



Weekly news

Aug 1-8, 2022

Highlight on farmers, agribusiness and rural development in Laos



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NEWS DIGEST #30 Aug 1-8, 2022

Lao PDR news

President motivates Xayaboury farmers

Vientiane Times, Aug 5, 2022.

President Thongloun Sisoulith and government officials on Wednesday visited farmers in Buamlao and Phakeo villages in Paklai district, Xayaboury province, to encourage them to grow more crops and boost yields.

The villagers mostly farm cassava and sweetcorn, while some raise cattle and grow grass and other products for sale.

The President and other officials then visited a cassava processing factory run by the Lao Kaona Development Company and a bio-fertiliser plant in Namxong village.

The group was welcomed by the Governor of Xayaboury province, Mr Phongsavanh Sithhavong, Paklai district authorities, local residents, and members of the business community.

Paklai district Governor Mr Kongsy Vongsy reported on aspects of socio-economic development over the first six months of this year.

Revenue earned amounted to more than 4 billion kip, equal to 57.46 of the target figure for the whole year.

Villagers are growing wet season crops on 41,600 hectares of land, including 6,900 hectares of rice. So far, 85 percent of the flatland rice crop has been transplanted, while 100 percent of the upland rice crop has been transplanted. Crops other than rice are being grown on an area of 34,700 hectares, including 28,500 hectares of cassava, which is grown to supply the nearby tapioca factory. Bananas, Job's tears and other crops are also cultivated.

People are also growing more grass and fodder for their livestock. The district currently has 26 elephants, 27,850 head of cattle, 15,600 buffalo, 27,100 pigs and other animals.

President Thongloun praised village authorities and farmers for their success, encouraged them to continue to live in harmony and maintain traditional practices, and to produce more crops for processing and sale.

WWF issues call for recovery of tigers in Laos

VT Times, Aug 1, 2022.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Laos), in cooperation with the government, is paving the way for tigers to recover in Laos and enable Asia's iconic big cat to once again thrive in forests.

In a message to mark Global Tiger Day on July 29, WWF-Laos said Laos can anticipate a more prominent role in future global tiger conservation efforts. As a tiger range state member and contributor to the Southeast Asia Tiger Recovery Plan, Laos has the opportunity to aid the much-needed recovery of tigers within the country and across Southeast Asia, where their numbers continue to dwindle.

With no hard evidence of tigers in Laos since 2013, when a tiger was last documented by camera traps in the Nam Et Phou Louey National Protected Area in the east of the country, it may be time to turn to the west, closer to existing dispersing tigers and breeding populations for achieving tiger recovery. With global tiger conservation targets looking to address the ongoing fragmentation of tiger habitats and the need to expand the tiger's range, Laos, with ample tiger habitat remaining, holds excellent potential to aid the dispersal of tigers and bolster global recovery efforts.

In the years ahead, WWF and the Lao government commit to reducing existing threats to tigers across Laos' threatened landscapes, addressing remaining challenges that stop tigers from taking up residence and breeding once more in the forests of Laos, and fostering connectivity between neighbouring habitats.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Mr Thongphath Vongmany, said "Laos has recognised and supports priority actions outlined in the Kuala Lumpur Joint Statement On Tiger Conservation, in particular to commit to support the implementation of actions within the Southeast Asia Tiger Recovery Plan and strengthen tiger populations in potential tiger habitats within South East Asia." Laos has a key role to play in tiger recovery with a strong national policy to increase forest cover up to 70 percent, which will support the conservation of biodiversity, including tigers. Recovering tigers not only benefits forest ecosystems and biodiversity in Laos, it also helps local communities. As top predators, wild tigers play an important role in maintaining the balance of the country's ecosystems, safeguarding the nature-based livelihoods of the Lao people, 67 percent of whom directly depend on forests for their day-to-day needs.

"As tiger range states and conservationists prepare for the next Global Tiger Recovery Period 2023-2034, Laos' support for priority actions combined with sustained commitment from partners and increased investments and resources mean the tiger's roar could once again return to Laos," said the Conservation Director of WWF-Laos, Chris Hallam. WWF-Laos is committed to supporting the Lao government's efforts to bring back tigers to the forests of Laos, working towards a future in which these iconic predators thrive and coexist with the Lao people for the benefit of sustainable development and planetary health.

PM urges Bokeo authorities to bolster commercial production

VT Times, August 8, 2022.

Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh has told Bokeo provincial authorities to push for stronger agricultural production, with the growing of more crops for export, and to accelerate infrastructure development to benefit from transit services.

The premier made the comments when he met for talks with provincial leaders last week, according to the Paxaxon newspaper.

He instructed provincial leaders to tap the potential of the area by encouraging farmers to grow more crops, boost yields, and reduce imports. The PM also visited a cattle farm owned by the Duangchaleun Industry–Organic Agriculture Import–Export Company, which recently brought over 150 cows from Xieng Khuang province.

The company is raising the cows on an area of 150 hectares and growing grass on 73 hectares of land to feed them, saying it has complied with all the conditions needed to raise cattle for commercial purposes and export.

In addition, the premier visited a US\$1 million fish and shrimp farm run by the Bokeo Nayoung Company.

The company owns 99 plastic tanks which contain 20,500 fish and 500,000 shrimps. The company will sell the fish and shrimp on the domestic market, with the aim of reducing imports.

PM Phankham also advised local authorities to make every effort to fulfil the two national agendas on addressing economic and financial difficulties and drug trafficking. Authorities were also urged to combat human trafficking and do more to prevent tax evasion.

The prime minister highlighted the importance of the under-construction international airport located in Tonpheung district, which he said is key for Bokeo to build closer links with neighbouring countries to promote trade, investment and tourism in the province.

Bokeo province is strategically located in an economically developing area of northern Laos and has direct links to China, Thailand and Myanmar.

National Road R3 is a major route for the transport of goods and people between Laos, China, Thailand and the rest of the region.

Economists believe that when the planned expressway between Bokeo and Boten in Luang Namtha province is built, there will be an economic boom in this region.

The expressway will link Bokeo province with a station on the Laos–China railway in Boten, which it is envisaged will spur economic development in the area.

Provincial authorities were also told to further investigate and capitalise on the potential to grow more crops for export, and provide transit services for visitors and business operators, which would attract more foreign investment to Laos.

<https://www.vientianetimes.org...>

Authorities take action to reduce pork prices

VT Times, August 8, 2022.

Authorities in Vientiane have announced that pork will be sold at two places at a price lower than the market rates as part of efforts to control high prices and to protect the interests of consumers.

The first location is the agricultural market in Nonghay village of Hadxaifong

district, or behind the Vientiane Agriculture and Forestry Department, and the second site is an outlet of the Vientiane Foodstuff Enterprise in Sihom village of Chanthabouly district, according to a statement from Vientiane's Industry and Commerce Department.

Pork will be sold at these two places from 8 am to 5 pm between August 5 and November 5, and the price will be 55,000 kip per kg of grade A pork and 50,000 kip per kg for grade B pork.

The department has directed the Vientiane Foodstuff Enterprise to work in cooperation with entrepreneurs from the agricultural market, pig breeders and slaughterhouses to implement this scheme.

Pork prices have quickly risen to 65,000 kip to 70,000 kip per kg at fresh markets and supermarkets across Vientiane and other provinces, impacting local consumers.

The prices have risen because the capital cost of rearing animals has increased, especially the prices of animal feed and transportation fees.

At the same time, high inflation and the rising cost of living have meant producers face higher costs as well, the Director of the Vientiane Agriculture and Forestry Department, Dr Larsay Nouanthasing, told the media recently.

Economic recovery following the easing of Covid-19 measures, including the reopening of restaurants, domestic tourism sites and other activities, has meant production has not kept pace with demand, he said.

The Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and sanctions by the US and the European Union on Russia have resulted in high inflation rates and an increase in food prices in countries around the world.

The Lao government has struggled to cope with the rise in prices of goods, inflation and the weak Lao kip.

Dr Lasay said that at the height of the pandemic, many farms in Laos had discontinued raising pigs, resulting in lower production capacity, while some farms relocated their production base to other provinces due to variability in regulatory compliance.

"More than 18,000 tonnes of pork, or 284,000 pigs, were consumed in 2021, while demand is expected to reach 19,000 tonnes or 294,000 pigs in 2022. However, only around 16,000 tonnes or 245,000 pigs will be available locally," he said.

"Authorities are attempting to find a solution to the problem of high pork costs by focusing on implementing measures such as forming farming cooperatives, increasing the number of sows to 3,000, and restoring pig farms, while the government must have specific policies, such as supporting animal feed factories to increase production capacity," Dr Larsay added.

There are currently a total of 188 pig farms in Vientiane, but 33 have suspended operations amid economic difficulties, leaving 155 farms and 126,000 pigs available.

<https://www.vientianetimes.org..>

CLMVT news

Vietnam bamboo association to be established

vietnamplus, August 5, 2022.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) said at a seminar held in Hanoi on August 4 that it will work with other ministries and sectors to accelerate the early establishment of [Vietnam bamboo association](#) in a bid

to develop the bamboo processing industry.

Co-organised by the MARD and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry ([VCCI](#)), the event focused on the role of raw bamboo in the development of the value chain of Vietnamese bamboo products. Participants discussed the plant's role, position and value in Vietnam's traditional culture, climate change response, and market mechanism.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Tran Thanh Nam said bamboo trees bring about export value of about 300–400 million USD a year.

To develop the [bamboo industry](#), he recommended businesses, together with local authorities, and producers, to build large areas of raw materials to meet production, processing and export requirements.

According to the MARD, Vietnam houses nearly 1.6 million ha of bamboos, producing 2.5–3 million tonnes of bamboo annually. The EU, the Republic of Korea, and Japan are the destinations for most of Vietnamese bamboo exports.

Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen, coordinator of the EU-funded "Inclusive and Sustainable Clam and Bamboo Value Chains Development in Vietnam" project, said with a global market size that will reach approximately 83 billion USD by 2028, this will be a potential industry for Vietnam's agriculture.

According to the coordinator, bamboo products can replace natural wood and chemical compounds. Bamboo has earthquake-resistance capacity, and is able to prevent soil erosion, restore degraded soil, and absorb carbon, contributing to reducing the impact of climate change. It also plays an important role in the livelihoods of local farmers, as the plant is currently a source of raw material for over 600 bamboo and rattan craft villages.

Hoang Thi Yen, Deputy Director of the Department for Cooperatives and Rural Development, pointed out a series of shortcomings, including small, fragmented production, and a lack of legal standards and corridors for the cultivation, processing and use of bamboo materials in economic activities in Vietnam.

She underscored the need to preserve the cultural value of Vietnamese bamboo, promote economic values of and diversify bamboo products, and build concentrated plantations./.

<https://en.vietnamplus.vn/viet...>

New initiatives target barriers stifling growth in rice industry

phnompenhpost, Aug 4, 2022.

Agriculture remains the main source of income for many Cambodians living in rural areas, now more than ever in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Agriculture is considered a major player in sustaining people's livelihoods and was minimally affected by the crisis. In 2021, agriculture contributed about 24.4 per cent of the Kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP).

At the June 23 inauguration of the collective trademark of Sen Kra'op (SKO) fragrant rice and Damnoeb Sbai Mongkul (DSMK), a premium glutinous – or sticky – rice, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries director-general for agriculture Ngin Chhay said that although the rice sector has grown significantly, trends of global change have posed a number of challenges.

“There is a shortage of quality rice seeds for cultivation due to limited private sector investment in the seed industry. Some farmers are unaware of the proper cultivation of these seeds,” he said.

He added other challenges included a lack of irrigation systems, farmers' use of incorrect fertilisers and pesticides and the high prices of fertiliser, electricity and transportation. Production is not yet concentrated by seed, which means different varieties are sometimes milled together or mixed in wholesale and retail locations. This affects the overall quality of Cambodia's luxury rice varieties.

At a time when the world is experiencing an unprecedented number of crises, including as the spread of Covid-19 and the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, protracted inflation has thrown the world into a food crisis. This is an opportunity for Cambodia, an agricultural country, to increase production for export.

Rice, dubbed “white gold” by the government, has seen steady year-on-year export growth, so signs are promising that Cambodia will become a major exporter of milled rice in the region and supply the world market.

According to a report from the ministry, in the first half of 2022, 1,733,157 tonnes of paddy rice with a value of \$336,232,458 was exported to Vietnam, by far the largest market for Cambodian rice exports. This was an increase of 2.38 per cent from the 1,692,813 tonnes recorded in the corresponding period last year.

Exports to China (168,280 tonnes), the EU (98,624 tonnes) and four ASEAN destinations (28,680 tonnes) also increased from the 2021 figures.

Minister of Commerce Pan Sorasak said that his ministry is not just looking to boost exports, but is trying to help smallholder farmers prepare themselves for the new markets. This will help them to grow their own incomes, he added.

“In addition to promoting our products, the ministry has stepped up efforts to expand rice markets in key countries such as China, and those in the European Union and ASEAN,” he said.

Hun Lak, chairman of the Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF), the Kingdom's apex rice industry body, said that some farmers face difficulties in selling their rice at harvest time due

to not having a clear idea of market demand. In turn, exporters often do not receive clear information from the growers.

“The establishment of the SKO and DSMK collective rice brands aims to benefit us in the medium and long term. It will allow us to reduce the information gap between market demand and production between exporters, mills and farmers,” he said.

CRF secretary-general Lun Yeng told The Post that in the last three years, milled rice exports have been almost stagnant due to a number of obstacles, such as the EU imposing tariffs early in 2019 for three years. Despite this year's growth, exports to the EU from 2019 to 2022 fell by about 30 per cent.

He added that at the same time, by the end of 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic had stretched the world's supply chains to breaking point. He gave a clear example: a 20 foot container of rice that cost \$1,000 to transport in 2019 had jumped to as much as \$15,000.

"Not only are rates going up, supply is also insufficient. In 2020 and 2021, we needed 400 to 500 containers a week, but were only able to secure between 200 and 250," he said.

He added that the price of fertilisers was also starting to rise, affecting farmers' production costs, while milled rice was selling for lower prices due to shipping costs and the blockage of many existing milled rice stocks in rice producing nations.

"In the beginning of this year, the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine drove up fuel prices, which pushed up farmers' ploughing and harvesting costs, while milled rice prices in international markets changed very little," he said.

Despite these precarious conditions, the rice sector is moving forward with its plans, thanks largely to timely intervention by the government, in the form of credit policy, conditional concessions and tax exemption policies.

Nhem Chanthou, a farmer living in Boeung Khnar commune, Bakan district, Pursat province, produces and grows SKO fragrant rice, under the guidance of the Cambodia-Australia Agricultural Value Chain (CAVAC) programme. He said the farmers in his commune have turned to cultivating the variety because there is high demand for it, and it is easy to maintain.

"This means a better income for us at harvest time. In the past, we grew cheaper varieties which were sometimes sold to Vietnamese traders for less than 1,000 riel [\$0.25] per kg. They set the prices, according to how much they needed. We turned to this fragrant variety in 2020, and since then we earn more as there is a clear demand for our quality rice," he said.

Em Phalla, a farmer living in Samrong commune, Prey Chhor district, Kampong Cham province, said that in his commune, farmers currently grow IR51 and IR-64 non-basmati rice because the time to harvest is shorter (95 days) and the yields are higher. Most farmers get between 750 and 800 riel per kg for their product.

He said that experts had advised them to grow paddy rice that has a strong market, such as the SKO and DSMK varieties.

"We would like to try to these varieties if they produce a good abundant yield and have a high market price. Currently, our IR rice sells at a low price which fluctuates according to the brokers," he said.

The SKO and DMSK collective rice brands have been hailed by the rice industry. It was expected that they would enable farmers to produce enough to keep pace with demand from exporters, as well as win over more international buyers.

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/...>

The return of the most important coffee event in Thailand

thethaiger, August 05, 2022.

Kavin Intertrade is organizing "The 16th Thailand Coffee, Tea & Drinks, and Thailand Bakery & Ice Cream to support the industry's growth. The event is expected to generate purchase orders of 500 million baht in 4 days and have 17,000 visitors from 20 countries.

The tradeshow will take place **on 25 – 28 August 2022**, at Hall 99, BITEC, Bangkok, between 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. With more than 150 exhibitors, covering coffee, bakery, ice cream, cocoa, tea, and beverages, both equipment and ingredient at a special price to serve the high demand for coffee and bakery industry in Thailand and ASEAN markets.

Full article: <https://thethaiger.com/sponsor...>

Thailand hits accelerator on extension of China-Laos railway

thestar, August 08, 2022.

Officials from several Thai ministries will visit Vientiane later this month to discuss the Thailand extension of the China-Laos railway.

The Aug 30-Sept 1 talks will focus on linking Vientiane with Nong Khai, Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob said on Sunday (Aug 7).

Plans for the Thai extension of the three-country railway also involve the finance, foreign, agriculture and commerce ministries.

Saksayam said the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) would speed up construction of the Nong Khai-Bangkok high-speed railway and development of Nong Khai station as a trade hub.

The minister also revealed progress on a west-east rail link from Nong Khai.

"SRT will also propose a double-track rail project from Nong Khai to Khon Kaen to the Cabinet," he said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Highways would expedite a request for budget to study construction of a new bridge across the Mekong River.

As for the Finance Ministry, its Customs Department will hasten procurement of mobile X-ray screening equipment for the Nong Khai border checkpoint, as well as implementation of export-import procedures at Nong Khai railway station.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry is collecting data on development in Laos to promote Thai exports and also coordinating with Laos and China on the rail link.

"The Agriculture Ministry will speed up talks with China to open six land checkpoints," Saksayam added.

"The Commerce Ministry will study Thai-Chinese trade in Nong Khai and how to gain advantage from the Laos-China railway."

Saksayam said the Industry Ministry would expedite construction and development of Udon Thani's industrial estate to support trade by rail.

He added that the Transport Ministry was also pushing development of a high-speed railway in the South to link five countries – China, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

"The ministry sees that development of the southern route will help strengthen transport and tourism across the Asean region," he said.

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