Extension Approaches for Scaling Out Livestock Production in Northern Lao PDR (EASLP)

Project Newsletter No. 1
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From AIRP to EASLP!

Livestock production in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is increasing due to growing domestic meat demand and export opportunities. Livestock provide valuable income and security for many upland farmers and can reduce their dependency on shifting cultivation systems.

Over the last 10 years, the Australian government (via AusAid and ACIAR) has supported the introduction of high value forages and improved livestock management practices to over 3,000 farming households in northern upland areas.

From 2003 to 2005, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded a project to assist the Lao government with researching effective extension methodologies for scaling out useful forages. Known as AIRP (Accelerating the Impacts of Participatory Research and Extension on Shifting Cultivation Farming Systems in Lao PDR*), the project involved collaboration between Charles Sturt University, the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES), the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

District and provincial livestock staff from Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang provinces were trained to identify and document significant changes (impacts) to livestock production and household livelihoods.

These ‘impact case studies’ showed how farmers were overcoming livestock problems using forages, housing, vaccination, quarantining of new animals and manure management.

Mr Chia Wa Lor from Sandon Kor village in Nonget district feeding forages to his cattle.

The main benefits included reduced labour and increased income enabling access to education, health services, improved housing and goods. Case studies were used as an extension tool along with cross visits and champion farmer visits to stimulate farmer to farmer learning (Millar, Photakoun, Connell 2005). Farmer participation and adoption rates were substantially accelerated using these extension methods.

Scaling out is continuing under a new DLF program funded by the Asian Development Bank focussing on the poorest districts in five northern provinces. The EASLP will work with DLF to foster further adoption of improved livestock production by adapting extension methods and staff development approaches. Project timeline is July 2007 to April 2001.
Project objectives

1. Adapt livestock extension approaches to 11 targeted poor districts in northern Laos (Huaphan, Xieng Khouang, Luang Prabang)

2. Evaluate a range of capacity building techniques being used for livestock extension staff (Huaphan, Xieng Khouang, Luang Prabang, Bokeo, Luang Nam Tha)

Budget: $400,000 AUS ($100,000/year)

The Project Team

The Project Leaders are Dr Joanne Millar from Charles Sturt University based in Albury, NSW, Australia and Mr Nhoungthong Sihanath from the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service, based in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Mr Neuakhom Thepphanid from Xieng Khouang provides research assistance at the provincial level. Ms Bouathong Keola provides administration support at the project office based in NAFES, Vientiane. The Provincial Livestock Coordinators associated with project include Mr LeeCha Xaybeenou (Huaphan Province), Mr Khampai Phommavong (Xieng Khouang Province) and Mr Senpasith Thongsavath (Luang Prabang Province).

Collaborating scientists include Mr Souriyasack Chayavong (DLF), Dr Werner Stur (CIAT), Mr Viengsavanh Phimphvanvongsod (NAFRI), Associate Professor Peter Windsor (University of Sydney).


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Project Activities in 2007

The EASLP Project Coordinator and Research Assistant assisted with staff training workshops in February and September to review extension activities and farmer impacts. Cross visit planning was conducted in August in 4 districts (Viengthong, Viengxay, Phonexai and Khoune). Forty farmers from these districts were taken to Pek and Pak Ou districts in September to meet experienced farmers and learn about cattle fattening, pig production and goat raising. District staff then held their own cross visits during October involving over 180 farmers. An evaluation of the cross visits was carried out in December.

Planned activities for 2008

A selection of farmers who attended the cross visits will be interviewed to follow up their livestock management practices. Staff will be trained in facilitation techniques to further their professional extension development. A cross visit for cattle farmers from Khoun district to Nonghet will be held in July. This will be followed by a cross visit for Huaphan women pig farmers to Pak Ou in August.

Other scaling out strategies will be evaluated including 1. Partnering with development organisations 2. Village Learning Activities and 3. Production Groups, together with other ACIAR projects in Laos.

An evaluation of capacity building methods for livestock extension will be conducted by Mr Viengxay Photakoun, ACIAR fellow and CSU Master student.

For view project newsletters and contacts visit: www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/researchers/millar.htm