



LAO PDR AND SEARCHA



SEARCA's headquarters was constructed with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and the Government of the Philippines.



Established in 1966, the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) is one of the 26 specialist institutions of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), a treaty organization that promotes regional cooperation in education, science, and culture.

The SEAMEO member countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The associate member countries of SEAMEO are Canada, France, Germany, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Lao PDR is one of the founding member countries of SEAMEO, which was established in 1965.

SEARCA's objectives are to:

1. Provide high-quality graduate education and training in agriculture;
2. Promote, undertake, and coordinate research addressing the development needs and problems in agriculture of the region; and
3. Disseminate the findings of agricultural research and experimentation.

SEAMEO SEARCA

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Our Vision

A leading enabler and champion of excellence in agriculture and rural development in Southeast Asia

Our Mission

To elevate the quality of life of agricultural families through sustainable and resilient livelihoods and access to modern networks and innovative markets



Our Strategic Objectives

- Access new and innovative financial services
- Adopt new, sustainable, and resilient production technologies and systems
- Integrate with modern postharvest and logistics system
- Gain access to and operate in modern networks and markets





supports the
UN Sustainable Development Goals



Our Strategic Intent

SEARCA, in the next five years, commits to BETTER, BIGGER, and SMARTER outcomes and impact on the agriculture industry and its stakeholders, most especially the larger proportion of resource-poor farmers, by delivering better services through more context-relevant and valuable services to even more beneficiaries in more effective and efficient ways.

Alongside other global, regional, and national organizations, SEARCA aligns its direction toward contributing to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address global challenges to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. SEARCA commits to contribute and allocate resources for the achievement of five SDGs which directly align with its mandate and focus, with an emphasis on creating partnerships (SDG17). Moreover, SEARCA also touches three other SDGs as it tries to achieve the five.

EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE LEARNING



SEARCA's core program on Education and Collective Learning (ECL) leads the development of a new breed of agriculture leaders and professionals through its scholarships and other graduate study programs. ECL also leads the technical and professional trainings, and coordinates roundtable discussions, conferences, fora, and all other SEARCA learning events.

■ GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

► GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

One of SEARCA's main objectives is to produce high quality human resources in agriculture for the SEAMEO region to strengthen their institutions that would propel regional development. One of the major undertakings under this program is the provision of scholarships that enable Southeast Asians working in agriculture and rural development to pursue their master's or PhD studies.

SEARCA has been awarding scholarships (MS and PhD) in agriculture and related fields to Laotians since 1974. However, the awarding of graduate scholarships was suspended and resumed only in 1993. Since then, SEARCA has endeavored to give Lao PDR equal if not more scholarship slots than more developed countries in the region.





Full Master's and PhD Scholarships

So far, SEARCA has awarded 81 full graduate scholarships (68 master's, 13 PhD) to Laotians. Of this number, 10 were supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and two by the Regional French Cooperation in Asia (through French Embassies and French private companies), which enabled them to obtain their MS degree in agro-food industries from Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Industries Agricoles et Alimentaires - Section Industries AgroAlimentaires Régions Chaudes (ENSIA SIARC) based in Montpellier, France.

Lao PDR is also among the four countries covered by the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada's graduate scholarships administered by SEARCA. A total of 21 Laotians have been awarded this scholarship.

To date, 73 Laotian scholars (66 master's, 6 PhD, and 1 PhD research) have completed their graduate programs.

Special Graduate Seminar

The special graduate seminar is held once every semester and highlights outstanding research by a SEARCA scholar. Hosting the seminar is the Center's way to support the scholars' academic milestones and to recognize their capacity to produce quality research that has a great impact on agriculture and rural development. A Laotian served as a Special Graduate Seminar speaker. He is Mr. Saiphou Lormaisim, who completed his MS in Animal Science, University of the Philippines Los Baños, and presented his research titled "Assessment of Small-Scale Native Pig Production in Selected Villages in Salavan District, Salavan Province, Lao PDR" on 6 December 2019.

Regional SEARCA Alumni Association (RSAA)

Upon graduation, SEARCA scholars automatically become members of RSAA, an organization consisting of all SEARCA Graduate Scholarship Alumni. As a testimony that the SEARCA graduate scholarship program is a key factor in human resource development in Lao PDR, a number of these scholars are now occupying key positions of responsibility in government and other sectors of the country. Most notably among the Lao alumni is Dr. Oudom Phonekhampeng, who is now President of National University of Laos.

SEARCA, in partnership with the Regional SEARCA Alumni Association (RSAA), organized the Scholars' Conference 2023 on "Advancing Agricultural Research for Improved Food Security." Twenty-eight scholars presented their research across six parallel sessions from March 14-15, 2023, via the SOLVE Platform. The two-day conference is the Center's way to support their academic achievements and recognize their capacity to produce quality research that has a great impact on agriculture and rural development.

A Laotian SEARCA Alumnus served as Parallel speaker:

PARALLEL SESSION ON RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Mr. Bounmy Phommakone

National Coordinator, GEF Small Grants Program - Lao PDR, ECR Small Grants Cluster
United Nations Development Programme

The Lao PDR Alumni Association, in collaboration with SEARCA, hosted the 1st RSAA Regional Conference on Food Security and Climate Change on 4-5 December 2013.

The current Country Representative of Lao PDR to the SEARCA Governing Board, Dr. Somphong Chanthavong of SKU, is a SEARCA alumnus. His predecessor in the SEARCA Governing Board, Dr. Sitha Khemmarath of SKU, is also a SEARCA alumnus.

Re-Entry Program

To help ensure the immediate impact of its graduate scholarship program, SEARCA established a Re-entry program which provides funds of up to \$5,000 to support research projects of its newly graduated scholars.

A Laotian, Mr. Keopheth Phoumphon, was one of the first two recipients of the Re-entry grants when the program started in 2009. His project is titled "Development of a Database of Land Use Change in Houy-zon, Namhoun and Nasouang Watershed in Nasaythong District, Vientiane, Laos."

Each re-entry plan must have the support of the scholar's home institution and the proposed project should have potential to be a starting point for a national or regional research study on issues addressing a specific concern that could benefit from the expertise of the concerned SEARCA scholar. Each re-entry project is jointly supported by SEARCA and the scholar's home institution, and the outputs of the Re-entry Program are counted under SEARCA's research and development program.

Academic Bridging Scholarships

SEARCA also awards scholarships for academic bridging program, which is intended to serve as a preparatory program for possible admission to a master's graduate degree program. Thirteen Laotians were recipients of this scholarship, seven of whom completed diploma programs at Khon Kaen University, Thailand and the rest at the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

► INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lao PDR is the first beneficiary of SEARCA's Institutional Development Assistance (IDA) Program, which provided support to develop centers of excellence in agricultural education in SEAMEO member countries. SEARCA selects strategic universities that have the potential to contribute to the country's development.

In the case of Lao PDR, Savannakhet University (SKU) was selected at the time when it was newly established because it is strategically situated to cater to the demand for human resources needed to boost the economic development of Savannakhet, Khammouane, and Bolikhamxay provinces, which are located in the East-West economic corridor that is envisioned to link Vietnam and Myanmar through Lao PDR and Thailand.

SEARCA had assisted SKU in developing its curriculum to align it with the current globalization trends. The Center also assisted in strengthening SKU's teaching capacities for new courses through faculty and staff development. This was done through scholarships for graduate programs and academic bridging programs as well as short term training and other learning events, including the following:

- A Two-Level English Training Course for a Beginner Level (20 faculty members) and an Intermediate Level (25 faculty members) held on 11-22 March 2019 at SKU.
- Short Course on Utilization of Indigenous Crops to Strengthen Food Security for 26 junior SKU faculty members and researchers conducted on 6-10 June 2016.
- Participation of two faculty members in the Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change (MS FSCC) Summer School: Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in Vulnerable Areas in the Philippines held on 15-31 July 2019 at SEARCA and Camarines Sur, Philippines

Starting academic year 2017/2018, SEARCA awarded one PhD and two master's scholarships to faculty members of SKU as part of the Center's continuing institutional development assistance to the university.



■ TRAINING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Short-term training is SEARCA's fast lane to building capacities in the agriculture and rural development sector of SEAMEO member countries. Training activities are geared toward developing the technical and managerial competencies of university faculty members, researchers, agricultural and environmental leaders, and practitioners in Southeast Asia.

Since SEARCA began this capacity-building service in 1970, 174 Laotians had participated in 74 international, regional, and in-country SEARCA training, seminars, and learning forums. These capacity-building activities include trainings on indexing and abstracting, strategies for rural development, sustainable agriculture for the uplands, agricultural entrepreneurship curriculum and course development, sustainable agro-enterprise



development, agricultural biotechnology, environmental economics for decision-making, rapid bioassay of pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables for market inspection and farm education, climate change adaptation and mitigation, leadership excellence in academe program, and climate leadership program, among others.

Two of these learning events were conducted in Lao PDR:

- Advanced Higher Education Administrators Development (AHEAD) Training Course for the National University of Laos, 25-29 August 2003
- In-Country Training Course on Data Management for Rural Development (DMRD), 27 November-7 December 1999

RESEARCH AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

One of SEARCA's main objectives is to conduct and coordinate appropriate and relevant research that promotes accelerating transformation through agricultural innovation (ATTAIN). Central to the Center's resolve to be strategically visible and more relevant for all stakeholders and strategic agricultural and rural ecologies, SEARCA's core program on Research and Thought Leadership undertakes policy analyses, research for development, and facilitate knowledge platforms.



► PAST RESEARCH PROJECTS AND POLICY STUDIES

SEARCA has worked with various development organizations and research institutions in the implementation of the following completed research and policy studies in the ASEAN region, including Lao PDR:

A Series Activities in the Framework of the UN Decade of Family Farming

SEARCA documented and systematically analyzed policies, strategies, initiatives, and programs successfully supporting family farming in selected Southeast Asian countries under Activity 2 of this Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)-funded project. A case study on Lao PDR's nutrition strategies and programs was one of the six country-level case studies conducted. To support the documentation of some case studies and get the viewpoint from farmers' organizations, SEARCA collaborated with the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsidHRRRA).

Agricultural Transformation and Market Integration in the ASEAN Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns (ATMI-ASEAN)

Lao PDR was one of the five ASEAN Member States (AMS) covered by this International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded project, which was co-implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and SEARCA. The overall goal of the ATMIASEAN project was to strengthen the institutional capacity of the AMS to develop and implement policies and sub-regional programs to facilitate integration of smallholders in subregional agricultural and food markets. This was done through three main components and broad activities (1) Policy studies and expert workshops; (2) High-level policy forums and roundtables; and (3) Technical assistance for planning and policy development.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Department of Agriculture (MAF-DOA) served as the project's focal agency in Lao PDR. MAF-DOA led the conduct of the national-level activities in Lao PDR to strengthen the competitiveness of small-scale rural producers and support their inclusion in regional agrifood markets. These include capacity building for evidence-based decision making, policy formulation, and monitoring and evaluation, among others. The National University of Laos (NUOL) conducted the study on Analyzing Cross-Border Maize Value Chain in Lao PDR under the ATMI-ASEAN project. Moreover, Lao PDR also provided inputs to the Maize-Meat Regional Value Chain Assessment that was endorsed by the project to ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF).

Identify Opportunities and Developing a Guiding Framework to address Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus in Hand-in-Hand Initiative in Asia and the Pacific

SEARCA analyzed cases in selected Asia-Pacific countries to come up with recommendations on addressing the HDP Nexus in the Hand-in-Hand Initiative of FAO in the region. The project aimed to come up with a guiding framework with approaches and practices that were proven successful in the target countries under study. One of the case studies conducted was on the China-Lao Railway Line in Lao PDR.

Implications of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and Trade and Investments on Regional Food Security

SEARCA partnered with the Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) of Indonesia to implement this project which was identified by the SEARCA-initiated Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC) as one of the six priority research and development areas for collaborative undertaking under SEARCA's Umbrella Program on Food and Nutrition Security for Southeast Asia (FANSSEA). The project analyzed the potential impacts of AEC on existing trade agreements, flow of investments, and related commitments among ASEAN member countries, including Lao PDR, and across existing ASEAN Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), and its implications on food security in the region.



ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry Strategic Response Fund (ASRF) under ASFCC Phases 2 & 3

Lao PDR was one of the countries covered by the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry Strategic Response Fund (ASRF), which SEARCA implemented as the supporting partner of the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC). The ASRF is a flexible funding mechanism that aimed to enable the ASEAN Member States Focal Points to quickly respond to emerging issues and challenges and articulate policy recommendations and directions on social forestry as it relates to climate change, food security, and poverty alleviation.

Under the two phases of ASRF, grants were awarded to two projects in Lao PDR from 2014 to 2020:

- Enhancing Technical Guidelines on Village Forestry Management Planning through Stakeholder Consultation
- Improvement of Training Guide on Village Forestry Management Planning (VFMP)

Competency Certification for Agricultural Workers in Southeast Asia

SEARCA had been enjoined by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) in 2017 to conduct a study on competency standards for agricultural workers in Southeast Asia as a step forward in mapping national competency standards among the Southeast Asian countries. SEAMEO promotes technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as one of its seven education priorities. Hence, the collaborative study has been instrumental to the formulation of regional and national qualification reference frameworks and assurance framework, which was recognized to be essential in the harmonization and internationalization of TVET in Southeast Asia.

The results of the project were presented and validated in a regional workshop convened in May 2018 in the Philippines and jointly hosted by SEARCA and the Philippine Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). It was participated in by representatives of TVET institutions from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam; SEAMEO Secretariat; SEAMEO Regional Center for Vocational and Technical Education and Training (VOCTECH); SEARCA; the International Labour Organization (ILO); and private sector organizations involved in skills development of agricultural workers. It crafted a four-point recommendation that was subsequently presented and elevated for consideration in the 4th HOM on SEA-TVET held in September 2018.

The four-point recommendation focused on the following:

- Encourage TVET institutions to increasingly assume proactive and transforming roles in assessing, validating, and certifying skills and experience gained through non-formal and informal modes within a lifelong learning framework;
- Strengthen and expand competency certification systems to cover recognition of nonformal and informal learning;
- Encourage TVET institutions to pursue partnerships and alliances with a broader range of stakeholders; and
- Promote support from regional TVET networks and international cooperation.

Review and Assessment of the Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) in ASEAN

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) collaborated with SEARCA for the conduct of this scoping study whose results were the basis for the policy dialogue between the OECD and ASEAN countries, including Lao PDR, to secure food security in a long-term perspective.

Implemented from July 2015 to June 2016, the study aimed to identify the policy issues to improve agricultural productivity growth and sustainability in ASEAN region. Specifically, it aimed to provide an overview of agricultural innovation system in ASEAN countries, highlighting the need to evolve agricultural innovation system to generate innovative solutions for long-term food security concerns.

Food Reserves: A Comparative Study on Food Reserve Management and Policies in Southeast Asia

Lao PDR was among the countries covered by this project, which was a collaboration between SEARCA and the members of the UC. The project was under the auspices of SEARCA's Umbrella Program on Food and Nutrition Security for Southeast Asia 2014-2019. The project aimed to:

- Define and understand the importance of keeping food stocks and reserves, and the rationale behind countries' decision to stockpile.
- Identify commodities that countries stockpile and the modalities and mechanisms of food stockpiling that have been adopted, including physical, virtual, trade, national, and regional mechanisms.
- Examine the implications of a changing regional trade regime on a country's food stocks, as well as the impact of individual countries' food reserves on a regional stockpiling mechanism such as the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR).
- Explore the feasibility of establishing other types of regional stockpiles beyond reserves.

In addition to the survey in the 11 Southeast Asian countries, SEARCA organized a workshop involving all countries to determine the role of food reserve management and policies in the region and identify implications of a changing regional trade regime, like the ASEAN Economic Community 2015 (AEC 2015), on a country's food stocks. Countries stockpile food, particularly rice, in different modalities and adopt a mix of trade instruments. Thus, SEARCA chose rice as a starting point to study food reserve management processes and policies in Southeast Asia.

Umbrella Program on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Southeast Asia

From 2015 to 2020, this program was jointly implemented by SEARCA and the UC with the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security–Southeast Asia (CCAFS SEA) and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). It covered Lao PDR and the 10 other Southeast Asian countries.

Umbrella Program on Food and Nutrition Security for Southeast Asia

The Umbrella Program on Food and Nutrition Security for Southeast Asia was envisaged to serve as a platform for collaborative research on food security among the UC members and partner universities/institutions from the SEAMEO member countries. It aimed to align the program of work on food security of SEARCA and the UC to the development needs in the region and to support ongoing ASEAN-level programs on improving food security. The priority areas for collaboration were addressed through three integrated components: research and development, capacity building through graduate education and training, and knowledge management.

Other Past Research Projects

SEARCA's other research initiatives in Lao PDR had been focused on areas that are important to a transition economy and these include strengthening agribusiness in the country through studies on agro-industrial development indicators, market assessment and material sourcing. These projects were on:

- Agro-Industrial Development Indicators
- Market Assessment and Material Sourcing

- Capacity Building on Postharvest Research and Enterprise Development: A University Model
- Agribusiness Course Materials Development for the National University of Laos (NUOL) Faculty of Economics and Management
- Curriculum Development on Agribusiness/Entrepreneurship for NUOL
- Technical Assistance in Agricultural Entrepreneurship for Lao PDR Project
- Technical Assistance in Expansion of Subregional Cooperation in Agriculture in the Greater Mekong Subregion

SEARCA also addressed farmers' links to agricultural technology and service providers as well as environmental degradation by strengthening institutional capacities to respond to new challenges and development opportunities. SEARCA's work in Lao PDR along this line includes the following projects:

- Strengthening Research-Extension-Farmer Linkages in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam
- Adapting and Transferring Lessons from the Manupali Watershed (Philippines) to Other Critical Watersheds in Southeast Asia
- Development of Sustainable Indicators for Lao PDR and Vietnam for Regional Database Building

► RESEARCH AND COLLABORATIVE GRANTS

Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT)

The Southeast Asian region has a number of promising researchers and scientists whose desire to contribute to the region's development through research and knowledge dissemination initiatives is hindered by lack of funds. This situation serves as a barrier to translating promising research and training into scientific outputs that could be applied to promote development.

To address this concern and in line with the Center's thrust of promoting, undertaking and coordinating research programs relevant to the agriculture and rural development needs of the region, SEARCA will make available a pool of funds to be known as the SEARCA Seed Fund for Research and Training (SFRT). The SFRT is envisaged to provide chosen research and training project proposals with limited start-up funds intended to enhance chances of securing long-term support from donor agencies. A grant of up to USD 15,000 shall be awarded as seed fund for research/training.

To date, a total of five Laotians received SFRT grants for their research projects.

Travel Grants Program

To reinforce the Center's efforts and resources in accelerating transformation through agricultural innovation (ATTAIN) and become a leading enabler and champion of excellence in agricultural and rural development, SEARCA provides travel grants of up to a maximum of USD 1,200 to each qualified agriculture and agriculture-related professional, social scientist, or graduate student in Southeast Asia.

IFS-SEARCA Collaborative Research Grants

In 2016, the International Foundation for Science (IFS) and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) implemented a grants scheme for collaborative research called the IFS-SEARCA Collaborative Research Grants Pilot in Southeast Asia. It was open to the nine Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam, and focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

As a follow-on collaboration between IFS and SEARCA, in December 2020, the Mentorship Program for Advanced Grants was launched with a Call for Research on Accelerating Transformation through Agricultural Innovation (ATTAIN). Promising scientists will benefit from translating their research and scientific outputs into knowledge that can be applied to promote development, while enhancing their capacities to develop research proposals and conduct research, and also expanding their reach in terms of contributing to the body of knowledge in their research areas. The purpose of the Mentorship Program is to nurture relationships between established scientists and early career researchers (the IFS-SEARCA grantees) that are intended to help the latter to strengthen their research processes, ensure that their projects are of high quality, and produce useful results.

In partnership with SEARCA, IFS supports Southeast Asians who are enrolled in a PhD degree program or have recently completed a master's or PhD degree within the five years from the time of the call, and with limited research start-up funds. This call, however, gives priority in terms of number of slots to its scholarship alumni; faculty and staff of partner universities and universities under its institutional development assistance program; and other regular employees of development organizations, academic institutions and government agencies of Southeast Asian countries, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

The implementation of the new Advanced Grant scheme continued. Ten (10) successful applicants received an IFS-SEARCA Advanced Grant to conduct their research within one to three years.

► RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Agroforestry Status, Trends, and Outlook in Southeast Asia

The World Agroforestry (ICRAF) and SEARCA recognize the momentum brought by the adoption of the ASEAN Guidelines for Agroforestry Development and would like to harness this development by heeding the call of the ASEAN food, agricultural, and forestry (FAF) sector to produce the first Agroforestry Status, Trends and Outlook for Southeast Asia. The report published in 2021 gathered the relevant perspectives from key stakeholders in the sector to respond to the challenges and ensure resilient interventions in agroforestry. This will further guide development efforts and sustainable policies that can shape leadership roles, produce more responsive institutional arrangements, and enhance governance.

Under the Technical Cooperation Program of the Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the ASEAN Secretariat on “Scaling up Agroforestry for food security and environmental benefits in Southeast Asia,” the ASEAN Food, Agriculture and Forestry sector is requesting a report that encapsulates the status, trends and outlook of agroforestry in the Southeast Asian region. Such report will:

- Provide information on agroforestry practices, concepts, programs, policies, training, education and research, industry, issues/challenges, impacts and other relevant aspects.
- Draw an outlook of agroforestry into the future toward a resilient Southeast Asian region.
- Have an accompanying monitoring and reporting design for ASEAN Member States, which include Lao PDR, to report on contributions and progress toward achieving resilience through agroforestry in the region.

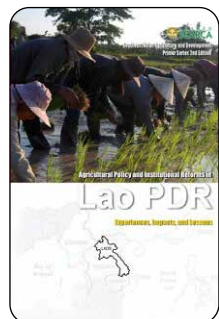
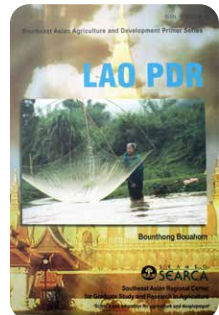
Farms, Food, & Futures: Toward Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development in Southeast Asia

Dubbed as Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Book 2016, SEARCA spelled out in this publication the nuances of productivity-enhancing interventions moving forward, carefully drawing from in-depth analyses and syntheses of lessons, experiences, and empirical evidence on Asia’s ARD. The book provided an overview of the complex issues and challenges, as well as opportunities arising from the structural transformation and market integration happening in the region. For the ARD Book 2016, SEARCA assembled eminent experts and thought leaders working in ARD in the region, and together authored the book with four cross-cutting and contemporary ARD themes, namely: inclusive growth; sustainability; regional integration; and institutions, governance and transformation.

Agriculture and Development Primer on Lao PDR

SEARCA published a primer on Lao PDR in 2010 as part of its Southeast Asian Agriculture and Development Primer Series. Authored by Dr. Bounthong Bouahom, former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and former Director General of the National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute, the primer presents the country’s state of agriculture in a holistic yet concise form and shows the institutions, structures, policies, and other areas affecting the sector’s performance over the past three decades.

The focus of the second edition (2021) is on Policy Reforms and Institutional Innovations in Agriculture: Experiences, Impacts and Lessons, which takes off from the results of a regional workshop convened by SEARCA to take stock of the current situation of the agriculture sector in Southeast Asia, review current institutional and policy regimes of countries in the region, and determine how they affected agricultural productivity and competitiveness vis-à-vis government responses.



Other Publications

SEARCA has published books, monographs and other publications on various topics related to Lao agriculture. Many of these were outputs from SEARCA's research projects and knowledge events. Aside from the Lao volumes in SAADP, Lao PDR is featured along with other countries in 22 publications published by SEARCA, including the following:

- Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development (AJAD), Vol. 3, No. 1
- AJAD Vol. 4, No. 1
- AJAD Vol. 9, No. 1
- AJAD Vol. 13, No. 1
- Enhancing Technical Guidelines on Village Forestry Management Planning through Stakeholder Consultation
- Discovering New Roads to Development Volume 4: Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Resilience
- Capacity Development Needs Assessment in Southeast Asia Toward an Informed Human Development Program in Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (ISARD)
- The Rice Economy and the Role of Policy in Southeast Asia
- Directory of Agricultural Information Resources of Selected Southeast Asian Countries
- Postharvest: Research and Processing Implications
- Where economic giants tread
- Fish Pond Farming in the Mekong Delta: Policies for Polishing
- Social Forestry in the ASEAN Region: Gaps and Strategic Interventions
- Playing the Same Tune: Harmonizing Biotechnology Regulations Across Southeast Asia
- A Review of Issues and Challenges in Climate Change and Agriculture in Southeast Asia
- Agro-Industrial Development Regional Workshop
- Workshop on Vulnerability, Impact and Adaptation Assessment for Climate Change: Approaches, Methods, and Tools (Completion Report) Operation One ASEAN: Towards Food Security in 2020 (SEARCA-DAAD Alumni Associations)
- Regional Consultative Workshop)
- 2nd IDRC-SEARCA Fellowship Plus Conference-Workshop
- 3rd IDRC-SEARCA Fellowship Plus Conference-Workshop: Conference Report
- Conservation Agriculture: A Biological Engineering Approach to Sustainable Agriculture in Support of Rural Development in Southeast Asia

Meanwhile, four articles on Lao PDR were published in the AJAD, SEARCA's international refereed journal. Published twice a year in June and December, AJAD is indexed in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) of the Web of Science (WoS), EBSCO Information Services, Research Papers in Economics (RePec), AgEcon Search, Socio-economic Research Portal for the Philippines (SERP-P), CAB Abstracts, ASEAN Citation Index (ACI), The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL), and Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC).

Moreover, three Laotians co-authored in five other SEARCA publications, including four AJAD articles.

► AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND NATURAL RESOURCES (AFNR) KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM

For almost six decades, SEARCA has been actively working with different like-minded institutions and networks in conducting research that addresses critical issues related to the region's agricultural and rural development. Capitalizing on this knowledge resource, SEARCA is leading the establishment of the Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources (AFNR) Knowledge Platform.

This primarily aims to facilitate and sustain an ecosystem for knowledge sharing that contributes to agricultural and rural development in the Southeast Asian region and beyond. It also ensures access to an accurate, highly credible, sound, timely, and reliable source of information that will fuel future research activities, capacity building initiatives, policy development and technological innovations aimed at accelerating transformation in the region's agricultural sector.

It has three main components: knowledge generation, exchange, and utilization. Knowledge generation includes the conceptualization and organization of opportunities for knowledge sharing and learning (conferences, roundtable discussions, webinars, etc). Part of this is facilitating the link with other SEARCA programs and the AFNR KP. While AKRU works on scholarly publications, AFNR will work on popular formats, addressing the needs of our other stakeholders and providing another entry point/access to other SEARCA resources.

The second part is the Knowledge Exchange, the actual website itself. In this part, contributions of the programs will be categorized into these thematic areas. These are loosely based on our ATTAIN Priority Areas (our current five-year plan): Food and Nutrition Security; Sustainable Farming Systems and NRM; Value Addition, E-Commerce, and Industry Development; Policy and Thought Leadership; and Training and Capacity Building. There will also be links to other tools/resources like the SEARCA Library, AgPractices, Access Agriculture videos, etc.

The last part is knowledge utilization, the community of practice. We envision the contents of the AFNR KP to stir discussions in the COP. Regular activities (example: online forum on a certain timely/relevant topic) will be designed to keep the COP active and engaging.

EMERGING INNOVATION FOR GROWTH



SEARCHA's core program on Emerging Innovation for Growth (EIG) is focused on providing farmers and farming families wider access to innovative products and services as well as business models for increased productivity and income through:

- Open Innovation and Agri-Incubation
- Knowledge and Technology Transfer
- Project Development, Monitoring, and Evaluation

► InnovEIGhts

The InnovEIGhts program is envisioned to support, facilitate, and implement co-created and co-piloted agribusiness incubation, information and technology transfer projects, and impact- and action-driven extension and technical assistance engagement for Southeast Asia. The said program envisions to establish and develop the agriculture and rural development sector through:

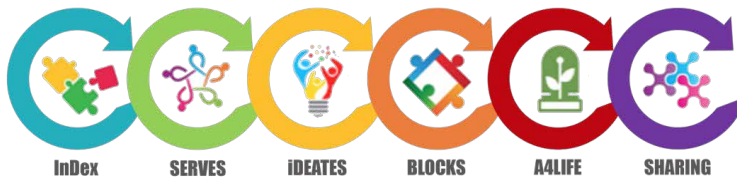
- Agricultural technology development and technology transfer,
- Adaptation and adoption of village-scale relevant technologies,
- Inclusive rural community development
- Local and immediate agribusiness clustering, and
- Gender inclusive and high impact projects.

The program also intends to achieve a number of goals in support of inclusive agricultural and rural development:

- Strengthen university public agri-research and university-based agribusiness incubators to promote local inclusive innovation ecosystem,
- Provide platform and projects for more effective and efficient prototyping, up-scaling, and commercialization of technologies and delivering impact-driven farming community assistance,

- Provide value-added services and assistance in the promotion of A/F tech-based startups and in the scaling-up of existing agri-technologies and agri-enterprises.
- Advance knowledge, attitude, and skills of farming communities and startups through innovation and entrepreneurial mentoring and trainings, and
- Build a coalition of support services from key government institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

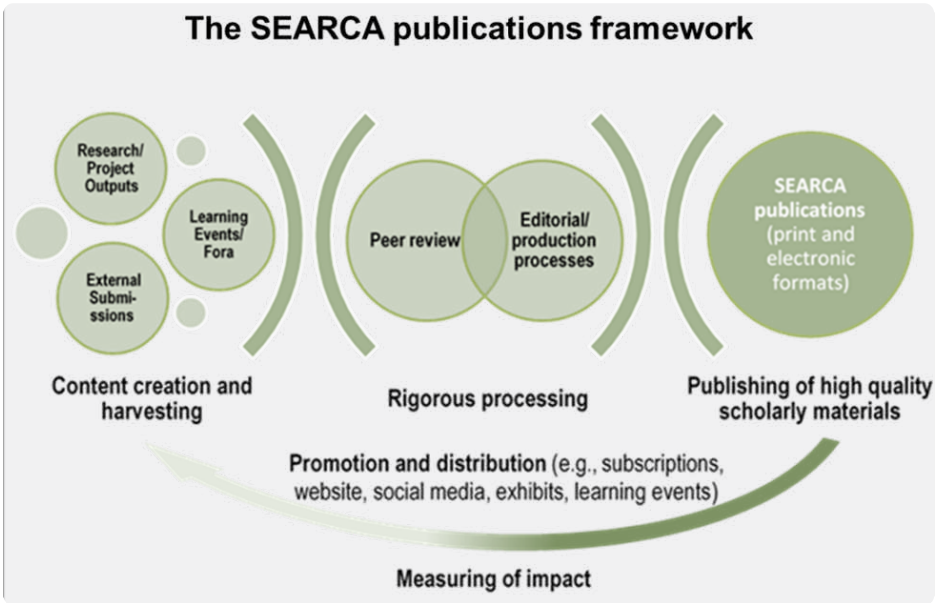
The InnovEIGhts program is a combination of independent but highly integrated components design to achieve SEARCA ATTAIN in aligned to targeted SDGs and to serve the different levels of beneficiary-stakeholders and Academe-Industry-Government (AIG) partners.



The program is composed of:

1. Innovation Index Studies (InDex) is the research and information arm of the InnovEIGhts program.
2. Specialists and Experts for Rural Viable Emerging Solutions (SERVES) is a program that provides co-created and co-piloted farming family and farming community livelihood projects that identify and implement innovative but practical solutions to persistent farming challenges.
3. Emerging Ideas Competition (iDEATES) focuses on engaging the youth, children, and agri-innovators in promoting agri-innovation and scientific farming methods to modernize agriculture and build local rural innovation ecosystems.
4. Building Linkages and Open Collaboration for Knowledge System (BLOCKS) is an innovative and open shared service hub that offers a platform and networks of fabrication centers, design resources, experts, and projects. It is responsible for promoting locally adaptable agri-technologies and practices that can be adopted by small farmers and rural communities.
5. Agriculture 4.0 Livelihood Integration towards Farming Enterprises (A4LIFE) focuses on building local and community-based innovation ecosystem and inclusive agribusiness value chains. It aims to produce a generation of green startups and agripreneurs.
6. SEARCA Hub for Agriculture and Rural Innovations for the Next Generation (SHARING) is a powerful innovation and open collaboration platform and access tool that serves as a gateway for information, programs, resources, and networks in the world where SEARCA operates.

APPLIED KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES



The Center's applied knowledge resources contribute to SEARCA's vision of becoming Southeast Asia's leading enabler and champion of excellence in ARD, particularly by asserting leadership in knowledge creation in these fields. Apart from the packaging of knowledge through publication, these knowledge products are also shared through its websites and increasingly complemented by social media. SEARCA also maintains a library and an archives system to store generated knowledge.

► PUBLICATION

SEARCA publication provides one important avenue for knowledge creation in ARD. This ensures that research results, policy discussions, and best practices from the field, among its primordial knowledge sources, are packaged and broadly shared. SEARCA aims to publish high-quality professional, intellectual, and scholarly output in ARD with scholars, researchers, and policymakers as intended readers. A broad spectrum of ARD themes is published through a number of serial and non-serial SEARCA publications that include books, journal articles, monographs, discussion papers, and policy briefs.

Publishing for over half a century now, SEARCA has a publication pipeline of materials primarily sourced from outputs of its staple programs. External contributions are also welcome, notably for the Center's priority thematic content. All materials submitted for publication as books, monographs, or journal articles undergo rigorous peer review and editorial processes to ensure high quality.

Over 500 various publications are curated in SEARCA's knowledge inventory system (mostly those published year 2000 onward). As of 30 June 2023, 16 titles either focused on Cambodia or included it in its country of coverage have been published by SEARCA. These include monographs (4), briefs and notes (1), proceedings (2), and journal articles (9).

► PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The Center has, in recent years, been investing in ensuring that its publications and other knowledge products maximize their intended use and not gather dust on a shelf. As it were, its momentum for more visibility online has proven more relevant than anticipated during the pandemic that started in 2020. The situation resulted to lessened printing and suspended the traditional distribution of physical copies and face-to-face knowledge exchanges/interactions.



The SEARCA website complemented by its social media presence are the current channels in which the Center's knowledge creations are accessed. Almost all publications are downloadable for free; learning/knowledge events and presentations are also freely accessible. As of June 2023, over 45,310 publications have been downloaded from searca.org, SEARCA's official website. Over 23,000 people from 159 countries have downloaded these knowledge materials. The most downloaded types are refereed journal articles, books and monographs, and various briefs and notes. As of June 2023, 95 downloads of SEARCA publications have been made by Laotians.

► LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

The SEARCA library, which houses a collection of over 15,500 agriculture and development-related references, serves primarily SEARCA scholars and staff, but it also accommodates other users. The references are also listed in SEARCA's online library information system



(LIS) <https://lis.searcaapps.org/lis/> to facilitate faster access and search. The LIS also includes theses and dissertations of SEARCA scholars as well as weblinks to various online resources, such as articles on the latest updates in agriculture and development.

The Center's archives have digitized all vital records for efficient information processing, storage, access, and dissemination. As of September 2023, over 6,500 SEARCA documents have been digitized, including personnel and scholars' records, project reports, publications, financial statements, agreements, directors' exit reports, five-year plans, memorandums, and contracts.

MANAGEMENT

Lao PDR is currently represented in the SEARCA Governing Board by Dr. Somphong Chanthavong, Acting Dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, Savannakhet University. The SEARCA Governing Board is the Center's highest policymaking body composed of representatives of the 11 SEAMEO member countries.

At present, the SEARCA Director is Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio. The Deputy Director for Programs and the Deputy Director for Administration are Dr. Nur Azura Binti Adam and Assoc. Prof. Joselito G. Florendo, respectively.

