

Pathways for future farmers in Southeast Asia

Key details

Location

Lao PDR

Duration

Start Aug 2024

End Mar 2026

Budget

AUD 957,210

Commissioned organisation

University of Canberra

Partners

National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute, Lao PDR; National University of Laos

Project leader

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Program

Social Systems

Project code

SSS/2022/134

Research need

This project aims to identify impact pathways for inclusive sustainable smallholder farmers from the present to 2050. These pathways will accommodate and encourage the behavioural changes required of farmers to enhance sustainable livelihoods and include incentives and supporting policies.

Smallholder farmers produce 40% of the global food supply and in Southeast Asia, smallholder farmers produce 30% of food commodities. The impacts of global food shortages, the rise of Chinese agricultural markets, unfolding climate change impacts in the region, and political complexities in Southeast Asia are leading to significant transformations in smallholder farming. However, it is expected that smallholder farmers will continue to produce a significant proportion of the world's food.

As traditional farming arrangements are under pressure to transform, the social structure on which traditional farming is based is changing and the protective policies introduced to support farmers are ineffective. There is a gap in understanding not only who will be the smallholder farmers of the future but also what are the pathways for sustainable livelihoods into the future? Knowledge and understanding needs to be developed for the transitions, adaptations or transformations that farmers will be required to make, and of the policy, sociological, agricultural and development interventions required to support future farmers in Southeast Asia.

Acknowledging the importance of smallholder farmers, this project seeks to contribute to the resilience of



smallholder farming, and to the improved recognition of their contribution to regional food security, employment, and natural resource management.

Working closely with its related ACIAR project, Future Farmers in Viet Nam ([SSS/2024/108](#)), the focus of this research is to support improved policy outcomes and decision-making by increasing farmer capability, improving resilience and risk management, and reducing poverty. It is a foundational piece of work that supports the ACIAR programming and country strategies in Southeast Asia, as well as informing key regional stakeholders on policy options and prospective trajectories for smallholder farmers.



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