

Thai-Cambodian palm oil plant plans to fortify with vitamin A

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Manager sees food production as a growth industry of the future in Cambodia

WHAT promises to be the largest palm oil factory in Cambodia has made vitamin A fortification a top priority.

The Thai-Cambodian operation, located 70 kilometres north of Sihanoukville, was started in 1997 with a capital investment of US\$17.5 million as a joint venture consisting of Thailand's TCC International and Cambodia's Mong Rithy Group.

For Managing Director of CPOI Wichai Kotaratititum, the choice to fortify with vitamin A was a natural one.

"There is a real health benefit in oil fortification for Cambodia," he said.

"Research has found that cooking oil is the best vehicle for the delivery of vitamin A."



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Wichai graduated with a master's degree in food technology from Massey University and has since worked in dairy farming production and technology, tapioca production, sugar milling and now as managing manager of Cambodia Palm Oil Industry.

Wichai says Cambodia is ideally suited for the production of food.

"This country has a good location for the agricultural business and food industry. I think we can drive the development of more food industries in Cambodia. The key factor is that we have the raw materials, so it is natural to make a complete system in one location: grow it, process it and sell it in once place," he said.

CPOI is working with micronutrient supplier BASF to fortify the palm oil with vitamin A.

"Even if BASF weren't helping us, we would certainly fortify because it is necessary for the health of the country. We will have a lot of support from the government and we know what we are doing will benefit people.

"We are the first in this type of business so the fortification fits naturally with what we are doing," he said.

This year, the MRICOP joint venture will produce an estimated 17,000 tons of crude palm oil through its mill plant, which has a capacity of 30 tons per hour.

Vegetable oil has been widely recognized as an ideal delivery vehicle for creating an nvisible Means of getting Vitamin A into a population.

The palm oil project promises to deliver palm oil fortified with Vitamin A all over Cambodia in volumes sufficient to provide a steady advance against the crippling and invisible effects of deficiency in the population.