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IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS  
IN ASIA AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES  
(GCP/RAS/171/JPN)

**Proceedings of the National Seminar  
on the System of Food and Agriculture  
Statistics in the Lao PDR**

Vientiane, 3-4 August 2000

Volume I  
Report of the Seminar

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

1. The first National Seminar on the System of Food and Agriculture Statistics in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR, a.k.a. Laos) was held on 3-4 August 2000 at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) in Vientiane. It was organized within the framework of the FAO project GCPIRAS/171/JPN for the improvement of agricultural statistics in Asia and Pacific countries. Fifty-five representatives of the following organizations attended:

- Cabinet Office, MAF
- National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
- Technical and Science Council of Agriculture and Forestry, MAF
- Department of Personnel, MAF
- Department of Planning, MAF
- Department of Agriculture, MAF
- Department of Livestock and Fisheries, MAF
- Department of Forestry, MAF
- Department of Irrigation, MAF
- Department of Meteorology and Hydrology
- Agriculture and forestry services of the Vientiane Municipality and of the provinces of Vientiane, Savannakhet, Khammouane, Champassak and Bolikhamxay
- State Planning Committee
- National Statistics Centre
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
- Lao-EU Livestock Project
- FAO, JICA, the World Food Program and DANIDA.

2. The seminar was prepared and run by an organizing committee established in accordance with Agreement No1688/MAF2000 of the Lao ministry of agriculture, with a view to:

- assess the state of food and agriculture statistics service in the Lao PDR;
- review existing food and agriculture statistics activities;
- identify the needs and expectations of data users;
- discuss problems and issues faced in the collection, analysis, use and dissemination of food and agriculture statistics; and
- formulate recommendations for future development of the national food and agriculture statistics programme.

3. Mr Anonh Khamhung, Director General of the Department of Planning, who chaired the proceedings, warmly welcomed the participants to the seminar, thanked them for their attendance and expressed his belief that a frank exchange of views would help strengthen the existing agricultural statistics system. He also thanked FAO, and especially Mr Ryuki Ikeda, the expert attached to the agricultural statistics support project for Asia-Pacific countries, for their help in setting up the seminar.

4. Mr Tsukasa Kimoto, FAO Representative in the Lao PDR, expressed his thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for organizing the gathering.
5. In his keynote speech, the vice-minister of agriculture and forestry, HE Sitaheng Rasaphonh, expressed his support and willingness to help strengthen national capacity in agricultural statistics gathering and processing.
6. The vice-minister gratefully acknowledged the financial support to the seminar provided by the government of Japan.
7. He went on to outline the progressive economic growth the country has known in the past fifteen years, resulting primarily, he stated, from the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism. Clear farming policies and increased investment in irrigation development were the main factors of increase in agricultural production and productivity, in a land where agriculture accounted for half of GDP and for three quarters of the labour force. Since 1996, considerable achievements had been made in the agricultural sector.
8. Mr Tsukasa Kimoto emphasized the joint commitment of the Lao government and of FAO to set up a reliable national statistics service and the commitment of the Lao government to a free-market economy. He expected that the workshop would achieve its objectives and hoped in particular that the strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities of the existing agricultural statistics system in the Lao PDR would be better understood so that improvements could be made. He stressed the importance of the first national census for agriculture as a clarification of the nation's agricultural structure and as benchmark for future annual surveys.
9. The holding of the census showed that the Lao PDR was committed to improving its agricultural statistics and information system. FAO was pleased to support the Lao government in this development effort. With an open exchange of views, data collection at the grassroots, data transfer, processing and use would be clearly understood.
10. Mr Ryuki Ikeda outlined the background of the project for the improvement of statistical systems in Asia-Pacific countries. The project was formulated in accordance with the recommendations of the sixteenth session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics held in Tokyo in late 1996. The project operates in 16 countries of Asia and the Pacific with two main objectives: the study of national systems of food and agriculture statistics through the organization of national or regional seminars on the production and use of agricultural statistics and of national or regional workshops on specific topics; and the formulation of a plan for the establishment of a database and equipment facilities to electronically transfer data to and from countries in the region and FAO.
11. There are many global concerns relating to agriculture, which require high-quality statistics to be properly addressed, Mr Ikeda emphasized. He added that, as in many other countries of the region, in the Lao PDR agriculture remains the foundation of industrial

development. Thus, strong agricultural policies are needed, and in order to formulate such policies, good and reliable statistics are required.

12. The Lao government has adopted a decentralized system of agricultural statistics whereby both the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the National Statistics Centre are in charge of managing agricultural statistics, Mr Ikeda further noted. Turning to the objectives of the seminar, he stressed the need to identify data gaps, deficiencies in methodology, duplication of activities, and measures for improving or streamlining agricultural statistics. To accomplish these objectives, the participants were strongly encouraged to openly share their views during the panel discussions.

13. HE Sitaheng Rasaphonh then officially opened the seminar. He expressed his pleasure and pride in presiding over the opening ceremony, and welcomed all the participants. Financial support from FAO was deeply appreciated, he stated, adding that the seminar would support Prime Ministerial Decree No01/PM, dated 13.03.2000, on the use of the province as the strategic unit, the district as the planning and budgetary unit, and the village as the implementation area. To reach socio-economic development objectives, plans, programmes and projects had to be formulated to suit each locality and a wide range of statistics was required. The current workshop would no doubt help improve agriculture statistics. He then declared the session open.

### **The system of food and agriculture statistics in the Lao PDR** (Session 1)

14. Mr Savanh Hanephom, Director of the Statistics Division, Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, presented the system of food and agriculture statistics of the Lao PDR by highlighting the contribution of the agricultural sector to the national economy and the development of the agricultural statistics project and of the agricultural census, which are supported by FAO and by the Swedish government respectively. The agricultural census in the Lao PDR was conducted based on the guidelines for the FAO World Census of Agriculture 2000.

15. Agriculture and forestry statistical information in the Lao PDR are decentralized. The National Statistics Centre is responsible for non-agro-forestry censuses (including the population census), but handles only semi agro-forestry censuses. Agriculture and forestry statistics are dealt with by the statistics division of the Planning Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The division prepares and distributes an annual bulletin of agriculture and forestry statistics. Prices of agricultural commodities and agricultural inputs can be obtained from the division.

16. Current agricultural statistics, the gathering was told, are based on administrative reports of each line agency, themselves based on data collected at grassroots level and passed along the administrative channel of each line agency. Data generation is not systematic due

to a lack of standardization of statistical concepts and procedures and to non-compliance to the requirements.

17. However, the reporting system on crop monitoring and crop forecasting with FAO assistance has been introduced in many provinces.

18. Among the suggested improvements of agricultural statistics are:

- collecting data from primary sources using the systematic sampling method;
- widening the scope of existing agricultural statistics to suit planning requirements in the market economy; and
- widening the publication of statistics.

19. The report outlined four main types of agricultural statistics:

a) Agricultural census, as part of a worldwide programme of agricultural censuses carried out every ten years. In the Lao PDR, the first agricultural census took place in 1999.

b) Current agricultural statistics are key national statistics, which are required regularly to measure the agricultural output and the contribution of agriculture to the national economy. These statistics include crop, livestock and price statistics.

c) Early-warning information (reports from the grassroots).

d) Agricultural census analysis. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry analyses some topics of the agricultural census of relevance to its concerns.

20. Besides these, there are other agricultural statistics such as:

- farmer household income and expenditure (carried out every five years);
- production cost (five-year data);
- post-harvest losses;
- livestock products; and
- crop productivity.

### **The first census of Lao agriculture: methodological review of data collection, analysis, use and dissemination**

(Session 2)

21. A study entitled 'The first national census of agriculture: methodological review of data collection, analysis, use and dissemination' was presented by Mr Bounthavy Sisouphanthong, Director General of the National Statistics Centre, State Planning Committee, highlighting the objectives of the national census of agriculture, its institutional arrangements, schedule, methods, geographic and topical scope, publication of results, and uses.

22. The two main objectives of the census were to generate data on agricultural land, its use and characteristics of holdings and to provide a base for agriculture and livestock surveys.

23. The census was made possible by the cooperation of the National Statistics Centre and the Ministry of Agriculture, with financial and technical support from the Swedish government. The work was conducted by a steering committee.
24. The project started in February 1999. An analytical report was under preparation at the time of the seminar.
25. Two types of data on crop and livestock production were gathered from all the 800 000 households in the Lao PDR.
26. Area measurement was done through sampling, since actual measurement of all areas was not feasible. The data collected is to be found in the main report.
27. The publication schedule was briefly outlined. Government organizations, research institutions and private-sector concerns were the main users of the census results, the seminar was told.

### **Data collection on crops, livestock and forestry by the ministry of agriculture (Session 3)**

28. Mr Khamtanh Thadavong, Director of the Planning Division of the Department of Agriculture, Mr Nhoungthong Sihanat, Deputy Director of the Planning Division of the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, and Mr Khamphanh Xaykosy, Director of the Planning Division of the Department of Forestry, took turns to report on data collection by the ministry of agriculture on crops, livestock and forestry, respectively. They outlined the organizational structure of the surveys, the survey items, methods and schedules, as well as problems, constraints, proposed solutions, and prospects.
29. The Department of Agriculture is well aware that high-quality data are needed to make effective policies, plans and regulations. The information available at the department covers foodstuff and commodity crops production, agricultural inputs, and technical issues. It is collected through both vertical and horizontal networks and by administrative reporting. The Planning Division is responsible for data collection and filing.
30. Livestock production in the Lao PDR has experienced stable growth in recent years, the meeting was told. High livestock mortality rates remain a major problem, though. Poor-quality livestock statistics indirectly contribute to disease outbreak, as sound forecasting cannot be made and the farmers are left unaware of imminent outbreaks.
31. The Department of Livestock and Fisheries recognizes the difficulty of trying to maintain high-quality statistics, yet is doing its best to gather as many reliable statistics as possible, as these are needed in setting objectives and in monitoring and evaluating projects.

32. Current livestock statistics have more weaknesses than strengths and even the quality of the recently released national agricultural statistics is dubious, the gathering was told. Data collection and reporting in the livestock and fishery sector are based on the vertical administrative approach.

33. This is also the case for forestry statistics, the seminar learned. The Planning Division of the Department of Forestry has a statistics unit responsible for the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of forestry statistics. Survey forms in the forestry sector are standardized at central level and passed down to local level. The horizontal flow of statistics is also important to the forestry section.

34. Forestry statistics serve the objectives of two national priority programmes: stabilization of slash-and-burn cultivation leading to permanent job allocation, and commodity production.

35. The seminar was appraised of the strengths and weaknesses of forestry statistics, as well as of their sources, and heard recommendations for future development, which would depend on specific conditions in each subsector. Finally, the seminar was provided with a rundown of the types of forestry data kept by the forestry department.

### **Compilation and use of the national accounts and of the GDP in the case of agriculture** (Session 4)

36. In a wide-ranging contribution, Mr Bounthavy Sisouphanthong, Director General of the National Statistics Centre, presented the national accounts and GDP frameworks concerning agriculture and other sectors, the source and methods of collection of input data for the national accounts and the GDP, and the issues and problems related to the availability and consistency of various primary data, as well as other problems, and made proposals for improvement.

37. The presentation began with an outline of three methods of GDP compilation, based respectively on total production output, on income and on total expenditure. Currently only the first method is used in the Lao PDR. The other methods are not used due to a lack of data on income and expenditure.

38. Calculation of the GDP of the Lao PDR involves three main sectors: agriculture, industry and services. Since agriculture accounts for more than half of the national economy, close attention has to be paid to the quality of the data used in calculation, but measuring income generated from agriculture, forestry and fishery is difficult, for a number of reasons.

39. The seminar was told of the various components of income derived from agriculture, forestry and livestock, of how to measure increases in agricultural income, of the difference between real and nominal GDPs, of what GDP deflators are, and of the main requirements in

GDP compilation, with the proviso that these requirements are not fulfilled under current statistics.

40. GDP reporting is done on a yearly basis. Quarterly reports are also attempted, but face delays in data processing and dissemination. There are annual reports on the GDP, but bi-yearly reports are also required.

41. As a final flourish, the concept, objectives, use and future improvement of the producer price index were explained.

### **Agricultural commodity and input reporting methods** (Session 5)

42. Mr Somboun Rasmithong, senior staff member of the Statistics Division, Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, presented a reference document on agricultural commodity and input reporting methods. The presentation began with a list of the kinds of agricultural data needed in the preparation of development plans for the agriculture and forestry sector. Agricultural produce and input price data are needed to help framers select the most profitable option, the seminar was told. Reliable information was defined as 'information which proves to have acceptably low levels of inaccuracy'. The fact that the quality of data depends on good and appropriate data collection methods was emphasized. The common pricing unit for produce and for input was described. Some technical terms were defined, and livestock pricing techniques demonstrated.

43. The agricultural and input price survey, participants were told, is limited mainly to agricultural activities of private households, and based on samplings of three to five villages per district and five households per village, i.e. 15-25 sample households per district. The timing of data collection differs at district and province levels. The district collects data twice a month, on the first and the fifteenth of each month, and reports to the province on the twentieth of each month. The province is responsible for processing and summarizing the data before forwarding them to the ministry. From time to time, officials from the ministry go out in the field to advise on operations related to data collection. Finally, four forms of agricultural and input prices at various levels, known as Forms 1 to 4, were outlined.

### **The livestock marketing information system** (Session 6)

44. In a paper entitled 'The livestock marketing information system', Mr Gérard PM Oosterwijk, expert attached to the Lao-European Union Livestock Project, explained the design and collection of livestock data and the procedure for slaughterhouse monitoring.

45. The presentation began with an overview of agricultural commodity price records, highlighting the scope for identifying livestock production, the current state of information and the need for extra livestock information.

46. Food intake is seen as the key to livestock productivity, hence to profitability, the seminar was told. The state of commercial compound feed prices and of other raw materials for feed was thoroughly described, leading to the conclusion that there was a need for additional information on feed prices. The differences between feed for poultry and feed for pigs were explained.

47. Price is another factor affecting the profitability of livestock. Current pricing is either based on weight expressed in kilograms (buffalo, cattle, pig, broiler chicken) or per head (duck and free-range chicken) or per kg (chicken eggs and duck eggs). Suggestions were made to improve price collection of cattle and buffalo, pigs, and eggs and poultry.

48. Regarding slaughterhouse monitoring for buffalo and cattle, it was noted that growth in meat production came from slaughtering animals when they were in good physical condition, with an estimated 40 percent increase compared to the slaughter of animals in poor physical condition.

49. Calculations of meat production based on livestock grades were shown and the point was raised of the ecological value of increasing livestock productivity per head rather than increasing stock rates.

### **The collection of agricultural statistics in the provinces** (Session 7)

50. The seminar included a session focused on the discussion of specific activities in the provinces such as identification of data availability, data collection methods, reporting methods (including reporting problems) and requirements for planning at provincial level.

51. Mr Sisavath Jasane, Deputy Director of the Agriculture and Forestry Service of the Vientiane Municipality, reported that representatives of its nine district agriculture and forestry offices meet every Wednesday in his office to listen to reports on agricultural production during the previous week and plan for the coming week.

52. Provincial staffers go out to support district staff in the collection of data at the grassroots, the seminar was told. All villages give regular reports to district agriculture and forestry offices, which in turn report to the municipality.

53. The seminar was further informed that data on rice production was collected twice a year: once during the wet season and again in the dry season. Other data were also collected.

54. Mr Bun-gnong Sipaseut, Deputy Director of the Xayaboury Province Agriculture and Forestry Service, gave a report that was similar to that given by the Vientiane Municipality agriculture and forestry service.

55. Mr Xayaphanh Lasy, Deputy Director of the Luang Prabang Province Agriculture and Forestry Service, reported that his office collected data on crops, livestock, fishery, forestry, irrigation, meteorology and hydrology. The detailed contents of these sections were also presented.

56. So did Mr Bounmy Sibounheuang, senior statistician of Khammouane province, who emphasized that most data were collected through district agriculture and forestry offices, and some through projects.

57. Mr Bountiam Phommaxay and Mr Pone Phet On Ta, respectively deputy directors of the agriculture and forestry services in Savannakhet and Champassak provinces, also addressed the issues and constraints of agricultural statistics in their provinces.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

58. Here are the main issues raised during the seminar:

- 1) Problems with the existing reporting system of agricultural statistics were highlighted and the need for improvement was stressed. Particular mention was made of the need for uniformity in reporting formats, concepts, definitions and timing. Reporting forms should be simple, easy to understand and suit the capability of field staff.
- 2) Seminar participants strongly emphasized the importance of the first census of agriculture and livestock, which provides structural data on the sector, a frame for sample surveys and a base for compiling regular agricultural statistics. The seminar emphasized also the need to conduct a second census in due time.
- 3) Data from the census should provide a base for the estimation of the area of rice, temporary crops and permanent crops. Data on livestock numbers and age and sex structure from the agricultural census should provide a base for the estimation of livestock numbers.
- 4) The need to strengthen the statistical capability of provincial and district offices was stressed, as well as the need to recruit additional staff for work on agricultural statistics.
- 5) Participants highlighted the need to review the role and functions of statistical staff and to establish regulations governing the collection of agricultural statistics at all levels.
- 6) The need to upgrade the skills of statistical staff both in the centre and in the field was emphasized. Different types of training were mentioned, including in-country study tours and training, and higher training abroad. It was recommended that the

- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry establish suitable programmes to train the statistical personnel in basic statistical methods.
- 7) Provincial and district staff face problems with budget and equipment that hinder their ability to carry out data collection work in the villages.
  - 8) Seminar participants generally considered that seminars such as the present one were very beneficial and recommended that they be held every two years.
  - 9) The future development of agriculture will need to give emphasis to:
    - the collection of data directly from primary sources, especially using sample surveys of farmers, to provide more reliable statistics;
    - an expansion of the range of agricultural statistics available to meet the government's information needs for planning in the market economy; and
    - an extension of the range of statistical publications to ensure wide dissemination of data in a timely manner.
  - 10) Outside technical assistance is needed on the use of the census of agriculture as a basis for the development of a medium-term programme aiming at strengthening national agricultural statistics in the Lao PDR.

### **Conclusion of the seminar**

59. All of the above-mentioned conclusions and recommendations were agreed upon and adopted by the participants. The seminar ended at 16:30 hours on 4 August 2000 with closing remarks by FAO consultant GG de Guzman, who emphasized that price information is just a small component in a more holistic, multi-component structure needed for a dynamic agricultural marketing system. Mr Tsukasa Kimoto, FAO Representative in the Lao PDR, congratulated everyone present for making this gathering a very successful two-day technical meeting on agricultural statistics. FAO is always ready to provide whatever support it can muster to help the Lao People's Democratic Republic achieve a good national agricultural statistical service. The seminar was officially closed by Mr Anonh Khamhung, Director General of the Planning Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

## **AGENDA OF THE SEMINAR**

### **3 August 2000**

8:30-9:00	Registration	
9:00-9:50	Opening ceremony	
	• Welcome speech	Mr Anonh Khamhung, DG, Planning Dept, MAF
	• Opening statement	Mr Tsukasa Kimoto, FAO Representative in the Lao PDR
	• Inaugural speech	HE Sitaheng Rasaphonh, Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
	Coffee break	
10:10-10:40	Introductory remarks on the project Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries (GCP/RAS/171/JPN) and the seminar	Mr Ryuki Ikeda, Agricultural Statistics Expert, FAO

### **Paper presentation**

10:40-11: 40	The system of food and agriculture statistics in the Lao PDR (Session 1)	Mr Savanh Hanehom, DG, Statistics Div, Planning Dept, MAF
11:40-12:00	Discussion	
13:30-14:20	The first census of Lao agriculture: methodological review of data collection, analysis, use and dissemination (Session 2)	National Statistics Centre
14:20-14:40	Discussion	
15:00-15: 45	Data collection for crops, livestock and forestry (Session 3); for crops	Dept of Agriculture
15:45-16:00	Discussion	

16:00-17:00	Collection of Agricultural Statistics in the Provinces (Session 7)	Agriculture and forestry services (Luang Prabang, Xayaboury, Vientiane Municipality) 20 minutes for each province
17:00-17:20	Discussion	

#### **4 August 2000**

8:30-9:00	Data collection for crops, livestock and forestry (Session 3); for livestock	Livestock Dept
9:00-9:10	Discussion	
9:10-9:40	Agricultural Commodity and Input Reporting System (Session 5)	Senior staff of the Statistics Div
9:40-9:50	Discussion	
10:00-10:30	The livestock marketing information system (Session 6)	Lao-EU Livestock Project
10:30-10:40	Discussion	
10:40-12:00	Collection of Agricultural Statistics in the Provinces (Session 7)	Agriculture and forestry services (Vientiane province, Khammouane, Champassak and Savannakhet provinces) 20 minutes for each province
12:00-12:20	Discussion	
13:30-14:00	Data collection for crops, livestock and forestry (Session 3); for forestry	Forestry Dept
14:00-14:10	Discussion	
14:10-14:55	Compilation and use of national accounts and GDP in the case of agriculture (Session 4)	NSC

14:55-15:10	Discussion	
15:30-16:00	Conclusions and recommendations	
16:00-16:40	Closing session	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing remarks</li> <li>• Closing statement</li> </ul>	<p>Mr Generoso G de GUZMAN, FAO consultant</p> <p>Mr Anonh Khamhung, DG, Planning Dept, MAF</p>
18:30-	Farewell dinner	



## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Mr Tsukasa Kimoto	Representative in the Lao PDR	FAO
Mr Generoso de Guzman	Consultant	FAO
Mr Ryuki Ikeda	Agricultural Statistics Expert	FAO
Mr Mark Ramachandran	Programme Officer	World Food Program
Mr Awthea Kerr	Programme Officer	World Food Program
Mr Yasunori Araki	JICA Expert	Ministry of Agriculture
Mr Michael Hunt	First Secretary	AUS/AID
Mr Vital Kellens	Counsellor, Head of Development & Cooperation Section	Belgium Embassy
Mr Stefan Islandi	Assistant Resident Rep	UNDP
Mr Gérard P M Oosterwijk	Livestock and Extension Specialist	LAO-EU Livestock Project
Mr Christov Holble	Assistant Officer	SIDA
Ms Genevieve Chicoin	Programme Officer	WFP
Mr Nobjaki Miyaza	Deputy Resident Rep	JICA Office in the Lao PDR
Mr Thongsoun Bouphasonh	Director, Cooperation Division	Permanent Secretariat Off, MAF
Ms Laddavanh	Staff Member	Permanent Secretariat Off, MAF
Mr Anonh Khamhung	Director General	Planning Dept, MAF
Mr Khamtanh Thadavong	Director, Planning Div	Dept of Agriculture, MAF
Mr Somsack	Statistician	Dept of Agriculture, MAF
Mr Nhoungthong Sihanat	Deputy Director, Planning Div	Livestock Dept, MAF
Mr Souriyavong	Statistician	Livestock Dept, MAF
Mr Khamphanh Xaykosy	Director, Planning Div	Forestry Dept, MAF
Mr Sangvane	Deputy Director, Planning Div	Forestry Dept, MAF
Ms Souvimonh Chipaseut	Assistant to Director	Irrigation Dept, MAF
Mr Savanh Hanephom	Director, Statistics Div	Planning Dept, MAF
Mr Khamsay Phothisane	Director, Planning Div	Planning Dept, MAF
Mr Okeo Souphanthone	Deputy Director, Statistics Div	Planning Dept, MAF
Mr Somboun Rasmithong	Senior statistician	Planning Dept, MAF
Mr Souksavanh Intharack	Statistician	Planning Dept, MAF
Ms Vivanh Souvannamethy	Deputy Director, Statistics Div	Planning Dept, MAF
Ms Anouhack	Statistician	Planning Dept, MAF
Mr Cheme Sithinarongsi	Director, Personnel Div	Planning Dept, MAF

Mr Linhkham	Senior staff	National Agricultural Research Centre
Ms Thongsavath Boupha	Staff	Science Council, MAF
Mr Bounthavy	Director General, National	National Statistics Centre
Sisouphanthong	Statistics Centre	
Mr Boua-Ngeun	Statistician	National Statistics Centre
Mr Khamxay	Statistician	Ministry of Commerce
Ms Phouvong	Staff	State Planning Committee
Mr Sisavath Chasane	Deputy Director, Agriculture	Vientiane Municipality
Mr Phienxay Lone Natu	Statistician	Vientiane Municipality
Mr Hat Sisombat	Deputy Director, Agriculture	Vientiane Prov
Mr Oubon Liemphasouk	Statistician	Vientiane Prov
Mr Phetsamay Phetlamp	Director, Agriculture	Khammouane Prov
Mr Bounmy Sibounheuang	Statistician, Agriculture & Forestry	Khammouane Prov
Mr Bountiam Phommaxay	Deputy Director, Agriculture & Forestry	Savannakhet Prov
Mr Keo Oudone	Statistician	Savannakhet Prov
Mr Maychom	Head, Statistics & Planning	Borikhamxay
Mr Sengphet	Statistician	Borikhamxay
Mr Pone Phet On Ta	Deputy Director, Agriculture	Champassak Prov
Mr Souriya Phanthavong	Statistician	Champassak
Mr Xayaphanh Lasy	Deputy Director, Agriculture	Luang Prabang Prov
Mr Phounsavanh	Statistician	Luang Prabang Prov
Mr Piene Chatip	Deputy Director	Xayaboury Prov
Mr Bun- gnong Sipaseut	Deputy Director, Agriculture	Xayaboury Prov
Mr Somphone	Statistician	Xayaboury Province
Ms Viengkham	Deputy Director, Statistics Div	Ministry of Industry
Mr Lounthong Phonekhamma	Deputy Director, Statistics Div	Ministry of Social Welfare
Mr Sengpaseut	Statistician	Personnel Dept, MAF

## **LIST OF STATEMENTS**

- Welcome Speech by Director General of Planning Department, MAF
- Opening statement by the FAO Representative in the Lao PDR
- Inaugural Speech by the Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
- Introductory remarks on the project Improvement of Agricultural
- Statistics in Asia-Pacific Countries (GCP/RAS /171/JPN)
- Closing remarks by Consultant of FAO/RAP
- Closing speech by the Director General of the Planning Department, MAF



## **WELCOME SPEECH**

**Anonh Khamhung**

Director General, Planning Dept,  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome the workshop participants today. On behalf of the hosting committee, I would like to thank the distinguished delegates who have spared some of their valuable time to attend this workshop in order to assess statistical activity and elaborate the findings on an agreed approach to develop agriculture and forestry statistics for yet another step ahead.

Over the two days of the workshop, I believe that your intelligence and valuable experience will contribute to strengthen the agricultural statistics system to serve as an important means of implementing the Prime Minister's Decree No01/PM dated 11.3.2000 on establishing the province as the strategic unit, the district as the planning and budgetary unit and the village as the base of implementation.

I would like to express special thanks to FAO, in particular to Mr Ryuki Ikeda, the expert assigned to the Project for the Improvement of Agricultural Statistics in Asia and Pacific Countries, who is contributing significant inputs to this workshop.

May I wish good health to the distinguished delegates, and much success to the workshop. Thank you.



## OPENING STATEMENT

**Tsukasa Kimoto**  
FAO Representative  
in the Lao PDR

It is my great pleasure to participate in this national seminar on food and agriculture statistics in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. On behalf of all FAO colleagues who are concerned with the country's agricultural statistics, I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for organizing this meeting. In particular, I would like to express gratitude to HE Sitaheng Rasaphonh, Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, for his presence at this seminar. Your very presence, Your Excellency, is a clear demonstration and confirmation of your support for and commitment to the further strengthening of the national capacity in agricultural statistics. I would also like to thank the government of Japan for the financial support provided for this seminar.

Since the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1986, the Lao PDR has known steady economic growth, although there have been certain issues and difficulties such as inflation and exchange rates. Agricultural production has also progressed steadily due to the shift from collective to individual farming policies, and to accelerated investment in irrigation. Giving the farmers the right to freely manage their farm and market their produce is a good economic incentive for them to increase agricultural production and improve agricultural productivity, contributing to sustain the new liberalization policy of the government.

In the Lao PDR, about 75 percent of the employed population are engaged in agriculture. The agricultural sector accounts for about 50 percent of the GDP. Accordingly, dynamic and sustainable development in the agricultural and rural communities is a major challenge to the nation. Steady and sustained development of this sector cannot be overemphasized as a factor contributing to social and economic development and improvement of people's living standards and quality of life. We are pleased to note that the improvement of rural communities and food production has been underscored in the Five Year Plan 1996-2000.

Today's national seminar, which FAO is proud to sponsor, is part of the long process of helping the government of the Lao PDR set up a strong national statistical service. This also reflects the desire and commitment of the Lao government to face the challenges associated with the efforts directed toward a free-market economy. It is hoped that this two-day meeting will provide us with a better understanding of the current situation of agricultural statistics in this country. We hope that, by the end of the meeting, we shall be able to identify the strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities of the existing system for agricultural statistics and then evolve recommendations for helping the Lao

PDR set up a national agricultural statistics system that will be on a par with other countries in the region.

We are pleased to note, in this connection, that the government of the Lao PDR has recently completed its first national census for agriculture, started in 1999, which was implemented with the cooperation of the Swedish International Development Agency. The result was publicized in February this year, and it not only clarified the structure of the national agriculture but also supplied a benchmark for annual surveys. We will have the opportunity to learn more about this exercise, as the topic is included in the agenda for this meeting.

It is indeed heart-warming to note that the Lao PDR is one of the countries in the region which are investing in the improvement of their agricultural statistics and information system. It is well recognized in this country that the well-focused, development-supportive regional project for the improvement of agricultural statistics in Asia and Pacific countries was first presented during the sixteenth session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics in Tokyo in 1996. The Lao PDR readily acceded to be considered a participating country, together with other countries in the region. We at FAO are committed to help the Lao PDR in this development effort.

In this context, let me emphasize that we view this seminar as an integral part of the continuing process to help the government of the Lao PDR improve the quality and timeliness of its official statistics. We hope that the presentations during this seminar, which will focus on the review of the system of food and agriculture statistics in the Lao PDR, will help clarify how data are collected at the grassroots level, forwarded to the central government, processed and summarized and finally used to evolve economic and development policies. Thus, the methodology used in the collection and analysis of data will receive prominent attention. We also hope that this seminar, through an open and free exchange of views and ideas, will help identify priority areas that need improvement. The output of this discussion will contribute significantly to the activities and policies we will pursue together with the government of the Lao PDR and other development partners, with a view to achieving further improvement of food and agriculture statistics in the Lao PDR.

I would therefore like to encourage your active participation and frank discussions during this seminar in order to bring forward useful conclusions and recommendations.

Finally, may I also express my best wishes for a fruitful meeting. Thank you.

## INAUGURAL SPEECH

**Sitaheng Rasaphonh**  
Vice-Minister of Agriculture  
and Forestry

It is my pleasure and honour to participate in the inaugural ceremony of the national statistical workshop in which the representatives of various international organizations accredited to the Lao PDR, the representatives of different ministries, departments and institutions and of some provincial agriculture and forestry services also take part. Let me take this opportunity to thank all for sparing valuable time to attend this workshop and in particular, I would like to express sincere thanks to FAO for its financial support to this workshop.

This workshop is held in an atmosphere in which all party members and people are enthusiastic to fulfil their part in order to welcome the three historical days of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Day (2 December) and of the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversaries of our respected former State and Party leaders.

This statistical workshop is of great significance and will serve as the basis for management, policymaking and planning. It is a way of implementing the instruction of the Prime Minister No01/PM, dated 11.3.2000, concerning the shift to the province as strategic unit, the district as planning and budgetary unit and the village as base for implementation.

In order to realize the content of the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Executive Central Party Committee so as to define the directives and tasks of the agriculture and forestry sector and to actively carry out development activities, to transform a so-called natural type of production into commodity production by taking into account increasing productivity, closely linked with the preservation and rehabilitation of soil, forests and water and the efforts needed to achieve self-sufficiency and generate some surplus – in order to achieve all this, we have to elaborate detailed plans, programmes and projects, ensure their suitability to the actual conditions of each locality, and define a complete set of support policies so that all economic sectors are involved and participate in the implementation of the state socio-economic plan.

As you are aware, agriculture and forestry are influenced by a number of complex factors such as natural and biological parameters with local variables. So are statistical data. The purpose of this workshop is not only to listen to the various presentations but also to exchange views in order to find out ways of improving agricultural statistics, including working modalities and activities, so that agricultural statistical information is more complete, accurate, reliable and timely than has been the case so far.

Under this august opportunity, I would like to officially declare the national statistical workshop open and may I wish good health to the chair committee and to the distinguished delegates, and success to the workshop as planned. Thank you.

# **INTRODUCTION TO THE FAO REGIONAL PROJECT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS IN ASIA AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES (GCP/RAS/171/JPN) AND TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR**

**Ryuki Ikeda**  
Agricultural Statistics Expert, FAO

## **1. Introduction to the project**

This project was formulated following the recommendation of the sixteenth session of the Asia and Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics held in Tokyo over October and November 1996. The session stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation and establishing a system for the collection and dissemination of statistics among member countries of the commission. Japan expressed willingness to contribute in this matter and offered a budget for a trust-fund project to be executed by FAO. This project was approved, and actually started in September 1998.

The two objectives of the project are:

- to study the national systems of food and agriculture statistics and to organize national and regional seminars on the production and use of agricultural statistics and national and regional workshops on specific topics; and
- to formulate a plan for the establishment of a database and equipment facilities to provide a capability to transfer data in electronic format both to and from countries in the region and FAO, using common concepts, standards and classifications.

Over the last few years, a number of country projects have been implemented at national level by FAO and other international organizations. This regional project is the first, in the field of agricultural statistics, to include as many countries of this region. The project covers 16 countries, i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Currently there are many issues in agriculture which are of global importance, such as trade environment, freedom from hunger, and so on. Accurate figures as indicated by good statistics can greatly contribute to finding solutions to these concerns. Demand for accurate and comparable statistics among countries will keep growing, and the project is expected to contribute to meet some of these needs.

## **2. Background of agricultural statistics in the Lao PDR**

In most countries of the region, agriculture provides the foundation for industrial development. In the Lao PDR, beyond doubt, agriculture remains the dominant activity,

even though the industry and service sectors have grown since the opening up of the economy.

Strong agricultural policies, therefore, must constitute the mainstay of the country's development policies. By providing useful indicators for various policies for production, exportation, or food supply and demand, agricultural statistics play an important role. Furthermore, for accurate planning, formulation and evaluation of projects, basic data reflecting the actual situation are strongly needed. The need for accurate and timely statistics is well understood.

The government of the Lao PDR has adopted a decentralized system for agricultural statistics. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the National Statistics Centre are recognized as the main organizations in charge of official national statistics. The agricultural census was implemented in 1999 through the cooperation of both institutions. Furthermore, the data of the National Statistics Centre provide vital inputs to estimate various components of the country's system of national accounts.

It is in such a context that the current seminar is taking place.

### **3. Purpose of the seminar**

The seminar aims to:

- assess the state of national food and agriculture statistics service in the Lao PDR;
- review existing food and agriculture statistical activities;
- identify the needs and expectations of data users;
- discuss problems, issues faced in the collection, analysis, use and dissemination of food and agriculture statistics; and
- formulate recommendations for future improvement of the national food and agriculture statistical programme.

The seminar will serve as a forum to identify data gaps, deficiencies in methodology, duplication of activities, and measures for improving or streamlining agricultural statistics.

We have endeavoured to make sure that both data producers and data users are equitably represented today. We therefore enjoin you to have a free and open discussion of the issues, of the strengths, and of the weaknesses that may be constraining the development of a user-friendly and responsive national food and agriculture statistical system in the Lao PDR.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

**GG de Guzman**  
Consultant, FAO

Let me start by extending my congratulations to everybody for making this a very successful two-day technical forum on agricultural statistics. Your active participation has resulted in a truly fruitful meeting. Mr Anonh and Mr Savanh and their staff have done a tremendous job in organizing this seminar. The presence of the vice-minister at the opening session was a clear indication of the importance the Lao PDR, specifically the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, has attached to the meeting.

The papers presented provided a bold and honest assessment of the true state of agricultural statistics. The discussions and the recommendations that evolved in the process showed your seriousness in establishing a national agricultural statistical service that conforms to acceptable international norms.

Before coming to the Lao PDR for this seminar, I had the good fortune to come across the executive summary of a document entitled 'Government strategic vision for the agricultural sector'. I read the document with interest and was pleased to note that its authors highlighted the importance of further developing and improving market information as an essential support system toward the development and conversion of the agricultural sector from essentially subsistence to a vibrant market-driven economic sector.

It was not clear, however, whether the authors of the document looked at the market information system as being confined within the narrow purview of the price monitoring system. I would like to emphasize that price information is just a small component of the more holistic, multi-component structure of a dynamic agricultural marketing information system or AGMARIS. AGMARIS encompasses the entire production, processing-distribution-consumption cycle. A demand-driven AGMARIS therefore should consist of modules providing comprehensive information on (a) agricultural production processed (land use, production, yield, input utilization, agro-climatic conditions, etc); (b) post-harvest activities including agro-processing; (c) marketing and distribution channels and processes; and (d) consumption and use of agricultural outputs.

It is also important to emphasize that such an information system should primarily address the needs of the most important clientele of the ministry of agriculture: the farmers and other rural folk. Thus, in designing a programme for establishing AGMARIS, which, by the way, is the backbone of the national agricultural statistical service, we should always be aware that such a system will prosper and grow only if the farmers use and support it, as they are the principal actors as well as beneficiaries involved in the development of the agricultural sector.

For this reason, an important consideration when attempting to establish AGMARIS is to make sure that the dissemination component of the system includes a strategy that will ensure that farmers are able to understand, use and benefit from the system's output. This, to me, is the biggest challenge. All our efforts to come up with sophisticated data collection methodologies and state-of-the-art processing systems will not achieve the desired outcome if, at the end of the day, we find our farmers still mired in poverty. Indeed, the best indicator that you have succeeded in establishing a market information system that supports the national agricultural sector development policy is when you are able to uplift the living conditions and quality of life of the rural folk. A farmer-focussed information system is the most powerful tool that you can provide to empower Lao farmers and make them active participants in the market liberalization policy of the government.

As I noted yesterday, you have already started to set up the foundations needed for a strong national agricultural statistical service. The first agricultural census, which is a prerequisite for any attempt to establish a stable national agricultural statistical service, has already been undertaken. FAO and other donor agencies have provided assistance aimed at giving the technical staff initial exposure on acceptable techniques of data collection and processing. What is now needed is more sustained support to put these bits and pieces of technology into a healthier environment conducive to the full institutionalization of an agricultural statistical service in the country.

Through the concerted efforts of your government and of the international donor community, we are optimistic that in the very near future the Lao PDR will realize its dream to have a national agricultural statistical service it can really be proud of. FAO will always be ready to provide whatever support it can muster to help you achieve this.

Again, thank you and a good day to all.

## **CLOSING SPEECH**

**Anonh Khamhung**

Director General, Dept of Planning

I learn that the workshop has proceeded smoothly over the past two days. The participants have undergone brainstorming to solve statistical problems. Many have made constructive comments. With your staff, I feel that the workshop has achieved its objectives and resulted in findings which may be the basis for the development of our statistical system, to make it an important tool in planning agricultural development.

Over the two days that the workshop has lasted, many problems have been identified which will need to be solved by us all now that the workshop is over. The Statistics Division of the Department of Planning will work together with you at provincial, district and village levels to give advice and ensure that implementation is in line with statistical principles.

Finally, I would like to wish good health to the statistics expert of the Asia-Pacific region and safe return to his workplace. I hope that the workshop will prove useful for the improvement of the statistical system in the provinces concerned, and I expect to hear about further progress in your statistical affairs. It is hoped that we will further receive support from FAO as well as from Mr GG de Guzman over the next two years.

Thank you for your participation and once again, special thanks to FAO and to the two experts who provided us with significant inputs. Thank you.