



## FAO LAO PDR NEWSLETTER

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### Food security concerns discussed with Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

Mr Nasar Hayat - Food and Agriculture Organisation to the United Nations (FAO) Representative to Lao PDR – called on His Excellency Dr Phet Phomphiphak, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) on 21 April 2022 to raise the issue of rising food, fuel and fertilizer prices on food security for Lao PDR. Mr Hayat outlined a plan for FAO to undertake analysis to better understand the impact on food security in the country and the Minister affirmed MAF's full support. Recommendations from this analysis are due in July 2022.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to brief the Minister on FAO's *Hand-in-Hand Initiative (HIHI)* to turn the Laos-China railway into a green growth corridor, and on the selection of a product (still to be confirmed) for the new FAO initiative – “*One Country One Priority Product.*” Minister Phomphiphak expressed his delight with the initiatives.



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### New FAO initiative to raise the profile of a priority Lao product

FAO officially launched a new initiative on 10 May 2022 - “*One Country – One Priority Product (OCOP)*” - to be implemented across Asia and the Pacific. Lao tea has been proposed (still to be confirmed) for selection due to its special characteristics associated with geographical locations, farming practices and cultural heritage. Tea is also an important example of an underutilized product which can significantly contribute to

improving farmers' livelihoods and economic growth, while protecting the environment and biodiversity.

H.E. Thangphat Vongmany, Deputy Minister of MAF, attended the meeting and acknowledged the potential benefits to be derived from the OCOP initiative. He stated that “it provides a very useful platform for exploring and sharing our ideas and experiences. It encourages country ownership, strengthens collaboration and establishes sharing of technical expertise. It will also support practitioners to access market information, production technology and apply agricultural innovation in their businesses”.

Mr Nasar Hayat, FAO Representative to Lao PDR emphasized FAO's strong belief that increased cooperation and collaboration among Member Countries in the region, as evidenced by such initiatives, will hasten recovery from COVID-19 in a structured and sustainable way.



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## Training workshop to strengthen DAEC staff capacity to better understand farmer needs

Training on the Farmer Information Needs Assessment (FINA) approach under FAO's TAP-AIS project took place in Vientiane in late March 2022. The aim was for participants to learn, in an interactive manner, the importance of understanding farmer needs, and the approaches and tools training required to conduct the necessary assessments. This training was the first step in capacity development support to strengthen the Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives' (DAEC) ability to provide services that are demand-driven and more responsive to farmers' needs.

The training was well attended with 17 in-person participants from the national DAEC staff and the Lao Korea Development Centre (KOICA) as well as over 20 virtual participants from DAEC's wide network of provincial staff. FAO collaborated with regional experts from the Centre for Research on Science and Innovation Policy (CRISP) to organize and implement this training.

The next steps involve the trainees conducting a needs assessment with farmers in the field and analyzing the results to develop a way forward. Strengthened extension services provided by DAEC will in turn empower Lao farmers to innovate in order to improve their livelihoods and climate resilience.

## New Atlas delivers accessible scientific data on climate change in Lao PDR

Five years of work has finally delivered the *Climate and Agro Atlas of Lao PDR*. Launched on 3 May 2022 by Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), H.E. Mr Chanthanet Boulapha, and Mr Nasar Hayat, FAO Representative to Lao PDR, the Atlas is a product of FAO's SAMIS project - "Strengthening agro-climatic monitoring and information systems to the adaptation to climate change and food security in Lao PDR".

The new Atlas provides a one-stop platform for enabling existing complex climate data to be utilised in an easy-to-grasp format. The capacity to manage this data has also been developed throughout the year under the program. Advanced statistical capacities on climate services and data treatment will remain available and guarantee the sustainability of the product.

The Atlas is available to download in English and Lao at: <https://www.fao.org/in-action/samis>.

The Atlas climate change data is freely downloadable from the LRIMS system at <https://lrims-dalam.net>.

The LaCSA system is available at [www.lacsa.net](http://www.lacsa.net) and in the Apple and Android store.

Regular updates will be available at <https://www.facebook.com/samisdmh>.

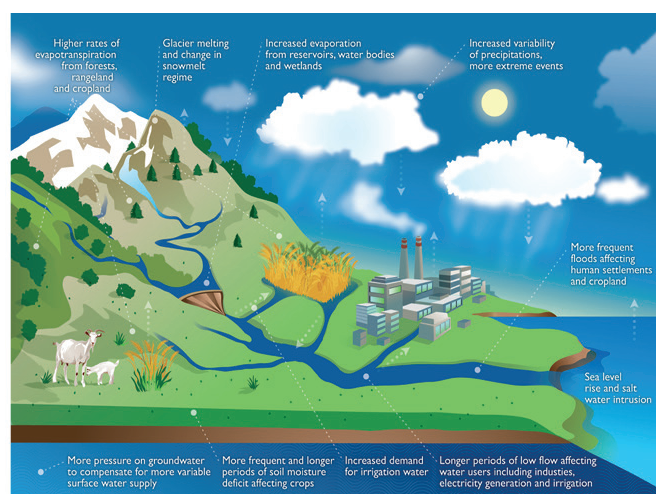


Figure 2. How climate change affects all the elements of the water cycle and its impact on agriculture.  
Source: FAO (2013b)



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## Vientiane Times Q&A on food security with the FAO Representative to Lao PDR

FAO Representative to Lao PDR – Mr Nasar Hayat – sat down with *The Vientiane Times* on 3 June 2022 to discuss the increasing concern at global and national level around growing levels of food insecurity and its potential to reverse years of development gains, as well as threaten the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Mr Hayat outlined some of the global issues at play: COVID-19 policy impacts on economies and supply chains, climate change and increasing natural disasters, and conflicts. The confluence of these have caused an increase in food and fertilizer prices that have an especially difficult impact on people in low and middle-income countries such as Laos as they spend a larger share of their income on these essentials compared to people in high-income countries.

Mr Hayat explained that “we all have seen, anecdotally, what this price jump has done to everyone’s budget here in Lao PDR, but we need more data to understand its impact on the most vulnerable households and food security in Lao PDR. For this reason, FAO is partnering with IFAD and WFP to conduct a research study– a Food and Nutrition Security and Livelihoods Assessment - to analyze the impact of rising global prices on food and nutrition security, household incomes and livelihoods in the country”.

The assessment will be finalized in July 2022 and will include recommendations for the Government of Lao PDR. “FAO stands ready to then assist with the implementation of prioritized recommendations” Mr Hayat noted.



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## Lao PDR expresses appreciation to FAO for its critical role in ensuring food security

FAO Representative to Lao PDR - Mr Nasar Hayat - called on Assoc. Dr. Linkham Duangsavanh, Chairman of the Lao National Assembly’s Economic, Technological, and Environment Committee on 22 April 2022. The purpose of the call was to discuss the FAO Action Plan for Lao PDR and future cooperation.

Assoc. Dr. Linkham Duangsavanh noted his appreciation of FAO’s commitment to Lao PDR, particularly MAF, for its critical role in food security, production, forestry, and environmental protection. He also suggested future collaboration between FAO and other relevant government agencies, to develop policies, measures and capacity building to accelerate commercial agricultural production.

Mr Hayat stated that he would continue to support, encourage, and strengthen the good cooperation between the Lao PDR and FAO for future development.



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## Tea Sector Development potential discussed with the Governor of Phongsaly Province

Following discussions with the Lao Government on the possibility of raising the profile of the tea sector, the sector was a major focus of discussion between FAO and the Governor of Phongsaly Province at a meeting in Phongsaly on 2 June 2022. Mr Khamphoy Vannasane, Governor of Phongsaly Province, noted that a tea development strategy was already in place, but the Province requires capacity

building support for everyone involved in the tea value chain (producers, aggregators and processors) to reach its full potential. Mr Nasar Hayat, FAO Representative to Lao PDR assured continued support where appropriate.



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## Successful Agro Innovation Market Fair held in Vientiane

FAO in collaboration with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) opened a public agriculture innovation fair on 30 May 2022. Agricultural innovation has huge potential in Lao PDR to increase farmer incomes, improve food and nutrition security and allow for sustainable management of natural resources. The aim of the event was to provide a platform to highlight and exchange ideas and facilitate partnerships between investors and policy makers.

The market fair was held over four days with more than 50 agriculture producers from throughout Laos invited to display and sell their agriculture products. It was a valuable opportunity to bring farmer groups and associations, smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs closer to consumers and allow for discussion around potential collaborations.

The fair also hosted a series of presentations and panel discussions with a focus on research and development in agriculture innovation and capacity development. The first discussion included panelists drawn from a number of government departments, the private sector and farmer organizations to share views and discuss ways to improve agricultural innovation in Lao PDR. The second presentation provided young farmers, researchers, students and entrepreneurs an opportunity to outline their stories and challenges in agricultural innovation to policymakers. A student debate and contest on 'Our Vision for Agricultural Innovation' was also a highlight of this activity. A seminar presenting research reports on agriculture, forestry and rural development was also chaired by NAFRI.



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## FAO workshops held to discuss rice-cum-fish farming in Attapeu Province

FAO, together with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) of MAF, successfully organized a series of consultation workshops in Sanamxay District, Attapeu Province, between 4 and 8 May 2022, for the rice-cum-fish farming (Integrated Farming) activity. This activity is part of the "Building Climate-Resilient and Eco-friendly Agriculture Systems and Livelihoods (Climate REAL)" project, funded by KOICA.

FAO is helping farmers rediscover rice-cum-fish farming, a traditional Asian practice where fish, or other aquatic animals like frogs, eat the insects and worms and the pond water is then used to fertilize rice and other crops. This practice has fallen away in recent times due to the intensification of rice production and pesticide use but is being reintroduced to promote species diversification and biodiversity.

The consultation workshops involved discussions with Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices as well as farmer representatives and village authorities on lessons learned from a similar project successfully implemented by FAO in Savannakhet Province. The workshops were then followed by site visits to demonstration farms. Farmer-Field-School (FFS) will be established around these farms, which is when farmers meet for weekly participatory hands-on group learning, frank discussion of problems and brainstorming of solutions for improved practices.

A total of 103 beneficiary households in seven target villages of Sanamxay District have been identified through the project baseline survey for participation in this activity. In addition to selling rice from the paddy fields, rice-fish farming will assist with food security by allowing farmers to earn extra income from selling fish or aquatic animals raised in the rice paddy fields and also reducing the need for fertilizer and pesticides.



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## FAO, Japan provide 35,640 chickens to farmers in Oudomxay and Luang Prabang

Some 3,887 vulnerable farmers in Luang Prabang and Oudomxay Provinces received local and improved breeds of chicken between April and June 2022 from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The support, valued at 2.32 billion kip, will boost egg production thus helping communities recover from the economic hardships caused by the COVID 19 pandemic and strengthening resilience to future shocks.

The FAO project, titled "Assistance for Smallholders and Socially Vulnerable to Prevent Spread of the COVID-19 in the Lao PDR", funded by the Government of Japan, will support the most vulnerable households (approximately 37,000 people) in 55 villages of seven districts in Luang Prabang and Oudomxay provinces. Beneficiaries include women-headed households, vulnerable families, producer groups, youth and returning migrant workers.

FAO chose local and improved breeds of poultry due to its high economic, market and household value and suitability for remote and mountainous locations. They will be checked by veterinarians and vaccinated before they are handed over to the farmers. Importantly, beneficiaries will also receive training on chicken husbandry, including meat and egg production, and marketing.



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## USAID, FAO provide PPE to Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF)

A handover ceremony of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and disinfectant materials was held at DLF in Vientiane on 25 April 2022. The support was made possible through USAID under the FAO implemented Global Health Security Project, and was attended by USAID Country Representative to Laos - Mr Michael Ronning - and FAO Representative to the Lao PDR - Mr Nasar Hayat.

Director General of the Department of Livestock and Fisheries - Ms Vilayphone Vorrachim - noted that "Lao PDR has long borders with five neighbors and as there is substantial cross-border trade of livestock and livestock products, there is a high risk of the introduction of common and new emerging animal transmissible diseases. With this donation, veterinarians and animal health workers will have their safety ensured especially for highly pathogenic avian influenza, brucellosis, leptospirosis and rabies".

The supplies consisted of full body suits, masks, gloves, goggles, shoe protectors and disinfectant worth over USD 50,000 and will be delivered to all 148 districts in the Lao PDR. Mr. Hayat stressed that livestock diseases adversely impact the food system, food security and nutrition, and income security, for the rural population, especially for the poor and the most vulnerable. "Many people, especially in the rural population have been pushed back to hunger and poverty due to the loss of livestock caused by diseases such as African Swine Fever and Avian Influenza." he stated.



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## Policy Brief: Antimicrobial resistance in livestock in the Lao PDR

The ECTAD team of FAO recently published a policy brief on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in livestock in Laos. ECTAD works closely with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) of MAF to address AMR and irresponsible antimicrobial use (AMU) in the livestock sector. Apart from highlighting achievements, the policy brief also outlines both strategic and practical advice on how to reduce AMR and AMU.

The policy brief can be accessed here: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb9344en/cb9344en.pdf>

## Quarterly *One Health* Coordination Meeting held in May 2022

The Quarterly *One Health* Coordination Meeting between the National Animal Health Laboratory, DLF, MAF, and the National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology, Department of Communicable Disease Control, Ministry of Health, was conducted on 3 May 2022 in Vientiane. Organised by DLF, the meeting aimed to exchange information on surveillance, investigation and response to Avian Influenza in Luang Prabang Province; resume and strengthen *One Health* coordination between human and animal health sectors particularly; and enhance the coordination and collaboration for rapid detection and response in Laos.

Invited guests included the National Animal Health and Policy Specialist, Dr. Bounlom Douangngeun, and the National Animal Health Specialist, Dr. Soubanh Silithammavong who shared technical expertise on the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases.

## *One Health* expansion through a pilot Environment Sector Country Mapping and Needs Assessment in Lao PDR



© FAO/Dr. Soubanh Silithammavong

A pilot of the *FAO Environment Sector Country Mapping and Needs Assessment Tool* was conducted with Lao PDR in a workshop held 4-5 May 2022 in Vientiane.

As a result of the workshop, FAO was able to enhance the environment sector's understanding of its role and contribution to the *One Health* initiative including in the prevention of the drivers of disease emergence and mitigation of environmental degradation or waste with implications for health. Importantly, the workshop resulted in the identification of key *One Health* risks in Lao PDR and contributed to a comprehensive *One Health* assessment for the country.

Assessment was hosted by the World Bank with strong leadership and support from MAF, including attendance by the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Forestry. It was led by Dr. Scott Newman, Senior Animal Health & Production Officer and the *One Health* Regional Program Priority Lead with the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) of FAO team in Lao PDR providing technical support.



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## Urgent need for awareness raising activities on antimicrobial resistance in animal health in Laos

Under the auspices of FAO ECTAD in Laos, in collaboration with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF), the National Animal Health Laboratory conducted provincial workshops to raise the awareness levels of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Three key conclusions were drawn from the meeting of 835 stakeholders from all 18 provinces:

- the concept of the *One Health* approach, in which multiple sectors work together to achieve better public health outcomes in combatting AMR, is still poorly understood;
- although the risks and causes of AMR at central and provincial level are understood, the level of understanding is very limited at district and commune level;
- antimicrobial use (AMU) is not restricted in the human, animal and environmental sectors and there are no immediate plans by the Government of Lao PDR to enforce restrictions of the (mis)use of antimicrobials.

Additional awareness raising campaigns of AMR are needed at community and farm level.



©FAO/Dr. Bounlom Douangneun

## Refresher training on sampling and identifying bacterial cultures provided to strengthen Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) surveillance practices in Laos

Recent laboratory testing on 160 chicken faecal samples in Champasack and Savannakhet Provinces revealed resistance of *Salmonella* spp. to Ceftazidime in Champasack's samples and resistance of *Salmonella* spp. to Ceftazidime and Cefotaxime in Savannakhet's samples. These antimicrobials are considered to

be of public health importance.

Such important findings were realized thanks to refresher hands on training on proper sampling and identification of bacterial culture recently delivered by FAO to relevant Provincial Animal Health Laboratory (PAHL) staff in Champasak and Savannakhet Provinces. The training was provided during the first quarter of 2022 to enhance knowledge and skills to continue conducting AMR surveillance in their respective provinces.



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## Reflection workshop with farmers in Lao PDR on newly developed agribusiness training

A reflection workshop was held with Lao farmers between 27-28 April 2022 to obtain their comprehensive feedback on draft agribusiness training modules being developed by the Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (NAFC) in close collaboration with FAO, the Lao Farmer Network (LFN), Lao Upland Rural Advisory

Services (LURAS) and DAEC. The workshop was held at the NAFC's campus in Luang Prabang province and was attended by 34 participants (22 participants, or 65% of whom were women) representing individual farmers, farmer cooperatives and the participating organizations.

The feedback and contributions made during the meeting will be used to further develop and finalize the agribusiness and market-oriented training modules and make them more practically feasible and respond to the needs of smallholder farmers, in particular women farmers.



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## FAO completes disaster risk management training for officials in Attapeu Province

FAO and Department of Planning and Cooperation, MAF, successfully completed training in late May 2022 on *Disaster Risk Management/Climate Change Adaptation (DRM/CCA) Planning* for government officials. The five modules of training were provided under the *Climate REAL* project, funded by KOICA.

The Deputy Director General of Department of Planning and Cooperation, MAF, Dr. Phommy Inthichak, acknowledged the significance of the *Climate REAL* project and its activities noting "Specifically, this series of training will strengthen the capacity of our personnel on disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the "Action Plan" for Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (DRM) in the agriculture and forestry sector".

Mr. Fongsamay Manyvong, Deputy Head of Agriculture and Forestry Office in Xaysettha District, outlined how natural disasters significantly impact the livelihoods of villagers as well as food security within the country. He noted that "Upon completion of the modules, I feel more comfortable and confident with disaster risk preparedness and management". He committed himself to raising awareness of the work within his networks and indicated he would seek to put together a team to develop a project proposal outlining key intervention activities for future disasters.