

Activity Report

Project Name and Code	Enhancing Sustainable Tourism, Clean Production and Export Capacity in Lao People's Democratic Republic (LAO0TBAJ)
Commission by	UNCTAD
Activity	Lao Organic Agriculture Forum (platform public-private sector dialogue)
Place and Date	Mercure Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 23 March 2012
Report by	Vitoon Panyakul and Nittha Poeyjatuek

1. Specific Objectives of the Activity

The main objectives of this Forum are:

- To update participants on the national situation of organic agriculture development in Lao PDR
- To facilitate a sharing among public and private sectors in Lao PDR on organic agricultural development
- To strengthen the national organic sector and support the development of organic agriculture in Lao PDR

2. Schedule of the Forum

08.30 – 09.00	Registration at meeting room of Phongsaly room, Mercure Hotel,
09.00 – 10.00	Opening and Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Open by acting Director General, Trade and Product Promotion Department, Ministry of Industry and Commerce▪ Open by Director General, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry▪ Keynote speaker: Dr. Sophia Twarog, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD▪ Keynote speaker: Mr. Andre Leu, IFOAM President
10.00 – 10.15	Coffee break
10.15 – 12.00	Status of Lao Organic Sector <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview presentation: Mr. Vitoon Panyakul (General Secretary, Earth Net Foundation and UNCTAD Consultant)• Participants sharing their experiences
12.00 - 13.30	Lunch break
13.30 – 14.30	Brain Storming Session (small group discussion) "Identifying Needs and Priority Lao Organic Agricultural Development"
14.30 – 15.00	Coffee break
15.00 – 16.00	Plenary Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report back of the small group discussion• Discussion on the future activities
16.00 – 16.30	Closing of the workshop

3. Participants

There were 40 participants from public and private sectors. Table below show the category breakdown. The full list of participant with their signature can be found in Appendix 1.

	male	Female	Total
Public agency	10	7	17
Private sector	5	3	8
Observer	1	2	3
Organizer	3	2	5
Journalist	5	2	7
Grand total	24	16	40

4. Inputs and Documents

There were 4 inputs and documents circulated and presented at the Forum, i.e.

- Document “Lao National Organic Forum: Rationale and Vision”, 1 page
- Powerpoint “The Multiple Benefits of Organic Agriculture” by Andre Leu, IFOAM President, 25 pages
- Powerpoint “Organic Agriculture in Lao PDR: Overview” by Vitoon Panyakul, UNCTAD Consultant, 12 pages
- Powerpoint “Organic Agriculture in Lao PDR” by Thongsavath Chanthasombath , Clean Agriculture Development Center, 20 pages

These documents have been uploaded to a website for participants and other interested persons to download. (<https://sites.google.com/site/organiclao/home>)



Opening by representatives from national government agency



keynote speech by UNCTAD representative



small group discussion, public sector



small group discussion, private sector

5. Discussion Summary

After the opening by the co-chairs from the Trade and Product Promotion Department and Department of Agriculture and followed by keynote speeches of UNCTAD representative and IFOAM President, 2 inputs on the overview of organic agriculture in Lao were presented.

All participants were given opportunities to present themselves and their organizations as well as raised key concern points about organic agriculture development in Lao PDR. Key issues raised by participants include:

Public agencies	Famers-Producers	Business / Enterprises	Consumers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of strategic and comprehensive action plan for organic agriculture development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some producers claim to be organic without any certification • no certified organic seeds available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding and knowledge on business value chain management • inadequate infrastructure supports for business • Certification costs • Financial incentive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not understand about organic certifications • Some products are quite expensive
<p>Across all sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholders have different understanding of organic agriculture • coordinating mechanism to link various sectors together, especially among public agencies 			

After lunch break, participants are divided into 2 groups, i.e. public and private sector groups. Each group was asked to brainstorm and select the top 2 priority of critical issues that they wish to see being addressed to move forward organic agriculture in Lao. The group discussions were presented to the plenary. The 4 priority issues are:

Private Sector Group:

1. MoAF and MOIC to support special markets to sell organic products (fresh and processed products), appropriate location,
2. Make technical information available in different places (provincial level) both on organic agriculture as well as transparent export process and possible "one stop service" for export

Public Sector Group:

1. Clear strategies and policies to promote OA (especially on the extension, organic standards, zoning, human resources within the public sector)

2. Market access for organic products (domestic and export)

Possible future activities that participants are interested to see happening (and what participants offer to help) are:

- expand more organic productions
- close collaboration between private sector to expand the volume and varieties to access more markets, both local and exports , especially make it possible to sell to hotels and restaurants
- having an organic shop with everyday selling (AGROASIE offers to undertake this as it already has open a shop in Vientiane)
- conduct market survey to identify specific needs of potential buyers, e.g. volume, frequency and then may organize business matching between buyers and producers
- conduct organic product survey to check what are available in the markets already (AGROASIE and Green Net are to work on this)
- info website (Green Net)
- circulate the participant list and the powerpoint (Green Net)
- more documents in Lao languages

The second L-NOF is tentatively scheduled around November 2012 .

- end -

Participant List: Organic Agriculture Forum (23 March 2012)

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