



Tropentag, September 19-21, 2012, Göttingen -  
Kassel/Witzenhausen

“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

## The Informal Market of Edible Crickets and Spiders in Cambodia. Potentials of a Traditional Food Source

CHRISTOPHER MÜNKE<sup>1</sup>, CHAMNAN CHHOUN<sup>2</sup>, THEA LACH<sup>2</sup>, VEASNA AO<sup>2</sup>, NANNA ROOS<sup>3</sup>,  
CARSTEN NICO HJORTSØ<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Life Science, Denmark*

<sup>2</sup>*Fisheries Administration, Marine Aquaculture Research and Development Center, Cambodia*

<sup>3</sup>*University of Copenhagen, Dept. of Human Nutrition, Denmark*

<sup>4</sup>*University of Copenhagen, Dept. of Resource Economics and Food Policy, Denmark*

### Abstract

The contribution outlines the current market of edible crickets and one species of edible tarantula in Cambodia and how this supports the livelihoods of Cambodians.

Eating insects as part of the diet (entomophagy) is common among rural and urban people in South East Asia. In Cambodia, most people regularly consume a variety of insects and spiders as part of their diet, and an informal market for such a food source has developed throughout the country. This market contributes an additional source of income to rural/urban livelihoods, due to an increasing demand in recent years.

In this study a market assessment was conducted in 6 provinces, including the capital Phnom Penh, as well as a review of the current institutional framework regarding policies and responsible stakeholders. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied, including questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews. The data was collected in the period January-May 2012. The study is part of the WINFOOD project, a collaboration between University of Copenhagen and the Department of Post-Harvest Technologies and Qualitative Control, Fisheries Administration, Cambodia.

The findings show that crickets have the potential for a larger domestic market, as well as export to the neighbouring countries of Cambodia, through domestication and scaled up collection practices. On the other hand, edible tarantulas are facing the challenge of overexploitation due to increased market demand, which puts pressure on the natural population of the tarantulas and consequently, the livelihoods of collectors.

Among the national government and international agencies the awareness of the potentials and constraints of the edible insect sector is limited. This is a field which is gaining more international recognition as an alternative source of food and livestock feed and therefore it is recommended that the Cambodian government and other stakeholders begin investigating the potentials and limitations of the edible insect market. Edible insects in Cambodia can contribute to resilience of agricultural systems to supply food and feed, but it has yet to find its place within academic disciplines and natural resource governance structures in order to be sustainably utilised.

**Keywords:** Alternative food sources, Cambodia, entomophagy, livelihood strategies, value chain analysis