

## Minutes from the Sixth Lao Organic Agriculture Forum (LOAF6): “Expanding Organic Exports through Sustainability Standards”

DECEMBER 14, 2017, CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, VIENTIANE, LAO PDR

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1. UNCTAD and Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), in collaboration with Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), organized the 6<sup>th</sup> Lao Organic Agriculture Forum (LOAF6) “Expanding Organic Exports through Sustainability Standards” on December 14, 2017 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The event was attended by approximately 130 people represented by governmental agencies, development partners and donors, producers, farmers’ organizations, traders, and local and international non-profit organizations.
2. The Forum started at 7:00am with the pre-session opening at Chao Anouvong Park to showcase local organic products with producers from all over the nation. Vice minister of MAF, Dr. Bounkhouang Khambounheuang, opened the event.



3.

4. *Image 1: Organic Market opening during the Pre-session*

5. The vice minister officially commenced LOAF6 opening session at the Crowne Plaza Hotel at 9:00am. Two keynote speeches were given by UNCTAD (Ms. Miho Shirotori, Chief of Global and Regional Trade Analysis Section, Trade Analysis Branch) and UNDP (Mr. Balasubramaniam Murali, Deputy Resident Representative).
6. A key message captured during the opening session was that organic agriculture has potential in Lao PDR for development; however, the main challenge is how to continue the momentum of growth for organic

agriculture, given that the production is still scattered and relatively small-scaled. Commercial production currently relies on subsistence farming practices using rudimentary tools and traditional practices. For the sector to progress, it requires improvements in infrastructure, legal mechanisms, and instruments for chemical control. In response to this, UNDP mentioned they will start a “[Brand Lao](#)” project to increase exports for high quality Lao Products (including organic products) through better promoting and marketing initiatives. The project will work closely with the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the private sector.

7. LOAF6 presentations were divided into three sessions and a group discussion session. Session 1 updated the status of the organic agriculture in Lao PDR with three presentations: (i) Introduction and Background of LOAF, presented by Director General of Department of Agriculture (DoA), (ii) Recap from LOAF5 and Update of Organic Agriculture Strategy for Lao PDR, presented by Deputy Director of Standards Division, DoA, and (iii) Standard and Certification in Lao PDR, presented by Director of the Standards Division, DoA. Session 2 was titled “What are Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)?” with 3 presentations: The first presentation of this session talked about “VSS and Global Market Trends”, presented by an advisor from the International Trade Centre (ITC). Helvetas shared the lessons they’ve learned after more than a decade of promoting organic farming in Lao PDR. Lao Farmers’ Products (LFP) shared the challenges pertaining to market expansion of their products. Session 3 comprised 3 speakers on topics (i) Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in Lao PDR presented by FAO, presented by UNCTAD, (ii) Rattan FSC Certification in Borikhamsay Province, Lao PDR presented by WWF and (iii) Approaches to VSS by Developing Countries. The breakout session followed in which participants were broken into groups and had to present their finding at the end of the session. The key messages and areas derived from the presentations, Q&As and group discussions are summarized below.



Image 2: LOAF6 Conference

8. The first presentation of the first session was titled “Introduction and History of LOAF” by the Director General of the DoA MAF. According to the speaker, the organic agriculture development in Lao PDR had

long been closely linked with food security and focus on environmental protection. It wasn't until 2004 that the Lao organic agriculture movement started to become active. To further promote organic agriculture, MAF developed and published the "[Strategic Plan for National Organic Agriculture Development 2025 and Vision to 2030](#)" in February 2016. The strategy serves as a reference document for organic agriculture development in the country. Currently, organic agriculture and GAP are the two main farming systems that have been developed and promoted across the country for sustainable agriculture and commercial purposes. In 2004 the Lao organic standards were established. The Lao Certification Body (LCB) was then established in 2008. LCB provides organic agriculture and GAP related services for certification, monitoring, training, dissemination, education and production of central and local officers. Over the years, their services have expanded to 8 of 17 provinces. 19 companies and 17 producer groups were inspected and certified over 2,869 hectares (the total output was 0.8 million tons annually). In 2006, the first organic market was set up in Vientiane and has since then expanded in other parts of the country. Despite such initiative, the organic agriculture development remains scattered and has no focus. It also lacks coordination among chain actors such as markets/consumers, farmers/producers/processors, governmental bodies, and development partners/donors/associations/NGOs. In other words, there were missing links between and among chain actors from upstream down to lower stream. The coordination mechanism comprised of four key actors (e.g. market, government, producer/processor, and commercial bank) was missing.

9. Elaborated from the "[Development Strategy of the Crop Sector 2025 and Vision 2030](#)", the DoA/MAF Strategic Plan defines directions, principles, methodology and measures for implementation to ensure that its strategies are applicable to the national socio-economic development and move toward an industrial, modernized and "cleaner" agriculture. The agriculture sector's slogan is "Modernize Crop Production, Clean, Safety, Quality, Sustainability, and Commercialization" with focus on production for food security and assurance safety of producers, consumers, and the environment.
10. Deputy Director of Standards Division briefed the participants about the LOAF development since its inception in 2012. LOAF started in 2012 with the support from the UN Cluster Project. LOAF1 & LOAF2 were hosted by MoIC with approximately 30 participants. LOAF3 had a clearer direction which reviewed and discussed LOAF's future. LOAF4 set even clearer roles with a priority plan set with short, medium and long-term goals. They also discussed the necessity to have a multi-stakeholder body called the Lao Organic Movement Association (LOMA) to facilitate LOAF and ensure its sustainability. However, the idea of having LOMA was not very concrete and did not materialize. LOAF5's theme was how to ensure organic agriculture sustainability? They concluded that though government produced policies, regulations, and standards, it is rather the producers and private sector who are the key drivers and thus who are the ones that need to be strengthened. LOAF6 not only aims for information sharing and access to markets but also aims to highlight and introduce various VSS.
11. The Lao Organic Agriculture Strategy aims that 2 percent of Lao PDR's production area or 70,000 households to be certified as organic. It also states that organic markets shall be established in all provinces by 2025. Additionally, it aims for organic markets to be established in all big cities (namely Savannakhet, Vientiane, Oudomsay, Xiengkhouang, Luangprabang, Luangnamtha, Champasack and Vientiane Province) by 2020. The vision for 2030 goal is yet to be set. Current challenges that the country faces include limited agricultural inputs such as materials or equipment, and lack of organic seeds supply which all lead to decreased productivity. Additional plans were also mentioned such as improving land use planning, and establishing centers for organic agriculture information and promotion. The strategy also aims to decentralize

local authorities to do inspection and certification while LCB would transition into a supervising role. LCB will also do more consulting and advising for businesses that want to export their products to overseas markets, as well as act as inspector for organic product imports. There was also mentioning of the possibility to hand over the certification process to the private sector.



*Image 3: Session 1 Presentation*

12. In the next presentation titled “Standards Development and Certification in Lao PDR”, Viengsay Sengsulivong, Director of Standards Division, DoA/MAF started his presentation by mentioning that standards development and certification in Lao PDR was guided by the drive for economic growth, international integration, and environmental protection. More specifically, it focused on quality improvements and safety of agricultural products while protecting environment, and enhancement of market accessibility. In Lao PDR, ‘clean agriculture’ has four production systems: organic agriculture (OA), good agriculture practice (GAP), pesticide-free production (PFP), and Conventional Agriculture-traditional farming (CA). The development of organic agriculture began in 2004 as a strategy to transition from subsistence farming practices. In 2013, Lao Organic Standards were adopted from the [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement \(IFOAM\)](#) Standards. The [ASEAN Economic Community \(AEC\)](#) was materialized in 2015 which requires harmonized set of standards or guidelines. The GAP certification will become the minimum requirements and member states thus must develop their national GAP in harmony with the [ASEAN GAP](#). Lao PDR has already started GAP development since 2012. Standards are crucial for Lao PDR because they are minimal requirements that are needed to export and sell in international markets.
13. Lao PDR is at an advantage because it already has organic standards and GAP standards in place. Currently the certifying body, which is based on ISO/IEC17065, has 15 central and local inspectors, 250 farm advisors, 22 (certification) committee members, and 20 farm-based ICS technicians.<sup>1</sup> Certifications have been carried out in 49 certified farms (e.g. 23 single farms and 26 collective farms owned by 155 sub-groups with 2785 families); organic-certified land covered 3327.16 hectares harvesting a total of 7729.78 tons of produces in 10

<sup>1</sup> ICS stands for Internal Control System.

provinces. 16 farms (or 200 family units) were certified across 1094.76 hectares harvesting 4955.69 tons of produces.

14. Nevertheless standards development and certification in Lao PDR are currently facing many challenges. For instance, (the number of) the accrediting, inspecting, and certifying bodies were not enough and did not meet regional and international requirements due to reasons such as the absence of an accrediting body based on ISO17011; the absence of an accredited and personnel trained laboratory based on ISO17025; and the lack of inspecting and certifying bodies based on ISO17065. Other challenges include lack of production capacity with small quantity and insufficient quality; entrepreneurs and farmers not prepared for certification; and facilities (logistics) not meeting high enough standards. These challenges need to be addressed.
15. ITC gave a presentation on “Voluntary Sustainability Standards and Global Market Trends” which gave the participants a more concrete definition and deeper understanding about VSS including: clarification of different labels/ecolabels schemes; introduction of the [ITC sustainability map](#) tool; and explanation of global market trends suggesting stable growth of sustainable products as well as consumer demands for these products.
16. The presentation by HELVETAS discussed the starting point of organic agriculture through a project called [Promotion of Organic Farming in Laos \(PROFIL\)](#) implemented in 2 phases, 2004-2007 and 2008-2011, in 3 provinces (Champasak, Borikhamsay and Khammouane) and Vientiane in collaboration with the DoA. The project helped establish organic standards for Lao PDR, develop capacity for certification, provide farmer training, develop farmer’s groups, and establish the organic farmer market. The project implementation produced a *sustainable model* which continued to function after the completion of the project. The organic farmer’s market continues to expanding in size, frequency, and locations. It has also now has become the center point for raising awareness of organic and sustainable agriculture issues by decision-makers, and reference to capacity and institutional development.
17. Since the completion of PROFIL, HELVETAS started a new project called [LURAS \(Lao Upland Rural Advisory Service\)](#). The project is currently in its second phase (2007-2021).<sup>2</sup> Together with the Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives, Provincial Departments of Agriculture and Forestry, and Lao Farmer Network, the project implements and supports organic vegetable activities in Oudomsay and Luangnamtha. The project outputs include: ICS certification training to Oudomsay PAFO (Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office), establishment of local organic outlet with existing wet market, implementation of residue testing to train PAFO staff on basic testing procedures. However, the speaker has also mentioned that Lao PDR’s products organic by default was a myth. Currently there is increased evidence of contamination with high level of pesticide residues. Making food safety is a cross-cutting issue. An important lesson learned in a decade after PROFIL was that the key to organic agriculture was about “*trust*”: e.g. between producers and consumers, between two groups of producers and consumers and value chain intermediaries like traders and retailers. Without trust, organic farmers do not receive premiums. Certification in Laos is at a crossroad now. Some producers such as CPC or Saffron Coffee focused on branding rather than certification. The number of organic agriculture farmers is declining because they cannot pay the certification costs.

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<sup>2</sup> LURAS Phase I started in 2014 and ended in 2017.



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18. HELVETAS also sees other challenges in the organic agriculture in Laos. For instance traders are mixing organic and conventional produce, doubts about integrity due to lack of an accredited third-party certifying body, lack of reliable testing facilities in Lao PDR, mistrust of labels, and stalling of other certification systems such as Fair Trade Laos. Areas for considerations may be putting more emphasis on the origin or provenance over certification or standards. The final call from the speaker was to try to find solutions to save the organic farmer market, especially the first organic farmers market in Vientiane which has symbolic experience. Nevertheless, some farmers dropped out because it was not financially viable. Additionally, commercial traders are now participating which brings up a big question whether they are organic. And there is not yet a semi-permanent building or structure which can host the organic farmer market<sup>3</sup>. It would be a major setback for the organic sector development in Lao PDR if consumers completely lose trust in what they were buying, as producers are not able to get the premium.
19. A representative from the Lao Farmer's Products (LFP) shared lessons learned from having worked with farmers for 20 years to produce organic agriculture, formulated producer groups, purchased produce from farmers, and processed products for both domestic and overseas. However, LFP is currently under financial difficulties. They can only produce only when they receive orders from clients – mainly in EU through their Fairtrade networks. With limited capital, they require that clients pay 50 percent in advance of the order amount. The parent organization of LFP, [ASDSP](#)<sup>4</sup> plays a big role in supporting the establishment of farmers' groups or organizations, organic agriculture training, compliance with organic agriculture standards, participation with LCB (internal) and ACT<sup>5</sup> (external) in inspections. LFP itself collects produce from rural farmers and groups at a fair price, processes and distributes them to local and overseas markets. LFP is complied with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) for traceability purposes, treats their employees fairly, and invites both local and international inspecting and certifying bodies. Their rice and green and black tea products are Lao organic and Fair-Trade Lao certified since 2007. However, they did not renew certification in 2009 as it no longer receives financial support from donors.
20. According to the speaker, LFP is the only Lao company that exports processed food items labeled "Made in Laos" to EU countries (such as France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland) bringing in a profit of approximately USD10 million to rural farmers. LFP also helps farmers transform from subsistence farming to a market-oriented practice and raises awareness on more hygienic consumption behaviors. Nevertheless after 20 years in business, LFP today is struggling to survive because of limited capacity. They do not have a large amount of working capital to buy storage for seasonal produces, and other equipment. The loss from the currency exchange rate is also a factor. Lao products are generally more expensive when compared to foreign ones because they have to import raw materials from overseas.
21. For LFP to continue business, more financial assistance is needed. However getting a loan is not an option because the interest rate is too high and the repayment period is too short. The government should also subsidize the losses from the exchange rate, and help find proper measures to cover the cost of inspections and certification. Most importantly, market information should regularly be available to help entrepreneurs find answers to questions such as what to produce, sell to whom, where to sell, at what quality, what kind of packaging, how much, and who were competitors. Producers should have this information beforehand.

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<sup>3</sup> Currently the organic market is held outdoors under tents with no fixed location

<sup>4</sup> ASDSP stands for Association de Soutien au Développement des Sociétés Paysannes.

<sup>5</sup> ACT stands for Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand.



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22. At the end of the session, representatives from farmer’s organizations shared key outcomes from the discussions at the pre-meeting. The pre-meeting, which took place on 13 December, was a meeting for producers and private sectors to discuss about current issues surrounding organic agriculture and how it should be resolved<sup>6</sup>. Four key areas that were concluded as follows: (i) an organic agriculture fund or funding facility should be established to support farmers, (ii) information on foreign market demand for organic agriculture products should be more readily available (iii) government should promote organic agriculture more proactively, (iv) An establishment of a multi-stakeholder action-based platform is in need but more discussion is required for this possibility.
  
23. The floor was then opened for a Q&A or comments/feedback session. An Asian Development Bank (ADB) representative asked DoA/MAF if the “Strategic Plan for National Organic Agriculture Development 2025” and Vision towards 2030” has budget allocated for implementation and who is currently involved in the implementation process. The deputy director of Standards Division replied that the government set goals in the Strategic Plan to open opportunities for interested donors and the private sector to play a role. It will depend on them to decide in which areas they want to invest or support. Regarding the market, purchase agreements should sought with big buyers like Limping Mall, restaurants and cafés as they would help collect demand data for farmers to do production planning. The ADB representative also asked whether or not producers would actually be able to understand and use the data from ITC sustainability map. Also would there be a possibility for Lao PDR to have an advisory board or group established for this? The ITC advisor setting up such board can be considered. She also mentioned some countries (Brazil, China and India) have similar bodies to help farmers and entrepreneurs.



Image 4: Session 2 panelists during the Q&A Session

24. A participating entrepreneur touched upon the issue of certification costs. Usually, it is the companies that want certification who are responsible for paying the costs. It is also the responsibility of the companies to

<sup>6</sup> The presenter was a representative, Mr. Khamphou Phanthaboun, from the Vientiane Organic Farmer Group. About 20 people attended this meeting

ensure they make enough profit from export that can pay off the certification. It should also be noted that export companies are required to comply with or follow product standards of the importing countries. Additionally, consumers believe in brands more than certification, and the certification might only be 50 percent worth of its total value to convince buyers. Organic certification is just merely a supplementary marketing tool to upgrade the brand. Government also needs to help entrepreneurs and exporters, not just the farmers. First, business should consider profits. If the business made a loss it would collapse and impacted other chain actors. If the business made profits it would be able to help and support workers and communities. Deputy Director of Standards Division/DoA added that there should be projects to support the private sector and the government should subsidize (facilitate) the exporters that were not strong and inexperienced, and wanted the support at the beginning. Acknowledging that the organic certification was not cheap, the DoA DG asked the participants to help identify or calculate the production cost of each organic product, and factors or inputs that would be pushing the production cost high, and how we could solve this issue. The answers would help the government to find solutions.

25. A participant commented that since Lao PDR is already advanced in the implementation of organic standards compared to other countries in the region it's important that LOAF must go on to continue the farther development of the organic sector in Laos. She also mentioned that since certification is very expensive, pushing toward one single ASEAN standard may be a viable option with LOMA becoming the flagship to push for an ASEAN Organic Label.
26. Another participant suggested to look at already existing mechanisms. For example, currently there are numerous national and local farmer networks. Mobilizing them all together can create a Farmer Federation which could help producers get better access to markets.



27. Image 5: Presentation for PGS

28. FAO started the afternoon session with a presentation on [Participatory Guarantee Systems \(PGS\)](#). PGS started out as a FAO pilot project called “Small-scale Farmer Inclusion in organic Agriculture Value Chains Development through PGS” and was implemented in two countries: Lao PDR and Cambodia from 2015 to

2017. The project was implemented together with DoA along with key partners: IFOAM, ADB, and Earth Net Foundation. PGS is a low-cost quality assurance certification program based on social control, joint decisions and knowledge sharing. It is not a third-party certification in which no independent certification bodies (such as LCB) are involved. It was suitable for local markets (not national markets, supermarkets or export markets) and short supply chains, smallholder farmer groups, and organic production. PGS groups are formed by local farmers along with a PGS committee consisting of farmers, local authorities, consumers, and rural advisors. Together they develop their own rules, procedures, and documentation for their PGS. They also agree on the standard, verify compliance, and inspect the farm once a year in a peer review process. The project trained 17 farmer groups of 262 members, saw 10 PGS operational groups of 194 farmers (50 percent of them are women). The PGS groups have already been formed in 5 provinces.<sup>7</sup>

29. A representative from World Wild Fund gave a presentation on “Using [Sustainable Rattan Certification](#) to Improve Forestry Management through [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC)”. The project started in 2010 working with the forestry research center and department of forestry to prepare target communities with rattan forests ready for certification. As a result, 4 communities/villages with 1142 hectares were certified FSC in 2011. In 2016, two communities were given certification in March 2017, a total of 10949 hectares. In 2017, two companies which have business links with the community-based groups of rattan collection and rattan basket weaving received a certification called [Chain of Custody \(CoC\)](#). Subsequently, the number of rattan handicraft groups increased from 3 to 6 villages in 2017 in two districts of Borikhamsay province. FSC certification has many benefits including giving access to bigger markets (e.g. access to international markets, increased incomes, stable markets), improving reputation (e.g. legal land planning and management, and investors were guaranteed of products and sources of materials), and improving competition (e.g. known market shares, differentiated/unique products, and increasing consistent supply of raw materials. FSC-certified rattan products are now sold in Switzerland, Sweden and USA.
30. Some of the challenges in FSC certification were: outlook of sustainable forest management in the future, high costs on forest survey, training and activity planning for certification, high annual fees for assessment and inspection by Rainforest Alliance, communication issues for entrepreneurs in international markets, limited capacity for companies and farmers to make large quantities of rattan products in high quality and good quality, and lack of policy support from the government (e.g. slow issuance of rattan quotas, high resource costs and other costs making it difficult to collect raw materials on time as planned, and finished products were very expensive and could not compete with other countries).
31. UNCTAD gave a presentation on “Approaches to VSS by other Developing Countries” to put the spotlight on the opportunities and prospects of VSS in response to the growing global demand for sustainable products. The presentation also explored the various certification labels (e.g. Fairtrade, FSC, Rainforest Alliance) as well as how VSS can contribute to achieving the SDGs (e.g. premium prices increased profits and improved farmers’ livelihoods, improved production methods, productivity, and crop quality, sustainable production practices associated with environmental and biodiversity protection). However, there are also challenges associated to it; VSS are increasingly becoming a prerequisite to enter global value chains but in developing countries only large-scale producers to have ability to comply with VSS requirements. The presentation also showed how some developing countries like Brazil, China and India have national platforms to discuss VSS in depth.

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<sup>7</sup> Savannakhet and Xiengkhuang had 2 PGS groups each; Vientiane Capital and Huaphan each had 1 PGS group; and Vientiane had 4 PGS groups.



32. The last session concluding the meeting was the discussion session. Participants were divided into in 3 groups. Each group was given the same two questions to discuss and had to present their findings. The first question focused on LOAF sustainability: participants identified what mechanisms were needed to ensure the continuation of LOAF. The second question asked the participants (especially addressed to farmers, producers, processor, exporters of organic agriculture products) to identify specifics of the costs of organic agriculture production which causes burdens as well as driving factors that increase the costs of production. The findings of three group discussions are summarized in the table below:

Questions	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<p><b>What mechanisms are needed to ensure continuation of LOAF and is the Lao Organic Movement Association (LOMA) needed to play a (facilitation) role in the future after LOAF?</b></p>	<p>The presence of LOMA is necessary. LOMA can act as a mediator for farmer organizations. It could also help access the market and exchange the market information, help contribute to policies on organic agriculture promotion, protect the interests of farmers, represent the country and region, act as a coordinator for concerned stakeholders, provide understanding about value chain of organic products</p>	<p>Establishing LOMA is a good idea as it would be a focal point to gather stakeholders (producers, traders, entrepreneurs), coordinate with public and private sectors, exchange the information, represent the country at an international arena, and protect the rights of the private sector.</p>	<p>LOMA is required. With that said, it needs to follow rules and regulations on registration (regardless of being an association or enterprise), have a charter, have a good monitoring and evaluation system, cater to various stakeholder groups, be independent, and have experts on local and international standards. The government needs to support and strengthen the institution, help access to funding sources.</p>
<p><b>What are the production costs and items that drive the costs for organic agriculture? What solutions should be taken for the government to consider?</b></p>	<p>The cost of organic production includes seeds, equipment, raw materials to make composts, electricity and energy costs, training farmers to strengthening capacity, certification. Also, government should help with promoting as well as help access the funding resources with low interest rates and a longer period of repayment.</p>	<p>The cost of certification should be lowered, and organic agriculture procedures should be simplified (e.g. for rice)</p>	<p>1. <i>Production costs:</i> labor cost, organic seeds, agricultural machineries imported with high tariffs, irrigated water, and electricity.</p> <p>2. <i>Transportation costs:</i> expensive and fuel are expensive with paper work being too slow</p> <p>3. <i>Processing:</i> packaging, labeling equipment is expensive because they are all imported.</p> <p>Additionally, loans interest rates are too high with too short repayment periods.</p>



Image 2: Discussion Session

33. DoA DG gave the closing remarks commenting that the findings of group discussions were useful for MAF. He reemphasized the following points: Organic agricultural development in Laos is still lacking behind in many ways: linkages between and among producers, processors, and traders/consumers are missing; key coordination mechanisms (that link banks, governmental organizations concerned, farmers/producers, and entrepreneurs) are absent which must be established and strengthened; the credibility of Lao organic label remains an issue, especially on how regional and international buyers can trust the label. Currently, LCB is the only national certifying body; however the private sector should step up to play this role in the future. However, for the time being the priority is to strengthen the capacity of the public body so that it could eventually transfer some responsibilities to the private sector. To do this requires instilling mechanisms, legislations, and resources. Financial assistance from organizations and donors are required but DoA does not have the data or cost analysis on the estimates.
34. “[Agriculture Development Strategy to 2025 and Vision to 2030](#)” is only department-level binding document within MAF. It is crucial for the country to have a ‘macro’ tool – a national organic agriculture development strategy that would specify roles and responsibilities on how other ministries to assist and participate. A national steering committee for organic agriculture and GAP can be formulated to bring together the government, private sector, and farmers. To do so, it would need a decree on organic agriculture and on GAP. If such a decree was issued, it could make the implementation process easier. Interested donors or development partners are encouraged to participate in these processes. He ended his remark mentioning that compared to the past LOAF meetings, LOAF6 produced good findings, addressed cross-cutting issues, and identified the way forward to help the organic sector development.



Image 3: Closing Session

35. An UNCTAD representative also pointed out several points as remarks: (i) this forum stimulated ideas and helped explore them deeply, (ii) we saw concrete discussions towards actions in which UNCTAD is ready to support, (iii) VSS was presented in a short time but this is a good starting point for Lao PDR, (iv) the organic agriculture development in Laos is advanced in comparison to other neighboring countries which is a big advantage. ITC, UNCTAD and others are happy to provide for more information relating to VSS
36. LOAF6 officially closed at 5:30PM.