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PRESS RELEASE

UNLOCKING SESAME'S POTENTIAL FOR EXPORT IN MAGWAY

Magway, Myanmar - The USAID-funded Value Chains for Rural Development project, implemented by Winrock International, is launching a partnership with Sustainable Action for Rural Advancement (SARA), a local non-profit organization based in Magway that will also be supported on technical and administrative side by Tag International Development, to unlock sesame's potential for export. The two-year project will support 3,100 smallholder sesame farmers in Magway's highest-producing sesame growing communities. The project aims to increase sesame crop yield through introduction of improved technology including mechanized tools and irrigation systems, and improved practices including crop management, harvesting and climate-adapted production methods, as well as facilitate links to markets.

Although Myanmar is one of the world's largest sesame producers, its sesame farmers are not reaching their full income potential due to low yields. Only about three percent of globally-traded sesame comes from Myanmar, in part because of the relatively poor quality of Myanmar sesame. Challenges facing Myanmar farmers include outdated cultivation methods and technology; lack of quality control and standardized practices; and high post-harvest losses and vulnerability to climate change, all of which result in significant production losses and prevent realization of full potential returns for smallholder sesame producers.

"In Myanmar, Magway region is well known as the 'Oil Bowl of Myanmar' where they produce the sesame under limited resources. We are honoured to be able to assist the farmers with the farming technology," said Mr. Robin Saw Naing, Chairman of SARA's Board of Directors.

SARA has operated in Myanmar since 2008 and has significant local experience improving the agriculture sector in rural areas of the Magway region through trainings, loans and the provision of inputs including tools, seeds, fertilizers, livestock, as well as other activities, including delivery of sesame-related programming. Tag International is a global organization that leverages adapted Israeli expertise to implement locally-adapted solutions. Since 2013, Tag has delivered a flagship beekeeping modernization project in Southern Shan funded by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) called "Plan Bee."

Myanmar's sesame farmers are supported by the USAID-funded Value Chains project, which links smallholders with competitive commercial value chains to increase agricultural productivity and promote inclusive agricultural growth. The Value Chains project employs a people-to-people and private-sector led approach to increase smallholder agriculture income and strengthen market access.

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