



6th Lao Organic Agriculture Forum (LOAF 6)

Expanding Organic Exports through Sustainability Standards



Thursday, 14 December 2017

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic

UNCTAD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will organize the 6th workshop of [the Lao Organic Agriculture Forum \(LOAF\)](#) “*Expanding Trade Growth through Sustainability Standards*” on 14 December at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Vientiane Lao People's Democratic Republic, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This workshop is open to producers, manufacturers, traders, exporters, and other businesses, as well as government agencies and international/regional development partners.

Background

LOAF is a multi-stakeholder platform that encourages public-private partnership and dialogue on organic agriculture development within Lao PDR. Since its establishment in 2012, there have been [five LOAF meetings](#) with each focusing on a specific theme, ranging from ways to create organic value chains, institutional requirements for organic agriculture and its sustainability. This year's The **LOAF 6** workshop focuses on expanding organic exports of Lao PDR through marketing channels of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS).

Expansion of VSS and VSS-certified production

Reflecting the growing consumer demands for “green” or “sustainable” products, global brands and retailers opt for sourcing products that certified for VSS. VSS provide metrics for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable production practices, including organic standards. Over 400 VSS today apply to agro-forestry products such as coffee, tea, bananas, cocoa, palm oil, coconut oil, timber, and cotton.

Organic standards are one of the representative types of VSS. According to [The World of Organic Agriculture 2017](#) (FiBL), the global market for organic food, estimated to have reached US\$ 81.6 billion in 2015, continues to grow at an unprecedented speed. The main markets are United States (47% of the 2015 global market), Germany (11%), France (7%), and China (6%), all of which showed double-digit growth rates. In 2015, 2.4 million organic producers were reported, of which 35 per cent are in Asia (largely in India), 30 per cent in Africa and 19 percent in Latin America and 14% in Europe.

Products carrying other VSS labels, such as [Fairtrade International](#) and [Sustainable Agriculture Network/Rainforest Alliance](#) have also been growing rapidly. The sustainability metrics used by these VSS cover elements that go beyond being organic, such as [providing fair economic gains to small producers](#) and [wildlife protection](#).



Lao organic exports

Despite pro-active movements by the Government, producers, the private sector and NGOs towards strengthening organic agriculture in the country, Lao organic exports (e.g. tea, coffee and rice) have not been growing

Previous LOAF meetings have identified financial and technical challenges related to complying with organic standards of importing markets. While these challenges remain valid, there may be channels other than organic certification that could enhance sustainable export growth of Lao products in a manner complementary to strengthening Lao organic agriculture.

Focus of LOAF 6

Against this background, the LOAF 6 workshop will discuss: (i) Complementarity between VSS and organic production; (ii) Potential market opportunities of Lao organic products via VSS channels; and (iii) Challenges related to VSS and organic certification in Lao PDR.

Workshop Agenda

Thursday, 14 December 2017 at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR

7:00 – 8:30	Pre-session: Organic Market Fair (<i>Outside of hotel at King Fa Ngum Park</i>)
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:30	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government of Lao PDR United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
	Keynote Speech <ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
9:30 – 10:30	Session 1: Status of Organic Agriculture in Lao PDR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction and background of LOAF by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) & Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) Recap from LOAF 5 and update of Organic Agriculture Strategy for Lao PDR by Standard Division, Department of Agriculture (DoA), MoAF Standard and Certification Development in Laos by Standard Division, DoA, MoAF
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break (<i>In Pre-function Area</i>)
10:45 - 12:15	Session 2: What are Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)? Part I: Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VSS and global market trends by International Trade Centre (ITC) Approaches to VSS by other developing countries by UNCTAD Part II: How are VSS certified? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic vegetable certification through Participatory Guarantee Systems by FAO - tbc Using Sustainable Rattan certification to improve forestry management by WWF Q&A and Discussion
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch (<i>At Mosaic Restaurant on the 1st floor</i>)
13:30 – 15:00	Session 3: Can VSS Improve the Marketability of the Lao organic label? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrading Lao GAP to meet international standards by GIZ Challenges of expanding markets for Lao Organic products Lao Farmer's Products - tbc Q&A and Discussion
15:00 – 16:15	Session 4: Breakout Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group discussions on VSS and organic exports
16:15 – 16:30	Coffee Break (<i>In Pre-function Area</i>)
16:30 – 17:00	Session 4: Breakout Discussion (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation from each group
17:00 – 17:30	Conclusion and Way Forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoAF, MoIC, UNCTAD