

SHARED STORIES

ADDING VALUE TO LOCAL FOODS

By Ra Thorng



In communities under the project of Caritas Cambodia, farmers transform organic fruits and vegetables into popular dried or fermented products and beverages, which are sold in local markets.

Seeing these value-adding activities as a catalyst to boost local employment and market competitiveness, Ms. Phang Chantha, a lecturer and researcher from the Food Research and Development Center under the Graduate School of the Royal University of Agriculture, and a proud alumna of Mekong Institute (MI) under the **PROSAFE (Promoting Safe Food for Everyone) project**, trained local food processors how to properly prepare, process, package, and store their healthy food and drink products to prolong their shelf life and preserve their nutrients.

“These information are very important for producers, distributors, and consumers, especially because their products are for human consumption,” she explained.



“
MI’s PROSAFE opened opportunities
for us to work together in building
a sustainable safe food
culture in the region.”

After three years, Ms. Phang observed that farmers in some communities have established their own businesses, with some products gaining popularity in Battambang and other nearby provinces.

For instance, Battambang’s fermented sweet soybean and pickled sweet radish are in great demand. Other farmers have also started producing various fruit beverages, as well as processed fruit products, such as marmalade, to meet customers’ requests for a wider selection of local food and drinks.

With these gains, Ms. Phang hopes to be included in more safe food courses.

“Aside from improving my knowledge and skills from expert trainers, MI’s PROSAFE trainings are a chance for me to meet food safety champions from other countries, opening wider opportunities for us to learn and work together in building a sustainable safe food culture in the region,” she ended. ■

(This story is in two parts. Learn how Ms. Phang Chantha enhanced her technical skills after completing MI’s PROSAFE trainings at <https://cutt.ly/6gzleJ7>.)



Ra Thong is a Program Coordinator under MI’s Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department. Ra has been with MI for the last seven years, contributing his expertise to help build a food safety culture in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam under the PROSAFE project. For information on the project, please contact adc@mekonginstitute.org.