Mapping and Assessing Universitybased Farmer Extension Services in Laos through an Agroecological/Organic Lens

Dr. Saythong Vilayvong

Research & Academic Service Office, National University of Laos

Email: vilayvong2003@gmail.com

Dr. Malavanh Chittavong

Faculty of Agriculture, National University of Laos Email: <u>malavanc@yahoo.com</u> Lack of information on the role of university in support/inhibit the sustainable agriculture.

Do universities have adequate knowledge, scientific expertise and service systems or technical support to train students for AE/OA ?





 This study aims to understand the role of universities for farmer extension services and their contribution to ecologically sustainable agriculture and rural development.



Results

- 1. Policy frame work related to agro ecology extension
 - The policies, strategies, laws and regulations regarding agro-ecology are clear formulated by MAF under the principles of *"Sustainable resource utilization and land-use planning"*
 - The "Clean, Safe and Sustainable agriculture" is integrated in the strategy for agriculture sector through 2025 and vision until 2030 of the MAF

2. General state of the agriculture extension system in Laos

- The overall extension system in Laos is implemented by the MAF
- Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperatives (DAEC) under the MAF is the main actor for implementing.
- The extension system is distinguished in chronological time line:
 - o 1975-1985: Agriculture Cooperative (Sahakhorn)
 - 1986-2001: New Economic Mechanisms. It was impacted to farmers in 10 years later by 1996. But no extension approach in implementing.

- 2002-Present: The Laos Extension Approach (LEA).
 The LEA consists of 2 fundamental systems:
 - Government Extension Service (GES) = DAEC + PAFO + DAFO
 - Village Extension Service (VES) = Village authorities
 + Village Extension Workers (VEW)
- **2013-2014:** MAF adapted the Agriculture Cooperative (AC).
- Present day:
 - Mainly is LEA and AC will be formed for activities relate to market.



The formal structure of LEA

The formal structure of AC

3. University specific in Laos

- There is cooperation between MAF and university to support agro ecology/organic agriculture.
- The university plays a role on:
 - 1) Human resource development,
 - 2) Curriculum development,
 - 3) Research and Extension, and
 - 4) Academic service.





The general extension system in agro ecology at university

Teaching program to support AE

• 8 BSc curriculums:

- Crop production (2 curriculums)
- Plant protection
- Livestock (2 curriculums)
- Fishery
- Agricultural economics and Food technology
- Veterinary
- 3 Master programs:
 - Sustainable Agriculture Resources Management
 - Crop Science
 - Animal Science
- **1 Doctoral program:** Rural Development

4. Agro ecology/Organic agriculture specific in Laos

- The organic agricultural concept has been introduced in Laos since 2000 by the Swiss NGO, Helvetas.
- 2005 CIRAD supported the organic coffee production in the south part.
- Nowadays, it spreads over the country
- There are 2 types of organic producers in Laos:
 - Certified organic producer
 - Non-certified organic producer

Certified organic producer

- There 90 farmer's groups & 17 companies received certification, which represent 1,637 farmers & 3,240 ha.
- The OA land increased by 80% from 2008 to 2015.
- The Gol of Laos targeted 70,000 certified organic producers by 2030 according to the MAF strategy.
- Currently, 5,000 ha of coffee is certified by IFOAM Asia & Fair Trade.
- Only coffee, tea & rice are exported to EU. While the fresh vegetable and fruit are sold in the domestic markets with about 30 tons.

Non-Certified organic producer

- Mostly supported by NPAs, INGOs & the international project
- Among of 59 stakeholders were identified, of which 50 stakeholders are involved in the Organic Agriculture.

SWOT analysis for the University-based Farmer Extension Services through an Agro-ecological/Organic Lens

Strengths

- Has a clear vision and strategy
- Have human resource
- Have teaching & learning programs
- Have laboratory facilitations

Opportunities

- Increase the linkage between MAF & NUOL
- Need assessment of impacts of AES to farmers
- Increase research support & disseminate findings
- Need research on the perceptions of students, farmers and faculty regarding the university-based extension
- Need improvement of marketing system
- Need expand extension service in agroecology to farmers & students

Weakness

 Small gap of the price between conventional and organic products

OA faces with a high production cost

Lack of impacts assessment of agro ecology extension at the grass root level

Threats

Low association between MAF and NUOL

Teaching time is 80%, while only 20% is for research work No specific research fund for support in agroecology/organic agriculture

Conclusion

- The main actors of agro ecology extension/organic agriculture in Laos are the MAF, development organizations and private sectors with the use of LEA and AC approaches. They provide training, hand coaching, and some production initiative inputs to farmers.
- FAG, NUOL is only the higher education institute has been supporting in agro ecology extension through teaching, trainings, academic services, and research. They also play role in improvement of curriculum & laboratory facilitations.
- There are 60 agro-ecological initiatives were identified and all of them are involved in OA.

Thank you for your attention