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### Concept note for a co-evaluation of an agroecological practice: the case of Sustainable Rice System (SRS),

### Xieng Khouang, Oudomxay & Savannakhet Provinces,

### Lao PDR

**Background**

This proposed co-evaluation is a follow up action of the thematic workshop organized by ALiSEA in Vientiane in November 2016: **What performance indicators for assessing agroecology impacts[[1]](#footnote-1)?**

This one day workshop paved the way to some common indicators to assess performance of agroecology and enabling rewriting a more positive narrative about agriculture. There is still a lot of work to do but it has highlighted a strong interest from the participants to address this issue collectively.

This 1st thematic workshop was instrumental in initiating a collective and multi stakeholder reflection regarding ways to measure success.

3 case studies addressing 3 different agroecological practices were presented to support some group work in order to identify collectively performance / success indicators according 3 main dimensions: Economic, Social and Environmental.

* **Sustainable Rice System**, presented by Thongdam Phongphichith from SAEDA (Xieng Khouang Province)
	+ Focus on comparison between SRS and conventional rice practices
* **Agroforestry coffee**, presented by Andrew Bartlett from LURAS / Helvetas (Xieng Khouang Province)
	+ Focus on comparison between agroforestry coffee and either large scale foreign investments for conventional coffee (or deforestation for monocropping)
* **Maize/rice bean intercropping**, presented by Juliette Lairez from CIRAD (Xieng Khouang Province)
	+ Focus on comparison between innovative system and conventional system

This concept note aims at **developing a framework for co-evaluating the performance of SRS practices**. It proposes to rely on a close collaboration with organizations that have been implementing and disseminating it for the past years, namely:

* SAEDA: main promoter since 2009 in Xieng Khouang Province
* CCL: promoter since 2013 in Oudomxay Provinces with close support from SAEDA
* ARMI: promoter in Savannakhet Province with close support from SAEDA

SRS has been historically developed out of the traditional rice growing practices and SRI practices in Xieng Khouang Province by SAEDA, starting from 2009.

Over the years, the SRS practice has been spread across the province through the involvement of District and Provincial offices of Ministry of Agriculture (DAFO and PAFO) and beyond the Province through collaboration between SAEDA and other Non Profit Associations, NPA, (such as ARMI) or INGO (such as CCL, CARE, Helvetas).

**Objective of the co-evaluation**

The objective of this co-evaluation of the SRS practice is to bring different stakeholders together (NPA, INGO and academia / research) to document the impact of a specific AE practice with new set of indicators and to assess in depth the mode of appropriation & dissemination in different geographic areas.

Ultimately, this first co-evaluation of an AE practice would contribute to

* Pilot test a multi stakeholder research framework for assessing the impact of an AE practice in terms of social, ecological and economical parameters that could be replicated later on
* Identify dissemination and adoption pathways for AE innovation (SRS)
* Support the elaboration of evidence based report that could enable engaging policy dialogue

**A set of new indicators co developed during the Vientiane ALiSEA Thematic Workshop**

In order to go beyond the only “yield per acre” indicator as the “be all and end all” measure of progress, complementary indicators have been identified and sorted according to 3 main dimensions: Social, Economic and Environmental.

Such indicators are not fixed and should be more seen as a starting point for a deeper discussion ahead of the co-evaluation with all relevant stakeholders in order to refine them and potentially adjust them.

Indicators highlighted in bold are those that have been particularly attracted the attention of the participants to the workshop.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Social dimension** | **Economic dimension** | **Environmental dimension** |
| * Percent of time saving for women (%)
* **Degree of hardship of field work (difference between conventional and SRS)**
* Percent of farmers adopting/adapting SRS (%)
* Percent of farmers who learn about SRS from others farmers (%)
* Percent of District Agriculture and Forest Office (DAFO) staff promoting SRS (%)
 | * Percent of rice productivity increase (t/ha)
* Total production (rice + vegetable + fish + livestock) increase (LAK)
* **Return on labor (Lao Kip/day)**
* Percent different input cost as compare to conventional practice (%)
* Percent price increases for organic rice production (%)
 | * **Pesticide free (SRS being organic)**
* Soil fertility balance
* **Agro-biodiversity increases (number of rice varieties, number of aquatic species…)**
* **Percent of biomass recycling (compost, manures, rice straw…)**
* Water use efficiency (kg of total rice production/m3 water)
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**Proposed co-evaluation set up**

In order to guarantee a thorough review of the SRS practice in the different field of intervention, it is proposed to rely on the following set up:

* **Evaluation team** to undertake in depth evaluation through interviews with SRS and non SRS farmers, DAFO & PAFO staff, SAEDA, CCL & ARMI staff in respective area of intervention
	+ A Jr researcher (MSc thesis student) for 6 months (with background in Agroecology)
	+ A student from National University of Laos / Soupanouvong University / Luang Prabang Technical college (student *practiculum*) or a consultant (if academic curriculum does not allow a student to be involved in such long term study)
* **Steering committee** that could be composed of different stakeholders and which would propose a methodological guidance to the evaluation team through regular meetings and exchanges
	+ ALiSEA (board of experts + regional coordinator)
	+ CIRAD & Helvetas
	+ Representatives of National University of Laos (Faculty of Agriculture) / National Agriculture and Forest Research Institute (NAFRI)
	+ Representatives from SAEDA, CCL and ARMI (to be further discussed)

**Logistic and operational support from main development partners (CCL, SAEDA and ARMI)**

As far as development partners working at grass root level for disseminating SRS, it is expected that they would provide support at different levels:

* Identification of farmer leaders and other relevant stakeholders to be interviewed (PAFO, DAFO…)
* Co-evaluation with the evaluation team (allocation of one staff from each organization to be part of the evaluation process in order to build their capacities, to be exposed to the evaluation methods)
* Administrative support for accessing and staying overnight in the field
* Logistic support for transport within the intervention area

**Communication and dissemination of results:**

* Organization of a dedicated ALiSEA national thematic workshop in Laos following up the one organized in November 2016
* SSWG-FAB or SWG-ARD presentations for addressing policy makers and other development partners
* Dissemination of evaluation results through ALiSEA online knowledge sharing platform and Newsletter
* Participation to national conference about AE performance indicators in Paris, France organized by Agrisud, AVSF, CARI and GRET in December 2017
* Regional thematic workshop in order to share the research results with other similar ongoing initiatives in Cambodia (GRET/Siem Reap, Louvain Cooperation/Kampong Tom) and in Myanmar (GRET/Ayeyarwady Delta).

**Timeframe**

The evaluation would last over most of the 2017 rainy season rice period including a 5 to 6 months internship (with in depth study in the 3 intervention areas) between end of May and October 2017.

**Proposed mission for the Jr researcher (MSc student) (to be refined)**

* To conduct a literature review about key performances indicators for agroecological systems
* To review the Monitoring & Evaluation indicators available at grass root level (development partners level)
* To refine the proposed indicators and elaborate the data collection framework that will be put in place over the rice growing season
* To conduct in depth interviews with SRS and non SRS farmers, DAFO & PAFO staff, SAEDA, CCL & ARMI staff in respective area of intervention
* To document case studies of successful SRS farmers compared to traditional Rice growing farmers,
* To document case studies of successful dissemination and adoption cases
* To document investment cost & gross margin for supporting adaptability / mass adoption of SRS
1. <http://ali-sea.org/alisea-national-thematic-workshop-what-performance-indicators-for-assessing-agroecology-impacts-vientiane-lao-pdr-november-2016/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)