers rely on small-scale vegetable production as a primary source of income. By increasing the productivity and profitability of vegetable farming, farmers can improve their livelihoods and raise their living standards. Additionally, the development of vegetable value chains, including processing, packaging, and distribution, can create employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth in rural areas (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019).

However, vegetable production in Cambodia faces several challenges, including limited access to markets, post-harvest losses, and lack of technical support. To address these challenges and maximize the benefits of vegetable production, Cambodia needs to invest in infrastructure development, market linkages, capacity building, and research and development. By improving access to markets, reducing post-harvest losses, and providing farmers with the necessary skills and knowledge, Cambodia can create a more enabling environment for vegetable production (MAFF, 2021).

The cultivation of vegetables is crucial to Cambodia's efforts to ensure food security (MAFF, 2021). It contributes to health and combats malnutrition by providing vital nutrients and broadening dietary options (World Health Organization, 2022). At-risk communities benefit from an increase in vegetable intake (Nguyen et al., 2018; Phang et al., 2020). Moreover, growing vegetables locally helps to boost food independence by reducing dependence on imported food and strengthening community food networks (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021).

In conclusion, vegetable production is a key factor in enhancing food security and promoting rural development in Cambodia. By ensuring access to nutritious foods, improving livelihoods, and stimulating economic growth, vegetable production can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future for Cambodia's population. However, addressing the challenges faced by the sector is essential for realizing its full

potential. Through targeted investments and policy interventions, Cambodia can strengthen its vegetable production sector and ensure a more food-secure and prosperous nation.



**Figure 1: Employment and Value Added in Agriculture in Cambodia**

### Vegetable production and rural livelihoods

Cambodia's agriculture sector, a cornerstone of its economy, significantly contributes to rural livelihoods. Within this sector, vegetable production has emerged as a crucial component, offering a promising avenue for enhancing income, food security, and overall rural development. This essay explores the symbiotic relationship between vegetable production and rural livelihoods in Cambodia, highlighting the key factors influencing their interdependence (MAFF, 2021).

Vegetable production in Cambodia offers several advantages for rural households. Primarily, it provides a relatively high-value crop, generating substantial income per unit area compared to traditional staples like rice and corn. This increased income can be used to meet essential needs, such as food, education, and healthcare, improving the quality of life for rural families. Moreover, vegetable production can diversify agricultural systems, reducing reliance on a single crop and mitigating risks associated with price fluctuations.

Beyond economic benefits, vegetable production plays a vital role in ensuring food security and nutrition. Vegetables are rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, providing a balanced and nutritious diet for rural communities. By promoting local vegetable production, Cambodia can strengthen its food systems, reducing dependence on imported food and ensuring access to fresh, affordable produce. This contributes to the overall well-being of rural populations and enhances food sovereignty (MAFF, 2021).

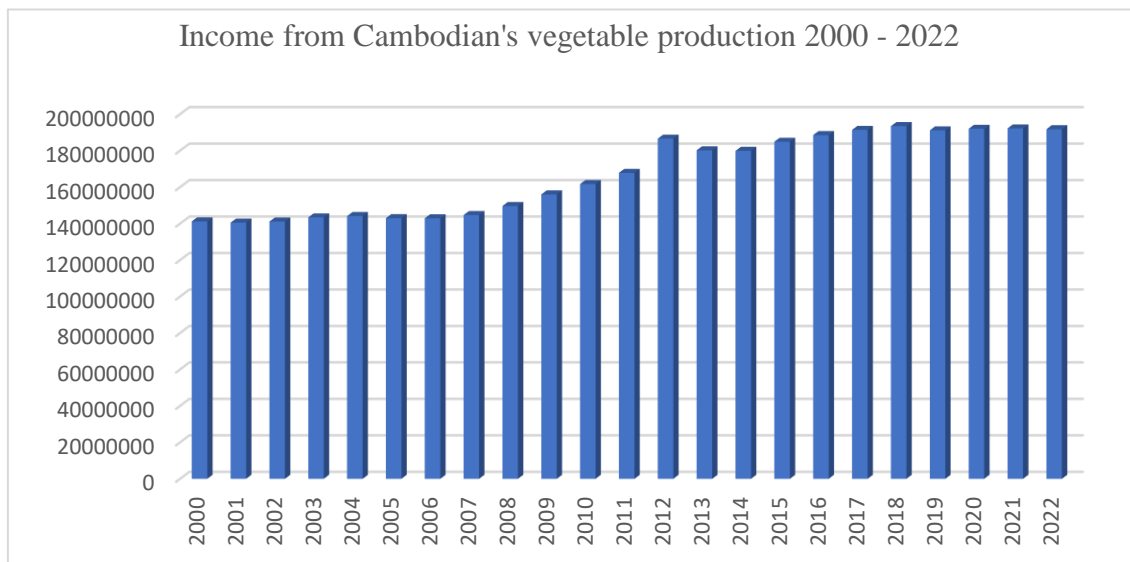
Rural development is another area where vegetable production can make a significant impact. The sector creates employment opportunities, particularly for women and youth, who are often underrepresented in traditional agricultural activities. By providing alternative livelihood options, vegetable production can contribute to poverty reduction and rural development. Additionally, the development of value chains associated with vegetable production, from farming to processing and marketing, can stimulate economic growth and create linkages between rural and urban areas. However, the relationship between vegetable production and rural livelihoods is not without its challenges. Limited access to markets, particularly for small-scale farmers, can hinder the profitability of vegetable production. Inadequate post-harvest handling and storage practices can lead to significant losses, reducing farmers' incomes. Moreover, the lack of technical support and training on improved production practices can limit the efficiency and sustainability of vegetable farming (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019).

To address these challenges and maximize the benefits of vegetable production for rural livelihoods, Cambodia needs to invest in several key areas. Infrastructure development, including improved roads, transportation, and storage facilities, is crucial for facilitating the movement of vegetables to markets. Supporting the development of value chains and market linkages can help connect farmers with consumers and exporters, ensuring fair prices and access to markets. Capacity building programs that provide training and technical assistance to farmers on modern agricultural practices and sustainable production methods can enhance their productivity and resilience. Finally, research and development are essential for developing improved varieties, pest and disease resistant crops, and efficient production systems.

The cultivation of vegetables is essential for Cambodia's efforts to ensure food security. It contributes to health and nutrition outcomes by providing important nutrients

and expanding the variety of diets. Studies have linked the consumption of vegetables to improved overall health status, particularly for at-risk groups in society. Additionally, growing vegetables locally helps increase food independence by reducing the need for imported food and strengthening community food networks (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019).

In conclusion, vegetable production is a key factor in enhancing rural livelihoods in Cambodia. It provides economic benefits, contributes to food security and nutrition, drives rural development, and promotes sustainable agriculture. By addressing the challenges and investing in supporting infrastructure, market linkages, capacity building, and research, Cambodia can strengthen its vegetable sector and improve the livelihoods of its rural population.



**Figure 2: Income from Vegetable Production in Cambodia (FAOSTAT Database)**

### **Factors Influencing Vegetable Production**

Cambodia's agriculture sector, a cornerstone of its economy, is significantly influenced by various factors that shape vegetable production. Understanding these factors is crucial for policymakers, agriculturalists, and researchers seeking to enhance the sector's productivity, sustainability, and resilience (Kheang et al., 2018).

## **1. Socio-Economic Factors**

### **A. Land Tenure**

Land ownership patterns and access to agricultural land play a pivotal role. Small-scale farmers, who constitute the majority of Cambodia's agricultural workforce, often face challenges in securing land tenure, limiting their ability to invest in long-term improvements.

### **B. Poverty and Income Levels**

Low income levels can constrain farmers' ability to purchase inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, hindering vegetable production. Additionally, poverty may limit access to education and training, impacting knowledge and skills related to agricultural practices.

### **C. Market Access**

Proximity to markets, transportation infrastructure, and access to buyers significantly influence vegetable production. Farmers located in remote areas may face difficulties in transporting their produce to urban centers or export markets (Ministry of Planning, 2023).

## **2. Natural Factors:**

### **A. Climate**

Cambodia's tropical climate, characterized by high temperatures and humidity, is generally favorable for vegetable production. However, the country is also susceptible to extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and typhoons, which can disrupt farming activities.

### **B. Soil Quality**

Soil fertility and nutrient content vary across different regions of Cambodia. Poor soil quality can limit crop yields and necessitate the use of fertilizers or other soil amendments.

### **C. Water Availability**

Access to water is a critical factor for vegetable production. Irrigation systems are essential in many areas, especially during dry seasons. However, water scarcity and competition for water resources can pose challenges (UN Environment, 2021).

### **3. Technological Factors:**

#### **A. Agricultural Practices**

Traditional farming methods often rely on manual labor and limited use of technology. Adopting modern agricultural practices, such as improved seed varieties, mechanization, and pest and disease control techniques, can enhance productivity and efficiency.

#### **B. Access to Technology**

The availability of agricultural technologies, including machinery, irrigation systems, and communication devices, can significantly impact vegetable production. However, access to these technologies may be limited due to cost and infrastructure constraints (Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts, 2022).

### **4. Policy and Institutional Factors:**

#### **A. Policies:**

Agricultural policies, such as subsidies, price supports, and extension services, can play a crucial role in influencing vegetable production. Government initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture, market development, and farmer empowerment can have a positive impact.

#### **B. Institutional Support:**

The availability of research institutions, agricultural extension services, and farmer organizations can provide valuable support to farmers, including training, technical assistance, and access to information.

In conclusion, vegetable production in Cambodia is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-economic, natural, technological, and policy factors. Addressing these factors through targeted interventions can help to enhance the sector's productivity, sustainability, and resilience, contributing to Cambodia's economic growth and food security.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This review underscores the critical role of vegetable farming in bolstering Cambodia's agricultural sector. By enhancing food security, boosting rural incomes, and driving economic progress, vegetable production offers a promising avenue for



addressing the challenges faced by the industry. To fully realize the potential of vegetable farming in Cambodia, a collaborative effort is essential.

As recommendation, policymakers, development organizations, and agricultural stakeholders must work together to:

- Fund research and development projects: Invest in research to develop improved varieties, pest and disease resistant crops, and efficient production techniques.
- Improve market opportunities: Facilitate access to markets, both domestic and international, by strengthening value chains and supporting market linkages.
- Encourage value addition: Promote value-added processing of vegetables to increase their profitability and create new market opportunities.
- Empower farmer groups: Strengthen farmer organizations to provide a platform for collective action, knowledge sharing, and advocacy.
- Embrace sustainable methods: Adopt sustainable agricultural practices that minimize environmental impact and ensure long-term sustainability.

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