Conservation agriculture for Eco-Friendly Intensification and Climate resilient Agricultural Systems in Lao PDR - EFICAS

Supporting the agroecology transition to buffer the shocks from market integration and climate change in Lao northern Uplands

Through this project, northern Upland farming communities are supported to design and implement land use plans that incorporate innovative agroecology practices and are embedded in value chains.

In 2015, seven households in Hadtsam village volunteered to test and assess forage technology, improved pasture establishment and management. They found that the proposed forage species grow well and were easy to establish. Their findings were presented to the whole community during a village meeting, which convinced them to further expand improved pasture areas this year.

Mr. Phonexay Vunnadeth, Head of Pakseng DAFO, Pakseng district, Luang Prabang Province

Context

An agrarian transition in northern Laos characterized by:
- Rapid changes in farming systems in line with an increased access to markets and an increased vulnerability of village communities to climatic and economic fluctuations.
- Significant impacts on natural resources (e.g. reduced forest cover, land degradation, biodiversity losses) and on village communities (e.g. overall poverty reduction but increased inequality and indebtedness).
- Low adoption of agro-ecological innovations promoted by research and extension institutions (e.g. organic farming, conservation agriculture, agroforestry).

Objectives

- Make Lao northern upland farming communities more resilient to external shocks (climatic, economic).
- Co-design and disseminate agricultural production systems that are more eco-friendly.
- Make agro-ecology visible on the map i.e. show that agro-ecology can be applied on a large scale.
- Build the capacity of extension agents so that they can play the role of facilitators in landscape level negotiation processes.

Impact

- Participation of villagers to the innovation process is high: 92% of villagers (58% of which were women) participated to the activities planning and assessment meetings, with 84% of them being involved in at least one the planned activities.
- The sensitivity of farming community to external shocks is decreased: Crop damages related to animals roaming and animal death related to disease outbreak were decreased by 38% and 22% respectively as compared to baseline.
- The capacity of the different stakeholders is increased: 20 extension agents were trained on participatory land use planning and innovation process facilitation; and about 1 400 farmers were trained on alternative eco-friendly practises, seeds collection and preservation.
The intervention method is recognised as promising: the landscape participatory approach developed by the project is mentioned positively in third party documents (e.g. FAO-CDAIS, SNV-ENUFF, ACIAR-Maize projects).

Testimony

Benefits from improved goat raising system

“The agriculture in our village changed dramatically recently with the introduction of hybrid maize that was promoted by the local trader who promised a good price, credit for opening new road to easily reach the production areas and provided seeds. But after 3 years we started facing problems with soil fertility, drop in maize price but increase in price of chemical input that made the crop not profitable anymore. Now we are indebted and searching new opportunities for income generation. The EFICAS project then came and supported us to develop goat raising activities through the fencing of livestock areas, the use of forage technology and a fund for animal vaccination. We are really happy to have this opportunity to exit from maize production.”