

THINK

Before You Plant

Extension Materials for Small-holder Rubber Farmers

1. Why Rubber Extension Materials?

There is much excitement about the potentials of rubber planting in Laos. However, it has been acknowledged by government officials, foreign experts and even experienced rubber farmers that – unless decisions are taken in a more informed and discriminating manner – the rubber boom will not make the desired contribution to the goals of poverty alleviation, stabilisation of shifting cultivation and reforestation.

These rubber extension materials have been produced in order to fill the gap in knowledge in rubber planting in Lao PDR. The purpose of these materials is not to promote rubber production, but to help farmers and extension staff make better decisions about if and how to produce rubber.

The materials were designed specifically for use in the 7 Northern provinces where smallholder rubber planting is more prevalent, but can also be used in other regions.

How were the materials developed?

These materials were produced by experts from NAFRI and NAFES in collaboration with staff from the Luang Namtha Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office. A strategic communication process was used whereby farmers and extension workers were involved in the design and testing of draft materials. The use of the final versions will be monitored, and revisions or additional items will be produced if required.

2. What materials have been produced?

Three separate but interlinked materials have been developed. They can be used on their own or integrated together for training sessions.



Radio Spots

Radio is one of the favored communication mechanisms of farmers. Three radio spots (each around 1 minute long) have been produced to provide farmers with general information on rubber planting, they include:

1. Strengths and weaknesses of rubber
2. Risks involved in rubber planting
3. Alternatives to rubber planting

The radio spots are meant for farmers thinking to plant rubber and have been produced in three languages: Lao, Khamu and Hmong. The spots will be played on Lao National Radio for three months (February – April 2008) and will be provided to all provincial culture and information offices. The spots can be played on village speaker systems or used as part of training sessions by NGOs.

Brochure Check List

Many farmers are planting rubber because they see their relatives or neighbors planting, or it is being promoted by a company. Other sources of information are lacking. This brochure provides a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of rubber planting, the basic social, economic and environmental conditions necessary to plant rubber, and alternatives to planting rubber if farmers do not meet these basic requirements.

While the brochure could be used directly by farmers who are literate, the brochure has been primarily developed to act as a discussion tool for extension staff or development workers to use with farmers or farmer groups.

Rubber Extension Manual

Until now there have been no reference books in Lao language on how to plant, manage and tap rubber. Many farmers and extension agents have requested that guidelines be prepared to assist them.

This manual is aimed at extension agents, development workers and village extension workers. It can act as a reference guide and be used in farmer training. The manual has been compiled based on experiences in rubber growing in Laos as well as synthesized information from neighboring countries (particularly China and Thailand).

Where to go to get support or more information?

All materials have been provided to district and provincial agriculture and forestry offices. If you are interested to receive copies of any of the materials please contact DAFO or PAFO offices or you can contact:

Information Management Center NAFRI

PO Box 7170, Vientiane, Tel: 021-770-089, Email: info@nafri.org.la

National Information Center for Extension NAFES

PO Box 811, Tel: 021-740-253, Email: info@laoex.org