

CANSEA a R&D Network on Agroecology Transition in South East Asia

Supporting the Lao facilitated ASEAN initiative on Agroecology (LICA)

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The Lao Initiative on Agroecology for the ASEAN country Members



Key results and lessons learned from the Action

A bottom-up and participatory network is set, from local practitioners on agroecological transition (key farmers, experienced extensionists and project managers, local Ngo and associations, national consultants and staffs...) to ASEAN countries decision-makers, in order to feed ASEAN countries policies with practitioners' proposals.

This bottom-up community has been valued both at the ASEAN level

(official acknowledgement and involvement into the ASEAN working groups process) and the regional community of practitioners (on-line platform and database).

The Lao part of this bottom-up community has set a first concept note about Policies for an agroecological transition that will be shared and improved with the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Burmese part of the network in 2019.

The key lesson learned from this process relies on the fact that, as regards intuitional and policy support to the agroecological transition, there is a sound community of experienced practitioners in ASEAN countries but only a deep enquiry (bottom-up process) in the field succeeds to identify (which is that has been done during this action).

Context of the Action

The Lao Initiative on Conservation Agriculture (LICA) had been endorsed in the SOM-AMAF and the **34th AMAF Meeting in Vientiane**, Lao PDR, on the 27 September 2012. Lao PDR proposed to launch and coordinate an initiative to develop and disseminate CA in the ASEAN region, which was endorsed by AMS Countries. In line with this initiative, Lao PDR suggested developing a Common Position on CA for AMS. A Concept Note was developed and circulated to **SOM-AMAF Meeting in Malaysia in 2013**. Then, in August 2015 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, the **Special SOM 36th AMAF** suggested that Lao PDR should continue the initiative and urged AMS to actively participate in LICA.

The **1st Lao Initiative Conservation Agriculture Meeting** was held on 5th to 6th May 2016, Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Meeting was attended by five ASEAN Member States (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Singapore), ASEAN Secretariat, and domestic senior officials. It has been asked to enlarge the scope of LICA to all agroecology (AE) practices. The main outcomes of this meeting were presented to the **23rd meeting of the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Crops** held on 21-22 July 2016, in Vientiane Lao PDR.

It was agreed that Lao PDR facilitates the LICA initiative by establishing a coordination unit that is composed of a focal points (country representative) from each respective countries.

Lao PDR will be in charge to facilitate stocktaking studies about current practices implemented among AMS. The meeting viewed that the initiative is a crosscutting issue that deal with other sectors and suggested to set links with others ASWG and *Climate Change adaptation initiative*.

At the Lao level, a national LICA task has been set up. A first meeting was hold on 14th March 2016, and a second one on 8th August 2017. These two meetings help to clarify and validate the scope of this initiative (not only CA but AE), and its challenge: to share, compare and if possible homogenize the national regulations to promote AE at the regional level, which will be used as a reference to draft ToR for developing Common Position of ASEAN towards CA Agro ecology. Lao PDR has endorsed the above conclusions to the Special 38th SOM AMAF meeting in Singapore, 14-15 August 2017.

CIRAD is engaged since 1998 in the field of Conservation Agriculture in 4 countries of ASEAN, namely Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia, and more particularly in Lao PDR in partnership with DALaM. With the implementation of the ACTAE regional project (AFD funding), this involvement aims at valuing Conservation Agriculture and aggregating other agroecological approaches and practices. In 2017, as a part of this action CIRAD proposes to pursue its support to MAF and DALaM to set-up, through ACTAE project, the LICA's task force that will be in charge of the promotion of CA and beyond others agroecological approaches.



Objectives of the Action

Three main supports are identified to reach this goal, with:

- A financial support to two meetings of the Lao task force for LICA in 2017
- A financial support to the DALaM facilitation of the Lao LICA task force
- The co-facilitation with DALaM of the action plan (see below) to prepare a LICA policy brief in late 2017, which will be submitted to the Lao government and ASEAN partners.

Partnership

This action is a support, not a direct implementation, to a Lao government mission to facilitate an ASEAN initiative on agroecological transition. The core partner is the Lao department that the government, and specifically the MAF, has designed to implement this facilitation: the DALaM. The other partners are the focal points that the governments of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam have designed to represent their countries. The last circle of partners are the focal points of the other governments of ASEAN, if designed.

The second side of the partnership is the different stakeholders that are progressively gathered to feed this national and ASEAN exchanges, i.e. the bottom-up network of experienced practitioners within first four countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam).

Location and description of the Action

In 2017, Lao PDR LICA staff was coached to launch, first at its own country level, a bottom-up participatory design of four elements that will feed a regional reflection on an ASEAN common position on agroecology:

- a) Set up a network of Lao field practitioners about the different AE approaches (a "LICA practitioners community", on-line available), then facilitate their knowledge exchanges,

...as a first step of a following regional LICA community of AE experts.

- b) Facilitate these Lao practitioners to set a first (Lao) concept-note for an ASEAN Common position on agroecology (shared understanding of AE, relevant policy mechanisms and tools, key actions and teams to be linked),

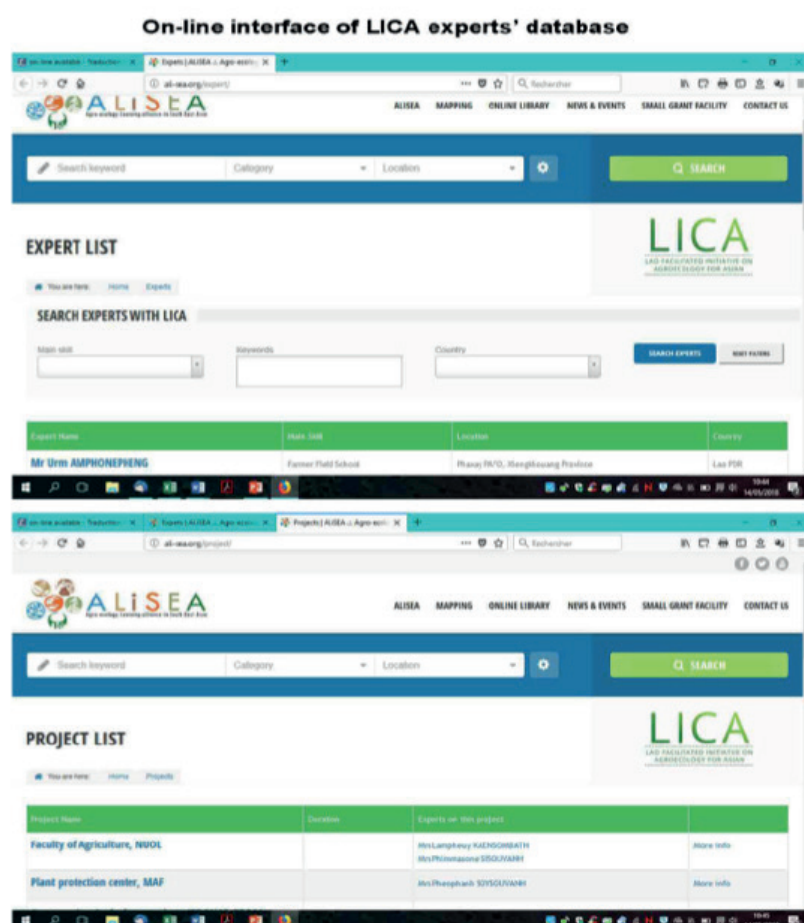
...as a first step before following proposals from the other countries "LICA communities".

- c) Facilitate these Lao practitioners to identify a "lead action for LICA" in Lao PDR that could be followed by a regional LICA community,

...as a first step before other AMS countries' suggested lead country actions.

- d) Link up LICA with the other initiatives in Lao PDR, included ASEAN initiatives in Lao PDR, which are closed to LICA issue. A scoping study identified these initiatives and their focal points, which will be involved into the next LICA steps.

...as a first step before other AMS countries' suggested lead country actions.



In 2018, Lao PDR is starting to expand this facilitation process to three other countries (Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar), with the help of countries LICA focal points:

- a) A regional meeting was held on 21st March, who brought together ASEAN secretary, Lao officials, and country LICA focal points from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar.
- b) A first directory of Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Myanmar field practitioners (a regional "LICA community") has been added to the Lao directory, and the whole database has been set on-line (see picture below).
- c) The whole approach and its first outputs has been officially presented by Lao government, and acknowledged by ASEAN, at the ASEAN working group on crops on 12th July 2018.

Expected impacts and prospects

The key first impact of this process is to value a regional field community of practitioners, and succeed to involve them into the official ASEAN debating process.

However, this bottom-up network and its link with the ASEAN decision-makers is just set and need to be developed in order to be impactful. The first requirement is to develop in Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam the same bottom-up process that has been implemented in Lao PDR. National focal points and staffs have been identified and are ready to start the implementation, under Lao staff coordination. In this way, the first concept note on Policies to support agroecological transition will be improved, then supported, by the four countries and then will feed ASEAN decision-making process.

Useful links and contacts

<http://ali-sea.org/lica-documents/>