

Highlight on farmers, agribusiness and rural development in Laos



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Savannakhet Takes Initiative in Weather Monitoring With Advanced Equipment

Laotiantimes, February 16, 2024

Savannakhet Province is set to become the first province in Laos to revolutionize its weather monitoring capabilities with the installation of state-of-the-art Light-Emitting Diode (LED) screens and advanced meteorological equipment.

The project, funded by South Korea in collaboration with the Lao government, aims to establish a sophisticated flood forecasting and warning system.

The project began implementation in October 2022 and aims to conclude in September this year, contributing to strengthening climate resilience and minimizing the effects of natural disasters, particularly in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin area of Savannakhet Province.

Boulika Inthilath, Deputy Head of the Provincial Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and officials from the water resource and meteorology departments assured that the initiative will empower residents with swift, accurate weather forecasts.

Key features of the upgrade include LED screens in Kaysone Phomvihane city, as well as rain gauges, flood warning devices, closed circuit television cameras (CCTV), and water level gauges in 12 districts across the province. With equipment costs exceeding USD 7.4 million, this initiative is expected to enhance the region's readiness for climate-related challenges.

In Kaysone Phomvihane city, specifically, the main part of the weather system will be a big LED screen near the Meteorological-Hydrological Station in Thahae village. This screen, which is 2 meters wide, 3 meters long, and 6 meters high and costs over 4 million US dollars, will provide real-time weather updates to the community.

Currently, preparations are underway, with equipment transportation to Savannakhet province already in progress. Although the project is set to end in September, installation is expected to finish by April 2024, ensuring residents have quick access to important weather information and strengthening the province's ability to handle climate change.

<https://laotiantimes.com/2024/02/16/savannakhet-takes-initia...>

Laos Vows to Graduate from Least Developed Country by 2026

Laotiantimes, February 16, 2024

The Lao government has pledged to complete its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and carry the nation out of the Least Developed Country (LDC) status by 2026, with efforts focusing on human resources development, economic regulation, and poverty reduction.

Lao Minister of Planning and Investment Khamjane Vongphosy made the vow on 14 February during a press conference following the 2023 Round Table Implementation Meeting, where the focus was on accelerating the implementation of the 9th Five-Year National Socio-economic Development Plan.

The Five-Year plan focuses on economic growth, with aims to improve human resources by ensuring improved quality of the educational system from early childhood, prioritizing green development, boosting productive sectors, such as crops, livestock, forest and fisheries and improving living standards. The plan also prepares for Laos' graduation from Least Developed Country status.

The Lao government is also pushing to reduce urban-rural development disparities, eliminate violence against women and children, reduce poverty, and enhance domestic business competitiveness by improving the business environment.

To support these initiatives, the government will implement appropriate financial strategies and strengthen disaster prevention and control operations. This includes improving early warning systems, conducting risk studies, and supporting high-risk communities to enhance preparedness for extreme weather events.

Minister Khamjane also emphasized the importance of collaboration, stating that the Ministry of Planning and Investment will coordinate with other authorities to follow up on suggested guidelines for successful implementation. This collaborative approach is seen as essential for achieving the SDGs and LDC graduation.

While factors such as an economic slump and high inflation project a downward trend for the country, the Lao government is continuing to implement the 9th Five-Year Socio-Economic plan, as part of the broader goal to achieve the SDGs and graduate from the LDC status.

<https://laotiantimes.com/2024/02/16/laos-vows-to-graduate-fr...>

Lao Government Green Lights 1200 MW Wind Power Project, Largest to Date

Laotiantimes, Feb 16, 2024

In a major boost for renewable energy in Southeast Asia, the Lao government signed a Project Development Agreement (PDA) with Savan Vayu Renewable Energy Co., Ltd. (SVARE) in Vientiane Capital on 14 February.

The project, a 1,200 MW wind power project in the Lako Focus Area, Sepon District, Savannakhet Province, marks the largest wind power development in Laos to date and is expected to generate enough electricity to power both domestic needs and contribute to the region's energy security.

The signing ceremony was attended by Dr. Sthabandith Insisiengmay, Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment for the Lao government, and Mr. Sengsack Sayarath, Managing Director of SVARE. This landmark agreement aligns with the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on energy cooperation between Laos and Vietnam, signed in 2016, and the Agreement in Power Cooperation, signed in 2019. The project has the potential to export excess electricity to Vietnam.

This project represents a major milestone in Laos' journey toward clean energy and sustainable development. It will not only contribute to domestic energy needs but also strengthen Laos' position as a reliable power exporter in the region, particularly to Vietnam, contributing to regional energy security and cooperation.

SVARE conducted extensive feasibility studies in Sepon District, Laos, identifying high wind resource potential with a total installed capacity of 1,200 MW. Requiring an estimated investment of USD 2 billion, the project will generate clean energy and contribute to regional economic and social development, creating significant job opportunities throughout construction and operation.

The wind farm is expected to be operational by early 2026, significantly boosting Laos' renewable energy capacity and supporting its goal of achieving renewable energy targets by 2030.

<https://laotiantimes.com/2024/02/16/lao-government-green-lig...>

Govt approves study on construction of river port in Luang Namtha

VT Times, Feb 20, 2024.

A feasibility study on the construction of a port, logistics facilities, trade and service area, and agritourism site in Long district, Luang Namtha province is set to commence following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Ministry of Planning and Investment and New Concept Consulting Company Limited last week signed the MOU.

The agreement was signed in Vientiane by Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Sthabandith Insisienmay and the President of New Concept Consulting Co., Ltd., Mr Buavieng Champaphanh.

If the project is approved, it will support the government's policy and the strategic plan of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to develop the Mekong River into a waterway that meets international standards for commercial shipping on the Mekong and Lancang rivers, which pass through four countries in the northern reaches of the Mekong River, including China.

The aim of the project is to enable the river transportation of goods, tourists and other passengers and create a link with other modes of transport in Laos and the region.

A port on the Mekong in northern Laos would be a major boost to Laos' transport network, support national defence and security, and advance Laos' economic and social development.

The proposed facility would be called the Xiengkong International Port. If the development goes ahead, it would enable the collection, transfer, packaging and storage of goods that depart or enter the port via National Roads 17A and 17B, the Laos-Myanmar Friendship Bridge that connects to the Nateuy Port in Luang Namtha province, and to the Thabok Port in Huayxai district, Bokeo province.

The project has the full support of the Lao government and would be built to international standards.

The proposed construction site is in Xiengkong and 11 other villages in Long district and would cover a total area of 44,260,311 square metres.

https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreeneews/freecontent_3...

Lao agribusiness group mulls ways to boost production

VT Times, Feb 19, 2024

The Lao Agricultural Business Association, which operates under the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), has vowed to improve agricultural produce by categorising agricultural products as commodities.

The association's annual meeting on February 5 to review work undertaken in 2023 and determine the direction of plans for this year discussed ways to maximise the quantity and quality of agricultural goods and boost sales.

The meeting took place at the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and was chaired by the Chamber's Vice President, Mr Bounleuth Luangpaseuth, who is responsible for the development of agribusiness.

Meeting participants heard a report on the association's work in 2023, delivered by the President of the

Lao Agricultural Business Association, Mr Bounthieng Lattanavong.

The work of the association was steered by the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and centred on encouraging buyers, producer groups, cooperatives, factory supplier groups (fertiliser, food, plant varieties, animal varieties, equipment, machinery, and water supply), financial institutions (banks and microfinance institutions) to work together to promote agricultural products as commodities.

The association, in cooperation with the relevant sectors, achieved satisfactory results in line with set plans for 2023, resulting in positive outcomes in terms of more commodities and lessons learnt.

This year the association will strengthen its membership and will continue to promote agricultural production and the identification of specific commodities through the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as supporting the government's national agenda to improve financial security and stability in the public sector.

Speaking at the meeting, Mr Bounleuth said the Lao Agricultural Business Association was formed in a short period of time and its operations have not yet gained full strength, but the work of the Executive Board is manifested through many beneficial activities.

"The Chamber will provide support and cooperation in strengthening the agricultural business association and ensure that it grows along with the LNCCI and provincial chambers of commerce, and will extend its operations and influence throughout districts across the country," he said.

He advised the association to create a strategy that aligns with the government's national socio-economic development plan and other strategic plans devised by the relevant ministries.

In recent years, Laos has earned millions of dollars from the export of agricultural produce, which mainly consists of bananas, rubber, cassava, sugarcane, and cattle and buffaloes, with China being the largest purchaser.

In addition, more agricultural produce is being sold at markets across Laos, but the government wants to promote agricultural production much more robustly in a bid to earn more foreign currency through the sale of produce to other countries.

<https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Business/Business...>

Large-scale cattle farm in Bokeo targets export market

VT Times, Feb 19, 2024

A private company is setting up a large-scale cattle farm in Bokeo province, aiming to supply beef to domestic and foreign markets, especially China.

The Duang Chalern Development Construction Company Group (DDC Group) has been awarded concessions by the state on five plots of land covering a total area of 3,687 hectares in two districts of Bokeo province, to grow grass and raise cattle.

The company's chairman and director, Mr Khamphai Silaxa, said the project started in 2021 and has experimented with four breeds of cattle, namely Angus Wagyu, Brahman, Brahman hybrid, and traditional Lao cattle.

The company has imported 450 Angus Wagyu cattle from Australia and 370 Brahman cattle from Thailand, and has also bred 2,000 Brahman hybrids and 2,000 traditional Lao cattle, bringing the total number of cattle to 3,620.

So far, the company has exported more than 1,000 cattle from the farm, mainly to China, but also to Thailand and Vietnam.

Mr Khamphai said the company plans to sell Angus Wagyu cattle to the Lao and Thai markets, Brahman cattle to the Lao and Chinese markets, and traditional Lao cattle to the Lao and Vietnamese markets.

He said the project has created more than 300 jobs for local people and has contributed to the socio-economic development of Bokeo province.

However, he admitted that exporting cattle to foreign countries is challenging and involves many steps, such as quarantine and inspections. It takes more than 75 days to complete the export process, he said.

He also said that raising some breeds of cattle is difficult and costly, as they need to adapt to the local climate and are prone to disease. He appealed to the public sector to provide financial support to businesses to help them overcome these difficulties and promote Lao agriculture more strongly.

https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Current/Cur_35_Lar...

Agriculture development centre gives boost to Huaphan farmers

VT Times, Feb 19, 2024

The Laos-Vietnam Cooperation Agriculture and Forestry Development Centre in Xamneua district, Huaphan province, is running courses to improve local farming methods and the quality of agricultural produce.

Deputy Prime Minister Prof. Dr Kikeo Khaykhamphithoune and his officials visited the Centre in Ong village last week, where they were welcomed by the Deputy Governor of Huaphan province Mr Phoutphan Keovongxay and other officials.

The Centre opened in 2018 and in 2019 began trialling new crop seeds and agricultural products, as well as methods of animal husbandry.

The agriculture and forestry development centre partners with the district agriculture and forestry office and other entities to run training courses for local people about new farming techniques, including crop cultivation and livestock raising.

The Centre also provides demonstrations for district officials, farmers, students and the general public.

Prof. Dr Kikeo said the Centre is seeking assistance from like-minded entities and wants to share experiences with similar centres in other provinces so that more progress can be made.

Staff are obtaining pigs and goats from Xayaboury, Savannakhet and other provinces to mate with pigs and goats at the Centre to boost breeding stock. The Agriculture and Forestry Department in Huaphan province is also helping the Centre in its work.

Many activities are underway, including duck and chicken farming, planting of fruit trees and rice, cultivation of organic crops, and the establishment of a fishpond, all of which are proving successful.

On the same day, Prof. Dr Kikeo and his officials viewed the construction of the Laos-Vietnam Friendship Hospital at Misouk village in Xamneua district, which is being funded by the Lao government and Vietnam's Thanh Hóa province with 1.77 billion kip and 518,466 billion dong respectively.

The nine-storey hospital is currently 75 percent complete.

https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Current/Cur_35_Agr...

Laos, Japan partnering to empower coffee farmers

VT Times, Feb 16, 2024

Luang Prabang province: Laos and Japan are launching a partnership aimed at empowering coffee farmers in Luang Prabang province, under the Cocreation of Food Security for Farmers with Economic Empowerment with Japan (COFFEE-JAPAN) project.

The initiative will bolster production and marketing efforts, while promoting access to and understanding of essential nutrition.

COFFEE-JAPAN is a project funded by the Japanese government with US\$1 million and will be carried out in collaboration between the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the United Nations World Food Programme, Saka no Tochu, a Japanese private company active in Laos, and Saffron Coffee, a Lao fair-trade coffee company.

The project targets eight villages in Luang Prabang's Phonxay and Viengkham districts, and will be implemented over a period of 30 months.

The coffee produced under the project will be sold to Japan. The partners aim to create a replicable model of incorporating nutrition into the coffee value chain.

Speaking at a ceremony in Luang Prabang city on Thursday, the Deputy Governor of Luang Prabang province, Mrs Siriphone Souphanthong, said that coffee, as a cash crop, has strong potential to boost people's incomes.

However, there is a dearth of high-quality internationally marketable coffee, as farmers in northern areas of Laos have limited skills to grow and process the crop in ways that meet the needs of international markets.

The project's activities will support people in target communities, help them to create income from coffee production, and access sustainable food security and nutrition, with a focus on women, and children under the age of five.

The Ambassador of Japan to Laos, Kenichi Kobayashi, said Japan has been continuously supporting the development of the agriculture and forestry sectors in Laos, including the partnership with the

World Food Programme.

The Japanese government is delighted to support this initiative, hoping to contribute to stabilising and improving rural incomes, while ensuring food security and improving nutrition.

The founder and CEO of Saka no Tochu, Mr Kunihiro Ono, said the company believes that numerous social issues exist in relation to coffee production, and addressing them rather than turning them away is crucial for the future.

The cooperation project aims to provide training and infrastructure for farmers, which will benefit their whole village, with the ultimate goal of a better life for all in the community.

Through the project's activities, it is hoped to increase the volume of coffee that will be available for export, to specifically target the market of small and medium roasters in Japan, Mr Ono said.

World Food Programme Representative and Country Director, Marc-André Prost, said the primary goal of the agency is to help families to access a diversified diet that meets their needs.

Nutrition education will create awareness in communities about people's needs at different stages in life, while the increased income from coffee production will allow farmers to buy the food they don't already produce, he added.

COFFEE-JAPAN is an innovative public-private partnership with a sustainable people-centred approach, integrating export-grade coffee production, capacity building and nutrition awareness to empower communities and drive positive change.

https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent_3...

Promoting development of green agriculture - Vietnam takes measures to ensure sustainable growth

thestar, Feb 20, 2024

Vietnam wants to promote the development of green agriculture to ensure sustainable growth and higher quality of products, especially export goods.

At the COP28 United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh introduced to the world for the first time a plan on establishing one million ha of high-quality, low-carbon rice production in Vietnam.

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Le Minh Hoan said many international partners are interested in this project because rice has always been one of the leading sectors that emit the most methane.

Hoan said: "The agricultural sector must contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including rice production. The current context forces Vietnam to change the farming process to adapt to the green consumption trend.

"Vietnam targets to market rice grains that do not cause greenhouse effects. At the same time, green production will be applied to other commodities to carry out green growth in agriculture."

Vietnam recorded the highest rice export of eight million tonnes in 2023, earning more than US\$4.5bil since 1989 when the first Vietnamese rice grains were exported abroad.

Vietnam does not have much agricultural production, but this country still has a high export output, playing an important role in food security, according to Hoan.

The carbon credit market also brings new opportunities for green agricultural development.

Tran Quang Bao, director of the Vietnam Department of Forest, Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry, said that development of the carbon credit market in Vietnam now is appropriate.

This will help Vietnam connect to the global carbon credit market.

Vietnam's 14.79 million ha of forests can generate huge financial resources from the carbon credit market to re-invest in forest protection and development.

According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN on global forest resources, Vietnam is one of 10 countries in the world that have the highest increase in forest area, Bao said.

In the future, the forestry sector will continue to propose solutions to attract investment in afforestation because this is a huge potential for Vietnam to participate in the carbon credit market.

Forestry is a field with negative emissions and is assessed by experts as having great potential to exchange forest carbon credits with domestic and foreign partners.

Therefore, the formation of the carbon credit market has many positive impacts on forest protection and development, he said.

To promote the early formation of the carbon market, the Forestry Department has said that it is necessary to complete the specific legal framework for the development and operation of the exchange on carbon credit, including forest carbon credits, according to Bao.

At present, the Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry has submitted to the government proposals on forest carbon absorption and storage services in the draft of a decree amending and supplementing some articles of a decree on enforcement of the Law on Forestry.

The department hopes that the new decree will create an important legal corridor for successfully implementing forest carbon absorption and storage services across the country.

This will be the basic premise to help quickly connect to the global carbon credit market when the domestic carbon credit exchange is officially operated in 2028.

In addition, the ministry has issued a circular on measurement and inventory of greenhouse gases in the forestry sector.

It also measures and calculates the amount of transferable forest carbon credits for each locality.

It is necessary to promote communication, and also improve awareness on forest carbon and the forest carbon credit trading market for central and local officials and forest owners. Besides that, building a database system relating to forest carbon indicators is necessary.

Meanwhile, the national system for measurement, reporting, appraisal and recognition of emission reduction results must be developed to ensure harmony with domestic and international standards.

Vietnam also needs to promote international cooperation to get technical and financial assistance from partners to boost carbon market development. — Viet Nam News/ANN

<https://www.thestar.com.my/business/business-news/2024/02/20..>

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Phonsinuane village, Sisattanak district, Vientiane capital,
Lao People's Democratic Republic

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