



ECHO[®] Asia Network News

Edited by Abram Bicksler & Rebecca Garofano

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In This Issue

[ECHO Asia Seed Banking
Workshop](#)

[Auxiliary Documents
now Available on ECHO
Community](#)

[Trainings and Group Visits](#)

[Comings and Goings](#)

[A New Year, A Chance for
New Seeds](#)

[Seed Bank Partner
Evaluators](#)

[New ECHO Asia Seed
Bank Production Manager
Sought](#)

[Cono Weeders for SRI
Weeding](#)

Asia Network News

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ECHO Asia Seed Banking Workshop

During January 21-23, ECHO Asia hosted the “ECHO Asia Seed Banking Workshop” in Chiang Mai, Thailand. With 28 participants from nine countries and numerous organizations represented, the group was exposed to numerous topics, hands-on activities, and fieldtrips, including:

- The importance and biology of seed saving
- Community based seed selection and saving by JOKO Thailand
- How to conduct a seed swap
- A field trip to the Mae Tha organic farming and seed saving cooperative
- A 2-day hands-on practicum at the ECHO Asia Seed Bank to learn about:
 - Seedbank processes and planning
 - Seed production and organic farming systems
 - Seed harvesting
 - Seed cleaning
 - Seed drying
 - Seed storage
 - Seed germination testing and quality control
 - How to build a bicycle pump vacuum-sealer
 - Village appropriate seed saving techniques

A key ECHO Asia workshop activity, an introductory seed swap event, took place on Wednesday night, in which seed from many types of crops were shared between participants.

ECHO Asia is extremely grateful to all the participants who came to this event, and looks forward to hosting similar events in the future.



(Top Left) ECHO Asia staff member, Paw, teaches about germination. (Top Right) Group photo of workshop participants. (Bottom Left) Abram teaches about ECHO Asia seed storage research. (Bottom Right) Workshop participants visited Mae Tha, a farming community, to learn about their seed saving work. Photo credit to Cory Hill.

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This Newsletter is For You!

Send announcements and your stories to echoasia@echonet.org for inclusion in our next newsletter.

ECHO Asia Seed Bank

A resource available to ECHO Asia network members for regionally appropriate seeds.

Auxiliary Documents now Available on ECHO Community

ECHO Asia has been slowly populating ECHOcommunity.org with [auxiliary documents](#) for free download to our members. In addition to [presentations from the ECHO Asia Agriculture and Community Development Conference](#) and [documents related to the recent ECHO Asia Seed Banking Workshop](#), we are offering free training and technical documents provided by our members and created by ECHO Asia. Some of the new materials include:

- A free PDF download of Keith Mikkelson's "Sustainable Agriculture in the Tropics: A Natural Farming System,"
- A free PDF download of Edward Allen's: "Livestock Micro-Enterprise Development Manual,"
- Free PDF and PowerPoint downloads of Livestock Health Extension Service Modules provided by a joint venture between the Chinese and Canadian government,
- PDF documents related to Seed Bank creation and best practices, and
- A multitude of other useful documents for those working in community development and agriculture in Asia.

Check back frequently to see what new materials are being added!

Trainings and Group Visits

In addition to our regional workshops, conferences and informal consultations at our office in Chiang Mai, ECHO Asia also occasionally provides paid consulting and training services for groups.

- In November, ECHO Asia had the privilege of hosting 2 Hort CRSP (USAID) evaluators in Chiang Mai and up at the Seed Bank to evaluate the results of the Hort CRSP Seed Saving work from 2010-2011 and gain insight into future projects through the CRSP program. The Hort CRSP grant we received from 2010-2011 propelled ECHO Asia into the seed systems research realm and helped to build the backbone of a successful seedbank.
- From December 4-6, The ECHO Asia Impact Center hosted 12 Lao Government officials to facilitate a training and field trips exploring "Climate Change Adapted Agriculture." This Asia Development Bank funded training was conducted in partnership with the Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP), and Terry Bolger. Topics covered included



Photos of the Lao Government officials visit to Ban Daeng Nai.

- a field trip to Ban Daeng Nai village to see agroforestry, erosion control principles, and intercropping of green manure cover crops; time at UHDP to explore agroforestry, natural farming, and smallholder backyard gardening; and time at the ECHO Asia Seedbank to learn about community seed saving, composting, and drip irrigation.
- From December 31-January 6, ECHO Asia, along with UHDP, hosted Dr. Ricky Bates, Dr. Tom Gill, and 12 students from Penn State University to learn about sustainable agriculture, agroforestry, and seed banking in the tropics.

If you have a team, a project, or a group that would be interested in attending a personalized training, a field trip, or hosting a national workshop in conjunction with ECHO Asia, please feel free to e-mail the Director at abicksler@echonet.org. As always, your input, collaboration, and feedback is appreciated!

Comings and Goings



(Top) Photo of Lue and Robert at an ECHO Asia training about modified bicycle pump vacuum sealers for storing seeds. (Bottom Left) Brian assists with registration at the Seed Banking Workshop. (Bottom Right) Holly in the ECHO Asia seed cold room with Wah during the Seed Banking Workshop.

- The ECHO Asia Impact Center hosted Robert Sanou, the new ECHO West Africa Impact Center Director, for a week in November, in order to give him a first-hand look at the services and inter workings of a Regional Impact Center. We welcome Robert to the ECHO family and look forward to working with him and Erwin Kinsey (ECHO East Africa Director) across the RIC network, which has offices in Chiang Mai, Thailand; Arusha, Tanzania; and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso!
- ECHO Asia hosted Brian Lawrence and Holly Sobetski both in the Chiang Mai office and at the ECHO Asia Seed Bank from 14 January until 6 February. Brian is an ECHO intern who is especially interested in seed banking and will be stationed at the ECHO East Africa RIC (Arusha, Tanzania) for 6 months in an effort to help create a seedbank for that Impact Center. Holly is the Seed Bank Manager at ECHO Florida and came to exchange ideas and information between the two seed banks. Both were able to take part in the ECHO Asia Seed Banking Workshop, and we have enjoyed our interaction with them, having learned much from them!
- It is with bitter-sweetness that we say farewell to Niemeet Chompoothong (Lue), the ECHO Asia Seed Bank Production Manager, who is pursuing a new career in Omkoi, Thailand, with his wife, Ing. Lue was the first hire of the ECHO Asia Seed Bank, and was instrumental in getting the seed bank up and running 4 years ago. Lue served a very vital role in all aspects of the successful start of the seed bank, and it has been incredibly rewarding watching him grow into his position. We will certainly miss him, but wish them God's richest blessings and are thankful for four wonderful, foundational years working with Lue!

A New Year, A Chance for New Seeds

Don't forget that each year, if you are a registered member of ECHOcommunity.org, you are entitled to 10 free sample packets of seed from the ECHO Asia Seed Bank. If you are in need of more seed than the 10 free packets, we also have packets for sale and a limited selection of bulk seeds (mainly green manure/cover crops). Additionally, each year we add to our offerings, and increase the number of varieties we make available to our network. [Click here](#) for the latest seed catalog and ordering instructions.



Seed Bank Partner Evaluators

We have a need for partners to evaluate our seeds in different locations throughout Asia! We are looking for dedicated observers to receive seeds of merit from our seed bank (already released as well as potential additions) and provide detailed information about your growing conditions, planting times, growth of the plants, etc., so that we can compile this data and make it available to others to help them determine which seeds are best for a particular area and/or set of climactic conditions. To take a look at what the evaluation entails, please see our [Google form](#), and e-mail us at echoasia@echonet.org to be involved with this project. We thank you in advance for the help that this information will provide to all of our network members!



New ECHO Asia Seed Bank Production Manager Sought

With Niemeet (Lue) moving back to Omkoi, ECHO Asia is in need of a new Seed Bank Production Manager, who will be responsible for overseeing the production of our seed accessions at the ECHO Asia Seed Bank, located in Mae Ai, Thailand. This is a managerial position, and will require interaction with 2 technicians, ability to plan, ability to keep detailed records on paper and on the computer, ability to work with a diverse team of foreigners and nationals, and ability to constantly improve processes. A bachelor's degree in agronomy (or similar agriculture related major) or commensurate experience is desired. This position will report directly to the Seed Bank Manager and Agriculture Program Manager. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please e-mail echoasia@echonet.org for a detailed job description and summary of duties.

Cono Weeders for SRI Weeding

ECHO Asia Impact Center is selling 5 cono-weeders that we had made locally in Chiang Mai. We first ran across these in NE India, where they were being used by local farmers to weed their [SRI rice](#) fields more efficiently and with less hand-weeding. Recent research suggests that the usage of a weeder that disrupts weed roots while aerating the soil is part of the suite of best practices that SRI depends upon to increase rice yields. The first model was modified to improve its performance, and we are now selling 5 copies of the refined model that has been put to use in the field. The weeder works best when there is between 1 and 2 cm of standing water in the field. For a video of the weeder in action, [click this link](#). The base price of the weeder is 3,000 THB plus shipping. Email echoasia@echonet.org for more information or if you are interested in purchasing one.



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