ACF Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation

VOICES OF PROGRESS

CAMBODIA



IN CONVERSATION WITH

H.E. DR. OUK RABUN

Senior Minister and Chairman of both the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) and the National Committee for One Village One Product (OVOP)

Please could you tell us a bit about yourself?

I have spent more than four decades serving the Cambodian people across different sectors of government, including as Minister of Rural Development, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Planning.

As Senior Minister, I now have the honour of advising the Prime Minister on cross-sectoral policy coherence and institutional coordination - particularly on issues that demand whole-of-government solutions, such as food systems transformation. My experience spans both technical implementation and high-level governance, and I remain deeply committed to inclusive development that uplifts rural communities, strengthens resilience, and ensures no one is left behind.

What areas of policy do you oversee?

I support the coordination of multi-sectoral strategies that cut across agriculture, nutrition, climate change, rural development, and economic growth.

As Chairman of both CARD and OVOP, I am responsible for developing and implementing our national food security and nutrition strategies and promoting Cambodian products. I work in close coordination with line ministries such as those of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Rural Development, Health, Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation, Environment and Finance to ensure alignment and accountability.

My role is to ensure that our policies are not implemented in isolation, but are interlinked, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of our people. The Alliance of Champions' emphasis on, and championing of, policy coherence and cross-government working is one of the things that made membership so attractive to Cambodia.

> **"Food systems touch every part of our society, so the response must be equally integrated."**

How do these priorities and policies interact with different parts of government?

Food systems touch every part of our society, so the response must be equally integrated. CARD plays a central coordinating role, particularly in aligning the implementation of the Third National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) (2024-2028) with national planning and sectoral strategies.

Our work with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries ensures production is resilient and diversified. With the Ministry of Health, we link food to nutrition outcomes. And with the Ministry of Environment, we advance climate adaptation and biodiversity. Trade, Industry and Finance partners are equally important to unlock value chains and investment.

The Food Systems Roadmap serves as a unifying framework across these Ministries. It identifies game-changing actions that require joint leadership, such as food fortification, climate-smart value chains, and social and behaviour change communication. The Roadmap and the 3rd NSFSN are now fully aligned in targets and institutional responsibilities.

How are competing agendas considered alongside each other? What are the challenges in doing this?

Balancing short-term sectoral priorities with long-term systemic goals is one of our biggest challenges. Ministries often have their own mandates, financing lines, and performance targets.

For example, increasing rice exports and reducing stunting may both be national goals, but require different pathways and sometimes trade-offs. We address this through coordinated planning processes, stakeholder dialogue, and integrated policy instruments like the Food Systems Roadmap and the NSFSN

The real challenge lies in capacity and resources, especially at the sub-national level. But by building trust between ministries, creating shared accountability frameworks, and demonstrating the win–win potential of coordinated action, we are making real progress. Hearing about how other ACF members are tackling these very same issues has been fascinating and helpful in equal measure.



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What structures, institutions or processes has the government put in place to consider these challenges in a holistic way?

Cambodia has institutionalised a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group for Food Security and Nutrition Chaired by CARD, which oversees the coordination of food and nutrition policy. We have also established Provincial Working Groups and inter-ministerial task forces to operationalize the Food Systems Roadmap, which is fully costed and linked to national development plans and budgeting processes. The SUN Movement and the country networks are also important structures supporting nutrition and our broader efforts with food systems, youth engagement, and stakeholder dialogue.

Importantly, the Roadmap was shaped by extensive consultation - from national Ministries to the sub-national level and engaging youth, Indigenous communities, farmers, civil society, the private sector, and development partners. It is supported by a Financing Strategy, an emerging Deal Room platform, and ongoing work to integrate monitoring indicators across sectors.

> **By 2030, we aim to build a food system that is resilient, inclusive, sustainable and nutrition driven.**

What are the benefits of getting the transition right from the Cambodian perspective? And what are the costs of getting it wrong?

Getting it right means more than just economic growth - it means a healthier population, resilient livelihoods, thriving rural communities, and a food system that respects our environment and Cambodian identity. It means meeting our nutrition targets, adapting to climate change, and preparing our youth for the jobs of the future.

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Rising malnutrition, land degradation, water scarcity, and vulnerability to climate shocks could deepen inequality and threaten our hard-won development gains. The transition is not optional - it is urgent, and it is our shared responsibility.

What are the Cambodian Government's aspirations for your country's food system in 2030 and 2050?

By 2030, we aim to build a food system that is resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and nutrition-driven. Our goals are clear: reduce all forms of malnutrition, enhance the productivity and diversity of our agriculture, strengthen value chains, and empower women and youth.

This is captured in our Roadmap and in our national commitments to the Nutrition for Growth process, NDC 3.0, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

By 2050, we envision a Cambodian food system that is smart and circular, where innovation and tradition go hand in hand, and where farmers are empowered as climate stewards and economic actors. We will need continued investment, regional collaboration, and global solidarity to get there - but we are ready to lead by example.



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IN CONVERSATION WITH

MR SIVEUN

Livestock producer, Ou Rumdeng Farm, Kampong Thom Province

Please could you tell us a bit about yourself and your farm?

Ou Rumdeng Farm is located in Kampong Thom province, Cambodia. It was established during the COVID-19 pandemic with a clear mission: to create local employment opportunities and support farmers in transitioning away from climate-vulnerable monocropping practices. We focus on diversified farming systems, including cattle and goat raising, cashew nut production, banana cultivation, and forage crops, as well as opportunities for continuous learning and innovation.

Can you describe a typical day during your busiest season?

We focus on year-round production, with our peak season running from November to May. During this period, our primary activities include cattle fattening and the purchase of livestock from local farmers. This seasonal focus allows us to meet market demand efficiently while supporting local producers by providing a stable outlet for their cattle. Our days are long but by aligning our operations with these high-demand months, we maximize productivity and income for both the farm and the surrounding community.



What trade-offs do you currently face in producing healthy food in a way that is sustainable? Can you give an example of how the competing pressures of increasing yield and income might conflict with farming in a way that protects your local environment, for example?

At Ou Rumdeng Farm, we constantly navigate the complex trade-offs between increasing agricultural productivity and maintaining environmental sustainability. While our goal is to produce healthy, high-quality food year-round, we often face competing pressures—particularly the need to boost yields and income in response to market demand, versus the need to protect soil health, conserve water, and reduce environmental impacts.

For example, during peak seasons there can be greater demand for crop production. A common way to do this is to increase water usage or add additional chemicals which both have a negative impact on local soil quality and biodiversity levels.

Instead, we have adopted climate-smart practices such as cut and carry fodder supply, organic composting and intercropping, thereby balancing productivity with environmental stewardship. But, these approaches often require more time, labour, and upfront investment, which can be challenging for a growing agribusiness operating in a resource-limited setting.

> “Government support in connecting sustainable producers to markets can help reward farmers for protecting the environment and producing healthy food.”

How could government policy help you manage these trade-offs in a way that leads to better outcomes for you, your community and the environment?

Government policy can play a critical role in helping farms like ours manage the trade-offs between productivity, income generation, and environmental sustainability.

We look to the government to support and incentivise sustainable practises. This includes subsidies or tax incentives to improve composting systems, manage grazing, use water-saving irrigation, and organic inputs. Agricultural extension services and farmer training programs are key tools for building our capacity to apply sustainable practices effectively. Government can also support by connecting sustainable producers to markets, thereby rewarding farmers for protecting the environment and producing healthy food. Finally, access to low-interest loans, insurance schemes, and climate risk financing can help us farmers invest in sustainable technologies and absorb economic shocks.

What are the most important things that would need to change, for you to feel secure about the future of your farm?

Looking ahead, our primary focus is on achieving full self-reliance and expanding our investments to ensure the long-term sustainability of Ou Rumdeng Farm.

We aim to transition toward climate-resilient breeding practices, diversify income through integrated crop-livestock systems, strengthen our market presence, traceability and quality assurance. We plan to create new opportunities for employment and profitability by introducing value-added services such as on-farm processing, packaging, and agricultural support services.

Ultimately, our priority is to pursue a farming model that delivers economic benefits without compromising the health of our land and community. We continue to learn, adapt, and innovate to ensure that both people and the planet can thrive together.



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