

## WORKSHOP ON RESEARCH AND EXTENSION LINKAGES

### Summary Report

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Effective linkages among stakeholders in the agricultural sector are necessary to bring about greater productivity and better livelihoods of rural people. The linkages between extension, research and farmers are especially important. This was the subject of the workshop jointly organised by the National Agricultural and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES) and the National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), between November 1-2, 2005.

The workshop was opened by the honourable Vice-Minister, Dr. Ty Phommasack, and the sessions were chaired by the Directors General of NAFRI and NAFES. The 130 participants included Heads of Divisions within NAFES, NAFRI and other Departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Heads of all 18 Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFOs) and Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Extension Centres (PAFECs), as well as representatives of various projects, donor agencies and NGOs.

The purpose of the workshop was to explore opportunities for greater and more effective interaction among stakeholders in the agriculture sector. The programme started with an overview of international experiences on extension, research, and farmer linkages, followed by six presentations on successful cases of collaboration from Laos. The second day was dedicated to work in eight groups to elaborate concrete plans for collaboration between research, extension and farmers in priority areas.

In his closing speech, the Vice Minister concurred with the major proposals made during the workshop, particularly the emphasis to be placed on human resource development in the agriculture sector. He also expressed the view that good collaboration between research, extension and farmers, with the additional involvement of private enterprises, will result in true benefits for the Lao rural people.

This summary will be complemented by the complete proceedings and a CD with all workshop documents.

#### **Synthesis of outputs from the workshop**

Improvements in collaboration between research, extension, farmers and other stakeholders is a precondition for effective service delivery at the village level that will lead to greater productivity and better livelihoods. To achieve this, the following steps are proposed:

- Firstly, ensure that mandates, functions and job descriptions are clearly defined and put into practice. *For example*, staff at the Provincial level need a better understanding of their role in setting priorities for research and extension, and in coordinating development projects.
- Secondly, develop and disseminate practical procedures, methods and materials. *For example*, processes and tools should be made widely available in support of participatory planning and M&E at village and District level, as well to support farmer-led experimentation and adaptation of innovations to local conditions and the needs of the poor.
- Thirdly, establish jointly managed information systems. *For example*, at the central level a working group on information management should be created with representation of both NAFRI and NAFES. The Working Group should aim to make technical information and practical experience more accessible to Provincial and District staff, and create channels for feedback.
- Fourthly, undertake extensive human resource development. *For example*, District staff should get basic training and coaching for their new role as Farming System Extension Workers (FSEW). Training of trainers is urgently needed, and educational institutions should assess future requirements of the sector.
- Fifthly, test new strategies for input supply. *For example*, farmers and the private sector can fill gaps in capacity for seed multiplication and animal breeding. This will allow research and extension to focus on other roles, such as technology development, education and quality control.

***Outcome of group work: actions to be started in next six months***

Area of collaboration	Suggested actions
<p><b>1. Access to seed</b></p> <p>Working together to make sure farmers have the required quantity and quality of seeds and planting materials</p>	<p>Seed production centres in collaboration with PAFO to promote seed multiplication at village level e.g. through seed multiplication groups</p> <p>DAFEO and seed production centres to develop mechanisms to estimate demand for seed of different varieties (annually)</p> <p>DoA to pilot the establishment of quality control units for rice seed</p>
<p><b>2. Livestock systems</b></p> <p>Collaboration to improve livestock breeds and health throughout the country</p>	<p>Develop a strategic plan for the production and dissemination of improved breeds, and establish further research and breeding stations</p> <p>Expand or establish capacity for disease diagnosis and vaccination at province level and improve the network of village veterinarians</p> <p>Improve understanding of animal husbandry practices. Promote the integration of nutrition including forages into the livestock keeping systems.</p>
<p><b>3. Information management</b></p> <p>Working together to ensure a better exchange and more relevant processing of agricultural information</p>	<p>Each institution to determine a unit or persons responsible for coordinating information management</p> <p>Establishment of a joint working group consisting of representatives from NAFES and NAFRI</p> <p>The WG to inventorise available information into an “information map” as a basis to identify interfaces, overlaps and linkage needs</p>
<p><b>4. Agenda setting</b></p> <p>Increasing the contribution of Provincial staff to setting objectives and determining the content for research and extension</p>	<p>Clarify the roles of PAFEC and DAFEO in determining research and extension priorities and establish procedures for collaboration in innovation development at village level.</p> <p>Develop the capacity of DAFEO staff in supporting research work with farmers through training of trainers and then training of DAFEO staff.</p>
<p><b>5. Provincial coordination</b></p> <p>Improving planning and coordination among all stakeholders at the provincial level</p>	<p>Base provincial annual plans on village needs to be collected by DAFEO staff through supporting villages and clusters in planning</p> <p>Build mechanisms to make relevant research and other technical information accessible for PAFO and DAFEO staff</p> <p>PAFO to take a greater role in coordinating between projects.</p>
<p><b>6. DAFEO capacity building</b></p> <p>Strengthening the ability of DAFEO staff to be effective in their new role as ‘Farming Systems Extension Workers’</p>	<p>Build PAFEC capacity in training and coaching FSEWs through training of trainers using LEA, and in developing and adapting extension tools, aids and materials</p> <p>PAFO to develop coordination and linkage mechanisms to the central level as well as to the district level</p> <p>PAFO to make new DAFEO role and mandate widely known</p>
<p><b>7. Opportunities for the poor</b></p> <p>Mainstreaming participatory processes at District and Village level to ensure that agricultural innovations are more useful for the poor</p>	<p>Pilot the development of processes and tools for farmer-led experimentation and adaptation to local conditions of the many available innovation options</p> <p>Extensionists at village and district level to learn to use these processes and tools in collaboration with groups of farmers</p> <p>More resources to be channelled to the district level to enable extensionists to work closely with groups of farmers</p>
<p><b>8. The next generation</b></p> <p>Helping to ensure that future researchers and extension workers possess the required ability</p>	<p>Conduct a joint training needs assessment to determine the basic knowledge requirements of future professionals</p> <p>Adapt curricula of the educational institutions according to results of the assessment</p> <p>Identify topics for practical research to be undertaken by the educational institutions in collaboration with research and extension, with the involvement of both teachers and students</p>