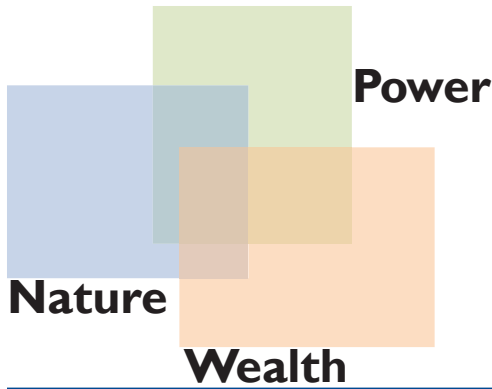




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## Ibis Rice

*Protecting wildlife in Cambodia...one grain at a time.*

### **Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Products**

Ibis Rice™ is a fragrant, organically grown Malis Rice. It is sold directly in bulk to large commercial mills in major towns in Cambodia and most recently, capitalizing on the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ branding, to restaurants and hotels near Cambodia's famed Angkor Wat temple in Siem Reap. Siem Reap is a main tourism center, which attracts more than 2 million international visitors each year to the temples at Angkor. The following hotels and restaurants in Siem Reap currently serve Ibis Rice: **Hotels:** La Maison d'Angkor, Le Meridien Angkor, La Residence d'Angkor, Soria Moria, Victoria Angkor Resort & Spa, Hotel de la Paix, The Villa Siem Reap and Sojourn; Now in Phnom Penh: The Bodhi Tree. **Restaurants:** Kamasutra, Sugar Palm, and V & A. Now in Phnom Penh: Le Wok

Future marketing will include selling various packaged rice mixes, including both brown and white rice, in tourist shops in Siem Reap. Siem Reap has over 100 registered hotels and restaurants and so far, 16 restaurants and hotels buy Ibis Rice. The rice is marketed as Certified Wildlife Friendly™

and organic, contributing to protecting critically endangered bird species whilst also promoting improved incomes for farmers that engage in conservation.

### **Conservation Challenge**

The Northern Plains of Cambodia are home to the greatest aggregation of large mammals and water birds beyond the savannas of Africa. The Giant Ibis is Cambodia's National Bird and one of 50 endangered species in the Northern Plains. The forests and wetlands of the Northern Plains, which these endangered birds depend on for habitat, are used by long-established local communities. These communities are very poor and are heavily dependent upon forest and natural resources for their livelihoods. Agricultural-based livelihood development is limited by low prices offered by the few traders that come to these remote villages. Worse, the same traders are the only source of credit, usually at usurious high rates. This provides little incentive for communities to improve agricultural efficiency, and means that the majority of households are trapped in debt cycles to the traders. With



**Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network:  
Ibis Rice**

growing human populations the pressure on land resources is increasing, leading to increasing forest clearance in key conservation areas and conflicts between communities and government agencies responsible for environmental protection. As land conversion is one of the few easily available forms of wealth, community members have little incentive to engage in conservation. Successful wildlife and habitat conservation therefore depends on engaging local families in ways that directly link local economic and social development to natural resource conservation.

### **Context and Business Model**

Wildlife Conservation Society Cambodia (WCS) has been supporting and promoting Ibis Rice™ for several years. The current focus of Wildlife Friendly™ product development is in the Northern Plains. The Ibis Rice™ program was started, in part, because of the enormous market opportunity provided by Siem Reap. Market research conducted by WCS indicated that a significant number of buyers (mainly up-market hotels and restaurants) exist in Siem Reap, many of whom would be willing to pay a premium for Wildlife Friendly™ products. The cooperative marketing model is also an important innovation offered by the project. Communities receive a share of the profits and assistance to move up the value chain (e.g. through training in value-added processing, assistance with capital investment, and access to necessary micro loans) so that farmers capture a greater proportion of the revenue and have an incentive to restrict farm expansion.

The Ibis Rice™ program established Wildlife Friendly™ village agricultural cooperatives, which:

- Buy from farmers if they abide by conservation rules and regulations, including wildlife protection and maintenance of land-use boundaries.
- Provide start-up loans at low rates of interest to cooperative members, breaking debt dependency cycles.
- Target the poorer farmers reliant on forest resources.
- Purchase rice at preferential prices from cooperative members. The initial business model is based on direct sales to the national market centers, bypassing the current middlemen.
- Train farmers willing to learn new agricultural techniques.

Farmers sell their rice directly to the Village Marketing Network (VMN) which buys the rice at a premium price. Only the farmers that have agreed to land use agreements that support conservation can participate. Procurement from farmers and distribution of funds is managed by the locally elected Village Cooperative Executive Members in the VMN.

Currently, the VMNs provide funding for infrastructure and inputs; they manage the buying and storage of rice; assure that a premium is paid to farmers; and establish a functional profit sharing scheme. Various activities are underway to increase the farmers' revenues by promoting new, higher yielding varieties of rice. Farmers are being trained in the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), a low-tech cultivation technique that does not use pesticides or non-organic fertilizers and is widely promoted in the region. In addition, farmers are being trained in the Cambodian Organics Association standards, which are adapted from and consistent with international standards.



### **Impact and Monitoring**

Farmers understand that purchase of their rice is conditional on compliance with conservation agreements. As a result, Certified Wildlife Friendly™ products directly provide incentives to local people to engage in behaviors consistent with long-term conservation. In 2008, this led to the initial 78 farmers each receiving more than \$60 additional income for their produce, a significant amount of money in remote rural villages where average annual incomes are less than \$400 per year. Over the past three years communities have tripled the proportion of revenue that they receive from Wildlife Friendly™ production. Given the success, the Ibis Rice™ Program will expand from two villages in 2008 to ten villages (>10,000 people) over the next three years. In addition to increasing local incomes the project provides other benefits to community members, such as training and access to credit at reduced interest rates. Lastly, the negotiation of land-use boundaries as part of the conservation agreements allows farmers to become eligible for formal land titles for their plots strengthening existing tenure arrangements that support conservation.

WCS has developed an effective monitoring system that involves field audits and satellite analyses to ensure compliance with land use contracts, annual assessment of key bird populations using counts of breeding pairs, and livelihood monitoring to track levels of family wealth. Community members are integrated into the monitoring system, taking an active role in bird counts and nest protection.

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This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the terms of the TransLinks Cooperative Agreement No.EPP-A-00-06-00014-00 to The Wildlife Conservation Society. TransLinks is a partnership of WCS, The Earth Institute, Enterprise Works/VITA, Forest Trends and The Land Tenure Center. The contents are the responsibility of the partnership and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government.