

Profile of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)

II. Farming system-Agriculture:

Number and Size of holdings

In 1999, there were 798,000 private households in the Lao PDR. Of these 668,000 were agricultural holdings. The largest number 293,527 (43.9%) are in the Central Region. This is followed by the Northern Region with 238,443 (35.7%). The fewest 136,031 (20.4% %) are in the Southern Region.

The holdings cover an area of 1,047,700 ha. The holdings in the Central Region cover the largest area, 455,223 ha (43.4%). The next largest is the Northern Region where the holdings cover 324,364 ha (31.0%). The Southern Region has the smallest area of holdings, 268,156 ha (25.6%).

At the provincial level, the largest number (95,444 or 14.3%) are in Savannakhet. This is followed by Champasack province with 70,233 (10.5%), Luangprabang with 55,720 (8.3%), Xayabury with 49,402 (7.4%), Vientiane Municipality with 48,580 (7.3%), and Vientiane and Khammuane provinces (both with 6.5%). The fewest 7,619 (1.1%) are in Xaysomboon Special Region.

The holdings in Savannakhet province cover the largest area, 150,034 ha (14.3%). The next largest is Champasack province, 146,686 ha (14.0%), Xaysomboon Special Region has the smallest area of holdings, 9,936 ha (0.9%).

No	Regions	No of households	No. of agricultural holdings		No of land holdings	Area of holdings (ha)	% distribution
			holdings	%			
	Northern	256,600	238,440	35.7%	235,570	324,300	31.0%
	Central	379,700	293,530	43.9%	279,130	455,200	43.4%
	Southern	161,700	136,030	20.4%	132,500	268,200	25.6%
	Lao PDR	798,000	668,000	100.0%	647,200	1,047,700	100.0%

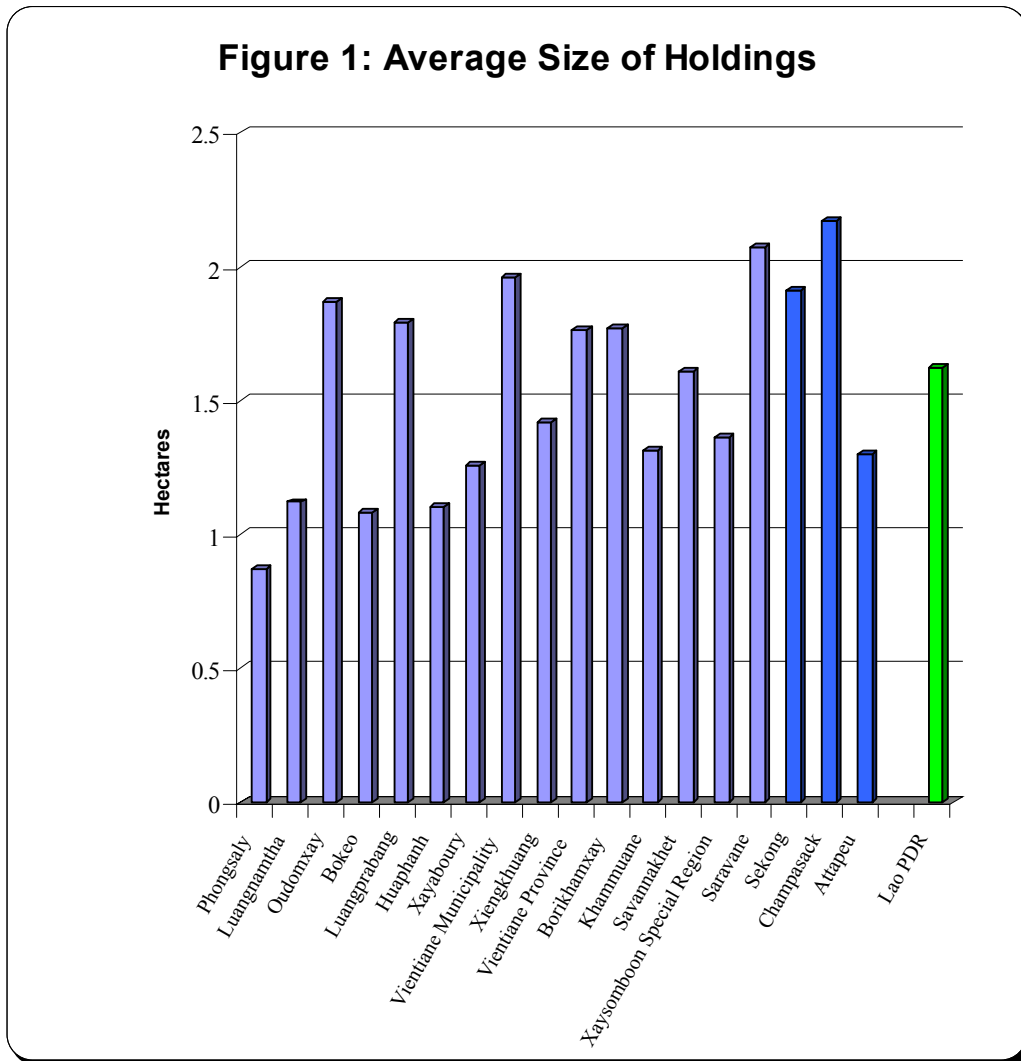
Note: Figures are rounded off.

Average Size of Holdings

The average size of holdings in the Lao PDR is 1.62 ha. In the south, the area on average is 2.02 ha, which is above the national level.

Champasack province has the biggest average farm size of 2.17 ha. This is followed by Saravane with 2.07 ha, Vientiane Municipality with 1.96 ha, Sekong with 1.91 ha, Oudomxay with 1.87 ha, Luangprabang with 1.79 ha, Borikhamxay with 1.77 ha, Vientiane province with 1.76 ha, and Savannakhet with 1.61 ha.

The smallest average farm size of 0.87 ha is in Phongsaly province.

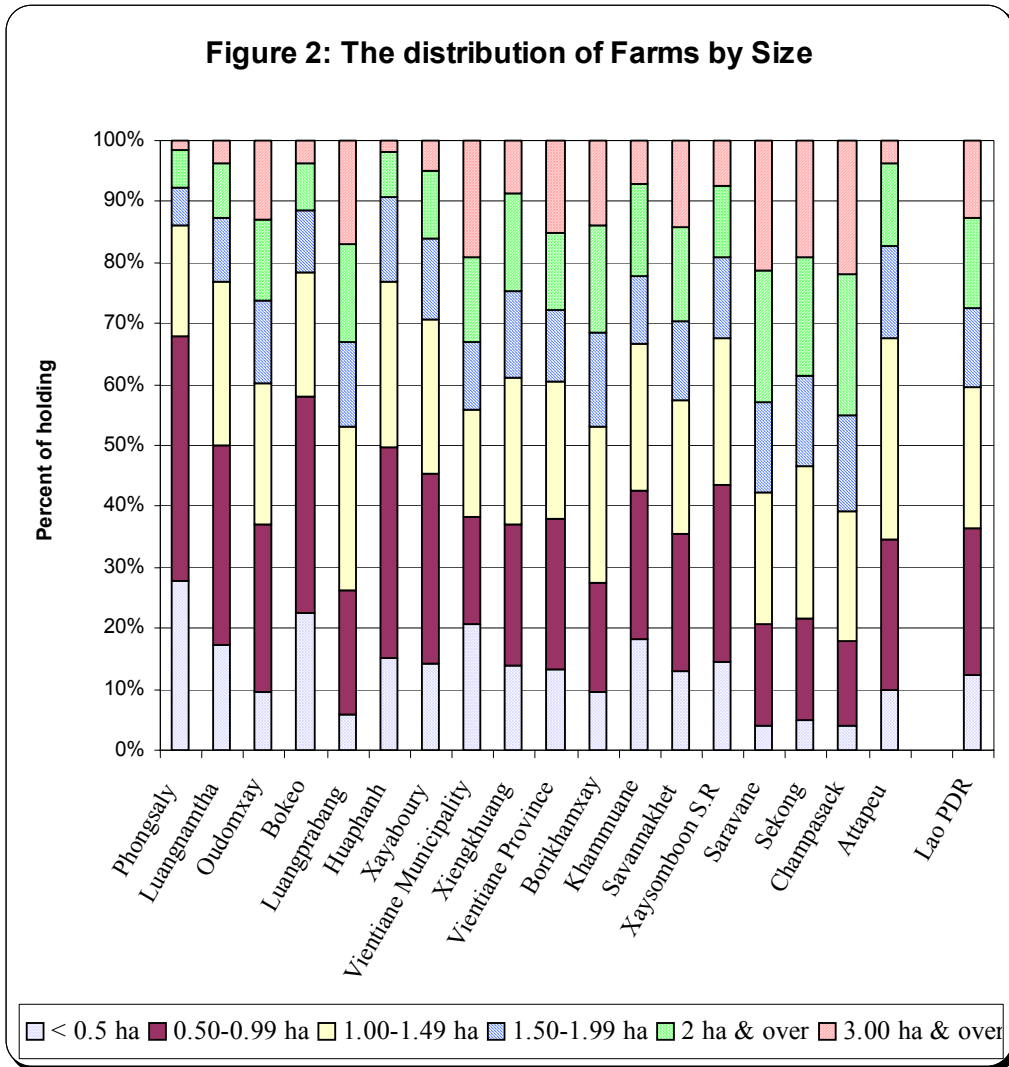


The Distribution of Farms by Size:

36.4% of farm holdings in the Lao PDR are medium sized (1.0 – 2.0 ha), 27.4% are large (over 2 ha), 23.8% are average (0.5 – 1.0 ha) and only 12.5% are small (less than 0.5 ha).

Champasack province has the greatest proportion of large holdings (45.0%). Of these large holdings some 21.8% are of 3 or more hectares. These are considered as being very large holdings.

About 42.8% of the holdings in Saravane are large holdings, Sekong has 38.5%, Vientiane Municipality has 33.0%, Luangprabang has 32.9%, Borikhamxay has 31.6%, Savannakhet has 29.7%, and Vientiane province has 27.7%. The smallest numbers of large holdings are recorded in Phongsaly (7.6%).



Size of Farm Parcels

On average, a farm household in the Lao PDR consists of 2.1 parcels.

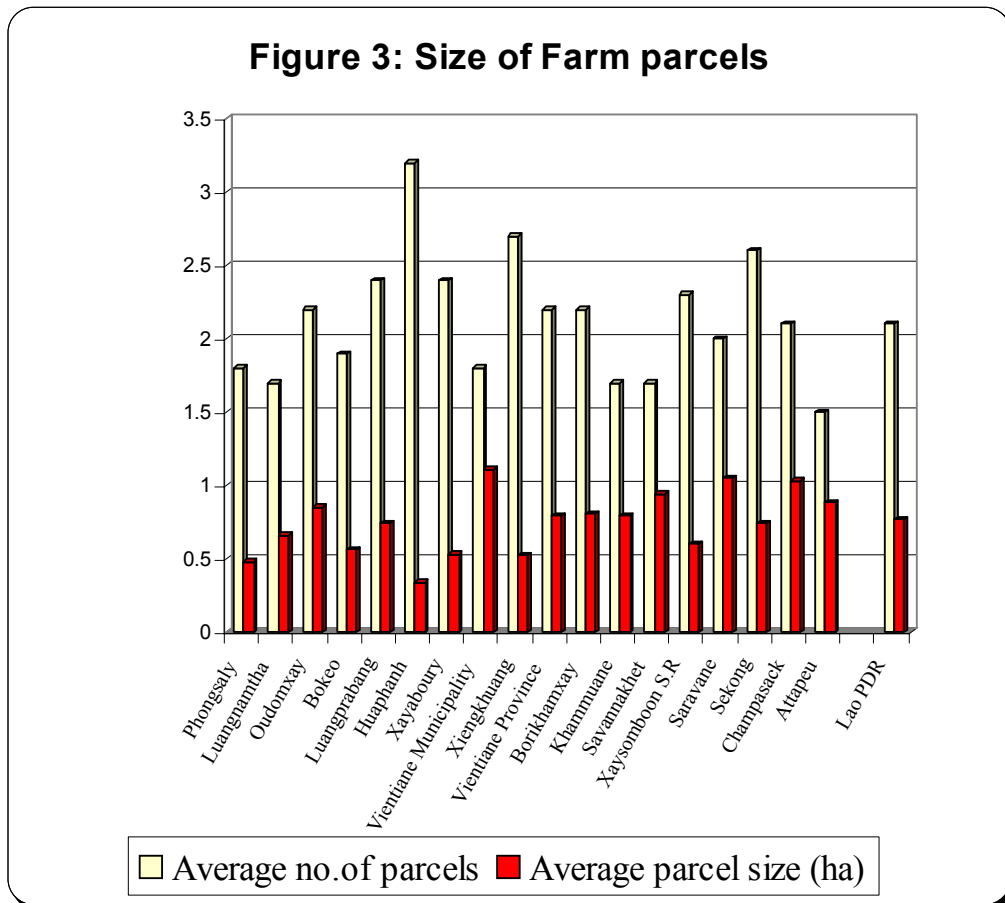
Huaphanh province has the biggest farms consisting of 3.2 parcels. The smallest farms in the country are found in Phongsaly, Vientiane Municipality, Luangnamtha, Khammuane, Savannakhet, and Attapeu provinces (1.8, 1.8, 1.7, 1.7, 1.7 and 1.5 parcels respectively).

In Xiengkhuang, Sekong, Luangprabang, Xayabury, and Xaysomboon Special Region provinces the average is 2.7, 2.6, 2.4, 2.4, and 2.3 parcels respectively.

Nationwide, the average parcel size is 0.77 ha, while in the Southern Region the average size is 1.0 ha.

Half of the country, Luangprabang, Sekong, Luangnamtha, Xaysomboon S.R, Bokeo, Xayabury, Xiengkhuang, Phongsaly, and Huaphanh provinces, were less than the national average area per parcel.

The biggest average size of parcels is found in Vientiane Municipality at 1.11 ha.



Access to Irrigated Land:

At the national level, 647,190 (38.7% of the total) land holdings are partially irrigated. However, the irrigated areas (1,047,742 ha) are only 22.2% of the total area of the holdings.

At the provincial level, Vientiane Municipality has the biggest percentage (79.3%) of holdings using some irrigated land. This is followed by Xaysomboon S.R with 74.2%, Borikhamxay with 63.6%, Xiengkhuang with 58.5%, Huaphanh with 56.3%, Vientiane with 54.8%, and Xayabury with 51.4%. The smallest percentages are recorded in Attapeu (5.1%).

In Vientiane Municipality the irrigated areas are 56.6% of the total area of holdings, compared with 47.1% in Xaysomboon S.R, 43.8% in Borikhamxay, 37.0% in Xiengkhuang, 36.5% in Luangnamtha, 35.3% in Bokeo, 30.0% in Vientiane and 29.6% in Xayabury. The smallest percentage (3.2%) is in Attapeu province.

The Land and the People:

At the national level, 0.27 ha is the average area of farming land/person.

In the provinces, Champasack province, with an average of 0.37 ha/person, had the largest area of farming land/person. Huaphanh and Phongsaly provinces, with an average of 0.16 ha and 0.14 ha of farm land/person respectively were the smallest.

Land Tenure:

The majority of holdings in the Lao PDR are operated under a single tenure form, and these account for 95.6% of the total land holdings. Of these, over 93.1% are owned (owner-like possession), 1.9% are rented and 0.6% are of other forms of tenure. The holdings operated under two or more forms of tenure comprise only 4.4%.

The percentage of holdings operated under a single tenure form in the Northern and Southern Regions were more than the national average (95.6%).

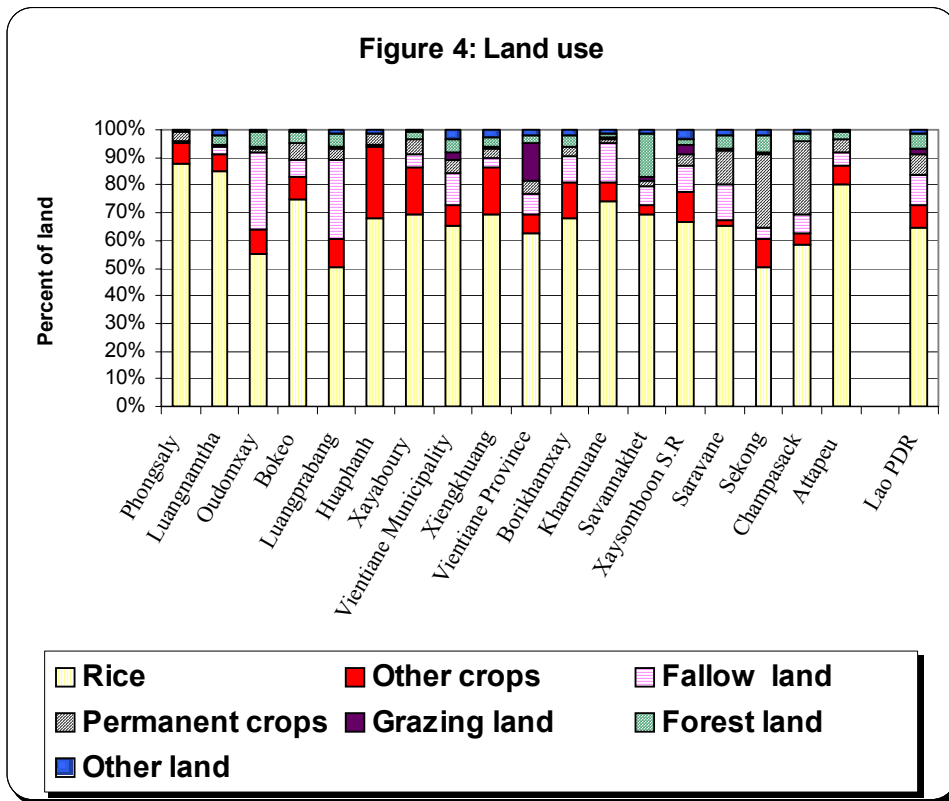
The percentage of holdings operated under a single tenure form in Xayabury, Champasack, Khammuane, Vientiane, Vientiane Municipality and Borikhamxay provinces were less than the national average (95.6%).

Land use:

The total area of holdings in the Lao PDR is 1,047,700 ha. Of this, rice crops make up 64.9%, followed by fallow land (10.7%). The area under other temporary crops (other cereals, industrial crops, vegetables and legumes,) is 8.2%, while the area under permanent crops is 7.8%. The forested areas are 5%, while the combination of grazing land and other land comprises 3.4%.

26.5% of farmland in Sekong province is used for growing permanent crops, compared with 26.0% in Champasack, 12.7% in Saravane, 6.2% in Bokeo, 5.3% in Xayabury, 5.1% in Vientiane, 4.8% in Vientiane Municipality, 4.6% in Attapeu, 4.1% in Luangprabang, 4.0% in Xaysomboon S.R, and 3.8% in Huaphanh provinces.

About 28.9% of the holdings in Luangprabang were left fallow in 1998/99. This compares with Oudomxay with 27.8%, Khammuane with 14.4%, Saravane with 12.6%, Vientiane Municipality with 11.4%, Xaysomboon S.R with 9.8%, Borikhamxay with 9.7% and Vientiane with 7.5%. The smallest percentage of farmland left fallow was recorded in Phongsaly (0.4%).

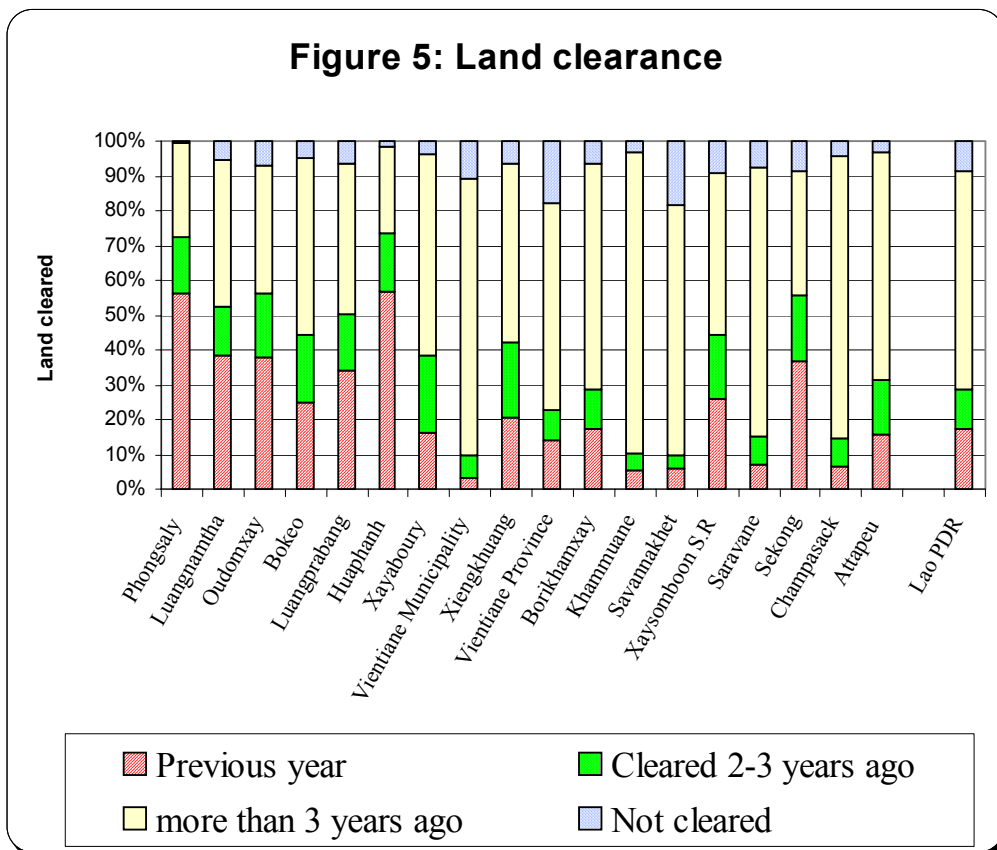


Land clearance:

In 1998/99, a fifth of all agricultural land (1,047,700 ha) had been cleared for crop cultivation within the previous year. Land clearance is highest in the northern provinces because of slash and burn cultivation in the upland areas. In the Southern Region only 9.2% of agricultural land (268,156 ha) had been cleared in the previous year.

Among the provinces, about 56.9% of agricultural land of the holdings in Huaphanh province had been cleared in the previous year, compared with 56.1% in Phongsaly, 38.2% in Luangnamtha, 38.1% in Oudomxay, 37.0% in Sekong, 34.3% in Luangprabang, 26.0% in Xaysomboon S.R, 24.6% in Bokeo and 20.3% in Xiengkhuang.

The smallest percentage of agricultural land of the holdings, which had been cleared in the previous year was recorded in Vientiane Municipality at 3.5%.

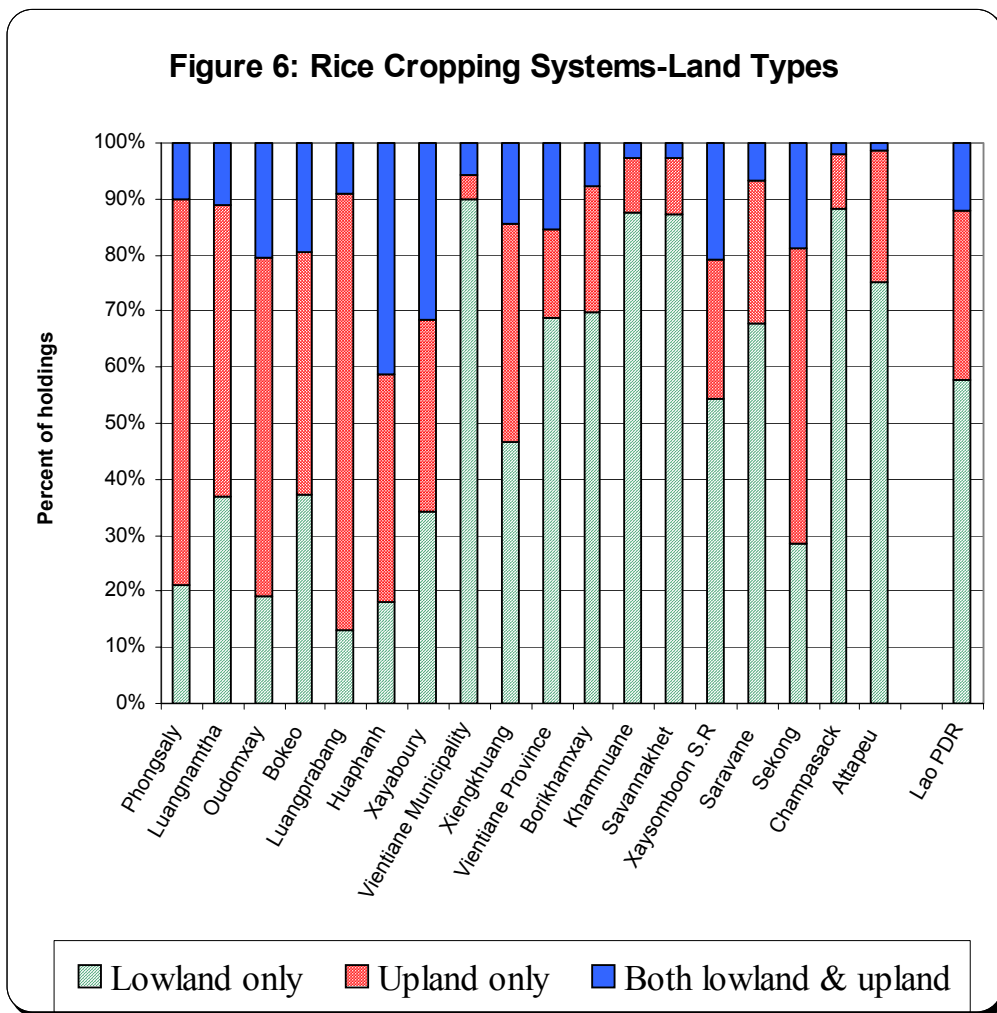


Rice Cropping systems - land types:

In the Lao PDR, the total number of land holdings is about 647,200, of which 614,000 (95%) are used for growing rice. Only 5% of the holdings throughout the country do not cultivate rice. About 12% of the total rice cultivation were in both lowland and upland areas. 58% cultivated rice in only lowland areas and 30% in only upland areas.

Of the provinces, about 77.7% of the farmers in Luangprabang province cultivate upland rice only. This is followed by Phongsaly with 68.9% being upland growers, Oudomxay with 60.2%, Sekong with 52.7%, Luangnamtha with 52.0%, Bokeo with 43.3%, Huaphanh with 40.8%, and Xiengkhuang with 38.9%.

The smallest percentage of farmers growing rice in only upland areas was in Vientiane Municipality (4.2%).

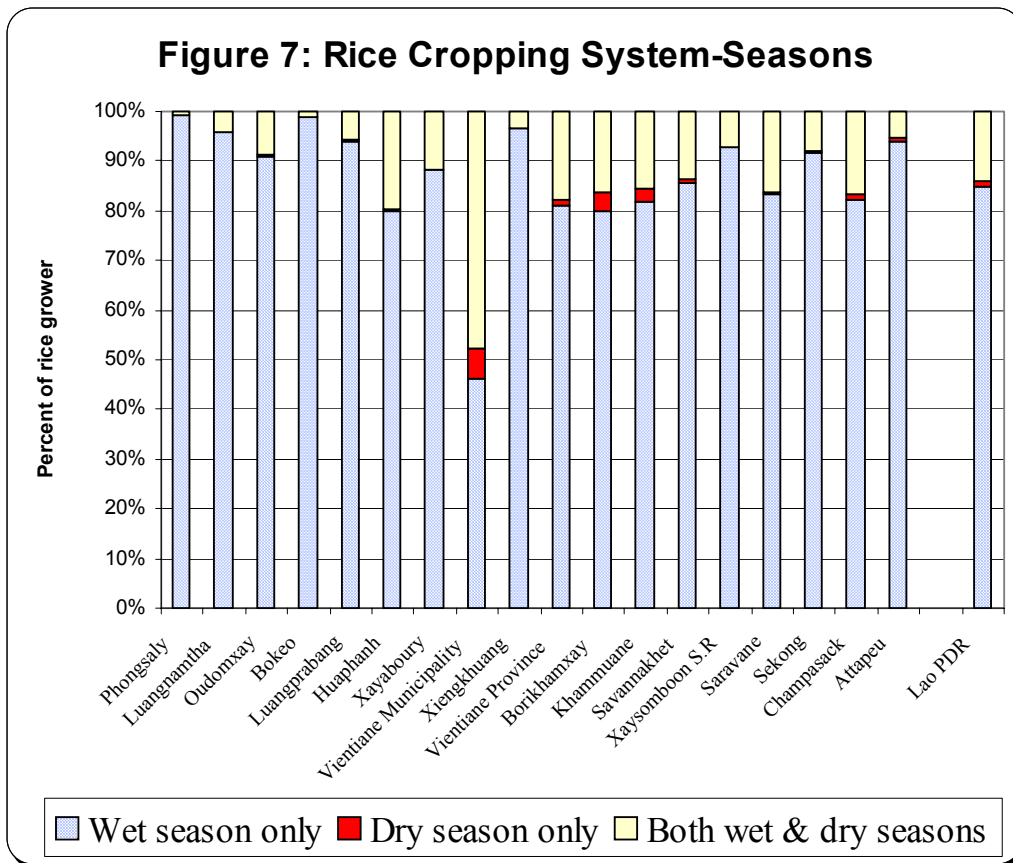


Rice Cropping Systems - Seasons:

The predominant crop throughout the whole of the Lao PDR is rice: 614,000 agricultural holdings grow rice. 77% of all households in the country, that is, 85% of the total number of rice growers, plant a wet season crop only. 14% of rice growers plant both a wet and a dry season crop. 1.1% plant only a dry season crop.

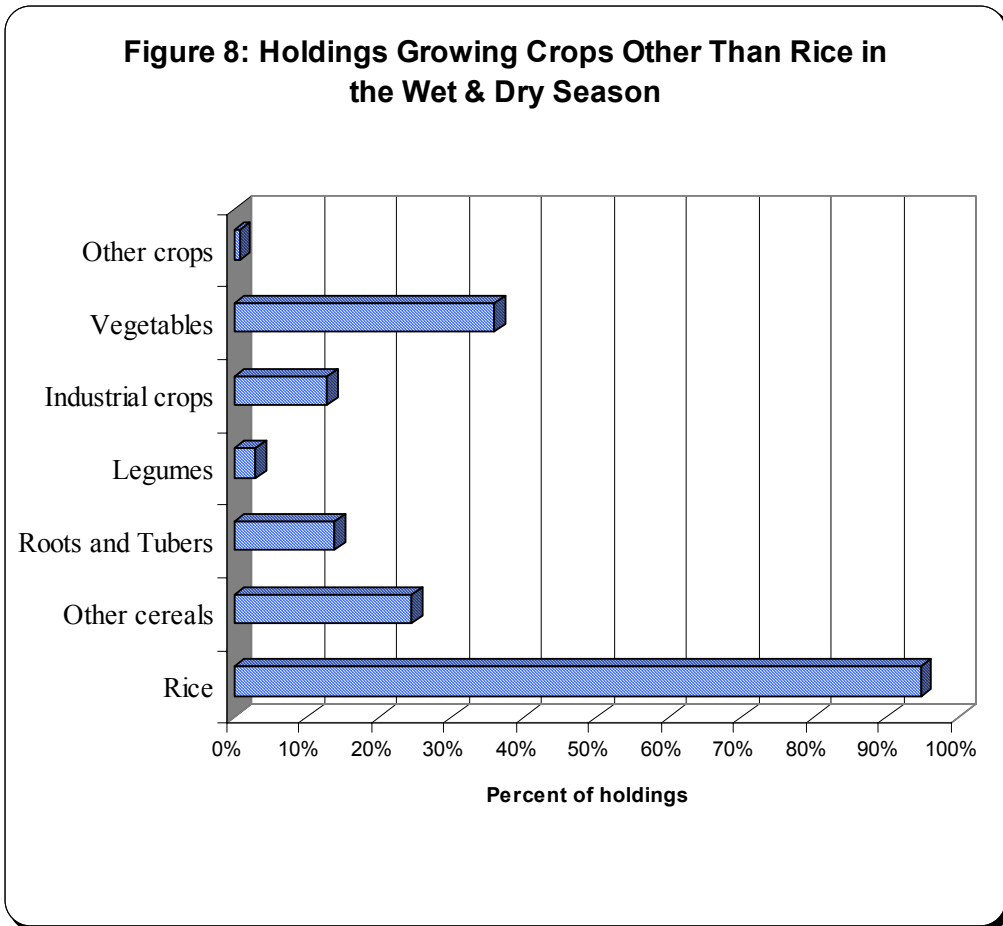
In Vientiane Municipality, 47.6% of rice growers plant both a wet and dry season crop, compared with 19.8% in Huaphanh, with 17.6% in Vientiane province, with 16.7% in Champasack, with 16.4% in Saravane, with 16.2% in Borikhamxay, with 15.7% in Khammuane, with 13.6% in Savannakhet, with 11.8% in Xayabury, with 8.8% in Oudomxay and with 7.9% in Sekong province.

The smallest percentage of farmers growing rice in both the wet and dry seasons was in Phongsaly (0.6%).



Holdings Growing Crops Other Than Rice in the Wet & Dry Seasons:

In the Lao PDR 627,900 of holdings grow crops (including rice). This is 97.0% of the total number, and represents a total area under cultivation of 802,600 ha. 158,900 holdings (24.6% of the total) grow other cereals, 89,900 (13.9%) grow roots and tubers, 19,000 (2.9%) grow legumes, 83,300 (12.9%) grow industrial crops, 232,800 (36%) grow vegetables and 5,300 (0.8%) grow other crops.



Holdings with Permanent Crops:

In Lao PDR fruit trees are common, but are found usually as only scattered trees rather than in plantations. The most common fruit trees in the country are coffee, tea, cardamom, banana, pineapple, mango, tamarind, abaca, coconut, papaya, jackfruit, orange, mulberry, custard apple, longan, lemon, jujube, and other permanent crops. There are 62,904,000 coffee bushes, 12,590,000 tea plants, 9,030,000 cardamom trees, 6,841,000 banana trees, 5,217,000 pineapple plants, 1,427,000 mango trees, 1,408,000 tamarind trees, 751,000 abaca trees, 738,000 coconut trees, 560,000 papaya trees, 503,000 jackfruit trees, 488,000 orange trees, 423,000 mulberry trees, 333,000 custard apple trees, 253,000 longan trees, 224,000 lemon trees, 148,000 jujube trees, 143,000 rubber trees, and other permanent crops.

The total number of holdings with permanent crops is about 288,315 (44.5% of the total). 116,018 (40.2% of the total land holding) are holdings with compact plantations. These plantations are usually relatively large plantations of 0.65 ha. Nearly 226,135 holdings have a variety of trees scattered around their farm.

In the provinces, 75.1% of the total holdings with permanent crops in Sekong province had compact plantations, compared with 75.0% in Luangnamtha, 62.6% in Saravane, 58.6% in Vientiane Municipality, 58.4% in Xiengkhuang, 56.3% in Huaphanh, 52.0% in Vientiane, 47.3% in Xaysomboun S.R, 46.9% in Luangprabang, 46.4% in Champasack, and 38.2% in Borikhamxay province.

The smallest number of holdings with compact plantations (17.6%) was found in Savannakhet province.

