

Strengthening policy and research integration for agricultural and rural development in Laos



Key details

Location

Laos

Duration

Start Mar 2025

End Jul 2030

Budget

AUD 3,190,000

Commissioned organisation

Stockholm Environment Institute Asia

Partners

National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute, Laos; Rural Systems Research Services

Project Leader

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Program

Social Systems

Project code

SSS/2023/160

Research need

This project aims to improve the integration of research evidence from agricultural and rural development in policy review, dialogue and development processes in Laos.

The agriculture sector plays a crucial role in the Lao economy, accounting for approximately 20% of GDP and employing around 80% of the workforce. Recognising the significance of agriculture, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has prioritised agricultural development and implemented a comprehensive policy agenda to enhance agricultural productivity, efficiency and competitiveness.

The Lao government is committed to evidence-based approaches in developing and adapting this policy agenda, as evidenced by the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2021-2025, which emphasises the use of evidence and data in policy decision-making.

This project will leverage expertise within the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and support its renewed commitment to evidence-based policy development and its willingness to strengthen the mandate of the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) to provide research results



for policy development. However, there is need to increase the capacity of NAFRI to operate as the primary institution to prepare policy-relevant knowledge for various government departments and international development partners.

The primary objective of the project is to explore and implement successful approaches and pathways that bridge the gap between research and policy development. Through policy studies, capacity support and policy dialogue, as well as including other ongoing ACIAR-supported research, the project seeks to strengthen NAFRI to become the primary research-to-policy conduit in the field of agriculture and rural development, ultimately leading to the effective presentation of research evidence to the policy development process in Lao PDR.

- future policies developed in Laos are based on research provided by the national innovation system
- key policy documents are developed on the basis of research facilitated through project activities
- NAFRI becomes a mentor for other national research institutes.



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Activities

This project aims to support evidence-based policy development by actioning 3 concurrent approaches:

- analysing existing institutions and processes along the research–policy spectrum and identifying potential improvements for research-based policy development
- producing case studies to demonstrate the benefits and efficacy of evidence-based policy development
- engaging in policy dialogue (based on case studies and institutional analysis) within existing stakeholder interactions, to renew relevance and improve communication between the research institutions and policymakers.

Expected outcomes

The project strives to build capacity within the Lao agriculture research and development sector so that evidence established by research becomes a foundational element of policy development for the benefit of rural residents. Desired project outcomes are:

- the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) is established as a key national research institute in the development of rural policy