

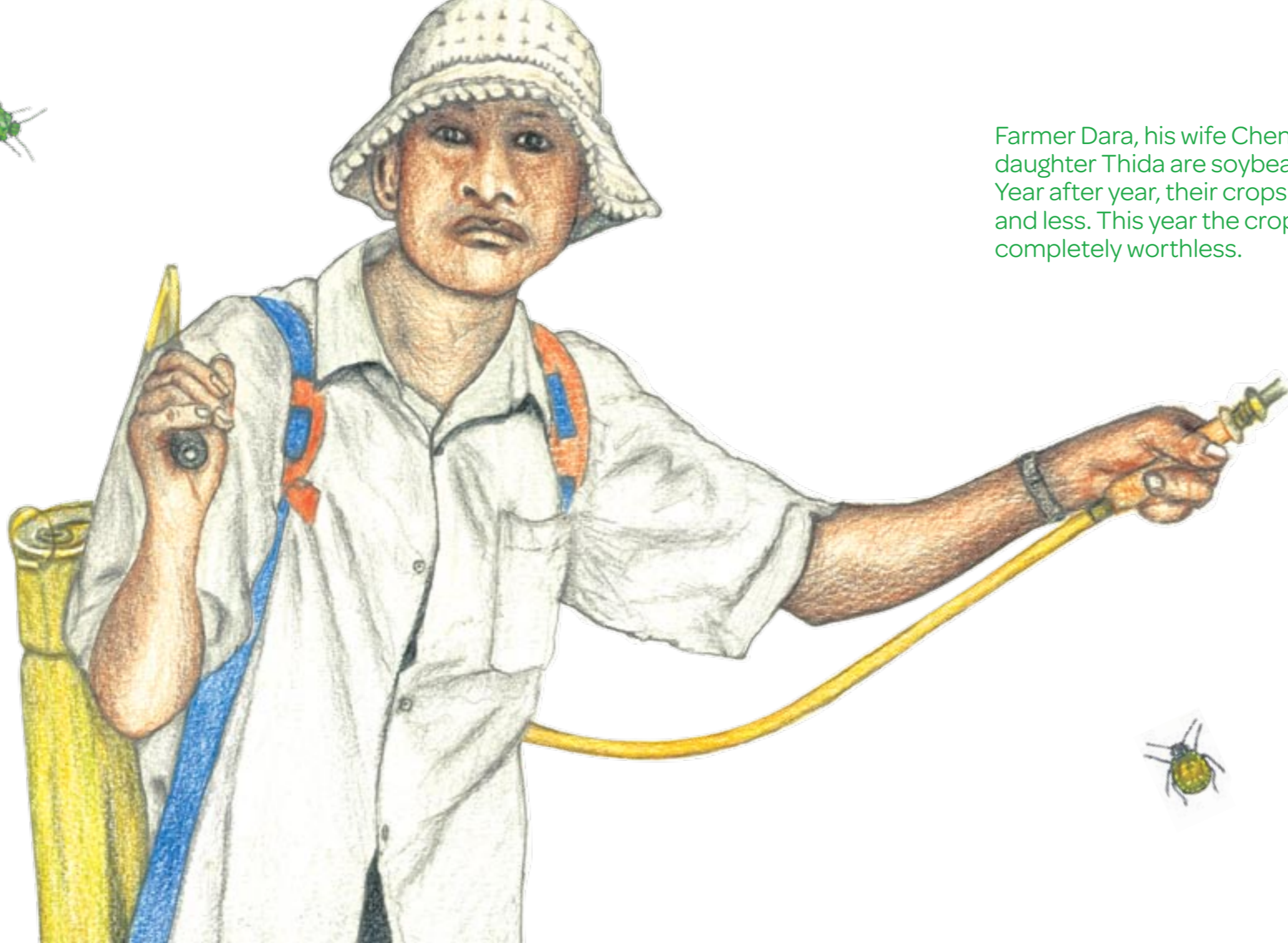


'No, Sareth. Our crop is safe. Let me tell you why.

'Our village, Samlaut, is home to many families who farm soybeans. But Samlaut is also home to many insects, like this one, because they like to suck on the soybean pods.

'Many families spray their crops to kill the insects but this doesn't always work. Mum and Dad thought that spraying was best but, after one very bad year, they started to wonder if there was a better way.

Luckily, one of our neighbours had a good crop that year and offered to give us some advice. She told us a story we will never forget...'



Farmer Dara, his wife Chenda and their daughter Thida are soybean farmers. Year after year, their crops yielded less and less. This year the crops were almost completely worthless.



Farmer Dara did his best in the fields. He sprayed as often as he could to get rid of all the bugs that were making their soybean pods look unhealthy and shrivelled.



As the rainy season approached, Farmer Dara got very sick. He coughed a lot and wasn't strong like he used to be. Late one night, an ambulance pulled up outside and took Farmer Dara to the hospital.



In the morning, Thida woke up to see her mother standing over her.

'Thida, last night, daddy was taken to hospital because of his sickness,' Chenda said.

Thida didn't know what to say. She was very worried.

For many days, Thida had pain in her heart. She missed her dad so much. But she still worked hard on her chores at home so her dad would be comfortable when he came back.

While looking after her baby brother one afternoon, Thida suddenly thought: *what are we going to do now that dad is not here to care for the fields?*



'It's time to sow the crop,' said her mum one day when Thida came home from school.

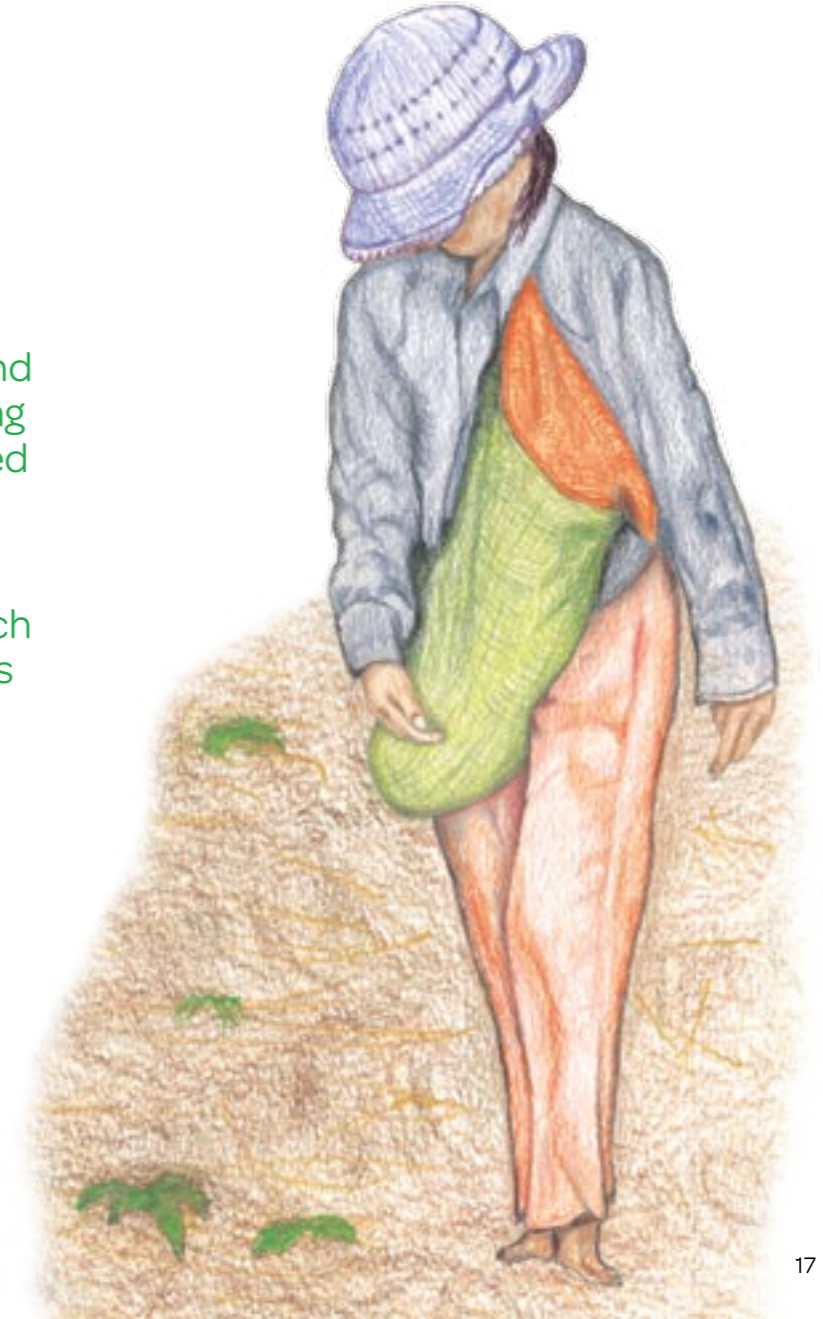
'But the bugs will ruin it. We have no spray,' protested Thida.

'Thida, listen to me. We must sow. We have no other way to earn money.'



Thida obeyed her mother and helped for many days, sowing the seeds they had harvested from last year's crop.

'I won't let you down, little seeds,' said Thida, 'I will watch you grow and find out what is harming you.'





Thida spent hours every day looking at the insects crawling on each plant in her crop. None of them seemed to be doing much at all.





When the time came for her crop to receive its first spray, she thought of her dad. She imagined him in his white hat, loose shirt and baggy trousers, a large knapsack strapped to his back.



He would hold a long spray gun in his left hand while his right hand pumped up and down, up and down, sending the deadly liquid squirting out of the gun. He would do this for hours, walking up and down the rows of plants, sweeping the spray gun side to side.

But not this year.