

ALiSEA Knowledge Management Meeting

Fostering the production of briefs among ALiSEA members

Monday 25.05.2026, 14.00 – 17.00

Objective



To exchange experience, agree on tools, and develop a **common strategy to support ALiSEA members** to produce policy, practice, and research briefs based on the findings from their own activities.

Agenda



Time	Topic	Format
13.30-13.45	Setting the stage Aim and programme of the afternoon session	Presentation and Q&A
13.45-14.30	What are ALiSEA briefs? Shared vision on key elements, types of content, and target audiences.	Input and discussion
14.30-15.15	Who are ALiSEA brief authors? Strategy for the authorship of briefs, balancing quality & productivity in a continuum between specialization and decentralization.	Input and discussion
15.15-15.30	Break	All
15.30-16.15	How to coach ALiSEA brief authors? Presentation of modular coaching concept applicable as in-person intensive event or as remote coaching. Adapting concept to the needs of NKMC	Input and discussion
16.15-16.45	Practical exercise Test the coaching concept through hands-on test: based on and input publication, define topic, format, main message, audience, and call for action.	Moderated group work
16.45-17.00	Feedback loop: Group pitches and plenary discussion to exchange views on the exercise and how it can be applied in the coaching concept.	All
17.00-17.15	Conclusion: Next steps and deadlines, need for additional support.	Discussion

Shared understanding about briefs

When did you write your most recent brief (as a main author)?



Policy Paper

Approach Brief

Practice Brief

This is the Title. Make it sound interesting and should not be longer than 3 lines.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Welcome to ASSET Project promotional leaflet template. This section is aim to capture the reader's attention. You can provide either a short introduction or interesting facts about your works.

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- Ⓜ This is a listing style with an ASSET icon. If you wish to use list function in Canva, feel free to do so.
- Ⓜ To use ASSET icon, you simply need to copy-paste it and move it to desired location.

Title of the special section

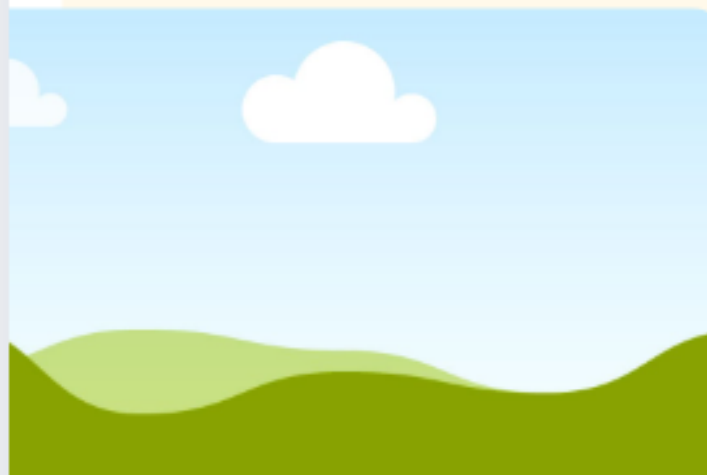


Figure 1: caption for the figure

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METHODOLOGY

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Figure 2: caption for the figure

MAIN TITLE/RESULT/DESCRIPTION

SUBTITLES CAN BE IN TWO LINES

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What are briefs?



Standard

High-end knowledge product requiring careful selection of messages and content, as well as good **synthesizing and writing skills**

Purpose

Advocacy brief: Argue for a particular course of action.

Objective brief: Balanced information to help readers make up their mind

Intended effect

1. **Convince:** the readers must realise that the issue needs their attention
2. **Stimulate:** motivating the reader to act
3. **Objective:** Inform about possible alternatives for action
4. **Helpful:** Is useful as decision support in prioritising action

A brief should be ...



1. **Relevant:** Relates to the **bigger picture** that is relevant for the reader
(e.g. a brief on fruit fly management must relate to the broader topic of input reduction, else it is a technical guide / or leaflet)
2. **Meaningful:** shows what research findings **mean**, rather than how research was done, and includes **realistic** and feasible recommendations
3. **Evidence based:** Is based on firm evidence from **several sources** (not only from one's own organisation or project)
4. **Focused:** (a) sticks to the issue at hand, (b) focuses on achieving the purpose, (c) is concise and precise
5. **Non-academic:** Avoids scientific **jargon**; uses clear and simple language; does not try to impress but to inform
6. **Accessible:** uses clear headings and short paragraphs
7. **Promotional:** Catches the eye and has an attractive design

Elements of a brief (part 1)



1. **Title** (max 80 char.): catchy, relevant to the topic. Options: (a) catch attention, (b) obvious regarding implications, (c) ask or imply a question.



Saving soils at degradation frontlines: sustainable land management in drylands

(78 characters / 10 words)

2. **Key messages** (max 750 char.): 3-4 bullet points, focused on the key elements you want the readers to get even if they don't read the rest.



Our tools help land users assess and select sustainable land management practices. This enables the informed, responsive, locally anchored stewardship that is needed to combat desertification

(200 characters / 26 words) x 3 or 4

3. **Lead** (max 750 char.): grabs attention, introduces the topic, says why it is important, tells the readers why they should do something about it.



Healthy soils are fundamental to life. They grow the food we eat and the wood we use for shelter and fuel, purify the water we drink, and hold fast to the roots of the natural world we cherish. They are the ground beneath our feet and beneath our homes. But they are under threat, especially from human overuse and climate change. Nowhere is this more evident than in dryland areas, where soil degradation – or desertification – wears away at this essential resource, sometimes with sudden rapidity when a tipping point is crossed. Though it is a challenge, preserving and restoring healthy soils in drylands is possible, and it concerns all of us. Sustainable land management points the way.

(692 characters / 117 words)

Elements of a brief (part 2)



4. Main text

- max 9000 char. = 1500 words = 3 pages (single spaced) or 6 pages (double spaced)
- At least 6 headings
- Clear and logical structure
- Stick to the topic and only use meaningful examples
- Must answer the question “so what?”



- 1. problem – effects – causes – solutions*
- 2. example 1 – example 2 – analysis – solution*
- 3. problem – intervention – results*
- 4. aspect 1 – aspect 2 – aspect 3 - analysis*

Elements of a brief (part 3)

5. **Implications** (max 2000 char): e.g. as box on last page. Tells readers what the implications are for policy or practice. Must relate to key messages.

6. **Boxes** (max 2 - 3 boxes with max 1000 char. / 150 words each): flexible; can contain study summary, field story, definitions, things not fitting in the main text.

Policy implications of research

Desertification threats demand a response

The risks of inaction on desertification are grave, while the opportunities of action are great. **Inaction** can lead to an accelerating cycle of lost productive land, biodiversity decline, natural disasters, population displacement, and rising carbon emissions. The **solution** is to stabilize or increase production of staple grains and grass-fed livestock, protect resilient plant species, empower rural communities, and keep carbon in soils. A **continuous effort** is needed to properly care for dryland ecosystems, always seeking a balance between people's needs and nature's ability to replenish itself.

We may be the cause, but we are also the cure

Sustainable land management is needed to prevent, halt, or reverse desertification in many dryland areas. Fragile ecosystems have evolved over centuries or millennia. Leaving them alone to return to their "natural state" is largely illusory and risky. A deforested dryland landscape that has been farmed for generations is unlikely to revert to wild forest if it is abandoned – it is more likely to turn into (fire-prone) badlands. Informed, responsive, locally anchored stewardship is needed to help nature flourish in a mutually beneficial way.

Supporting sustainable land use is an act of solidarity that benefits us all

Not long ago, most people farmed for a living and were intimately aware of their reliance on healthy soils. While our awareness of the importance of soils may have changed, our ultimate dependence on them has not. Sustainable land management is a wise **investment** in the present and the future. Even in relatively well-off European countries – especially those with drylands (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Greece) – people are concerned about **being able to produce enough food nationally** and regionally.¹⁷ Sustainable land management helps preserve that ability, and the many other ecosystem services of healthy soils. Rural communities that practise this form of land use maintain public goods that benefit everyone. They deserve to derive a fair living and a sense of pride from their work.

Box 1. World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT)

Network: CDE researchers were founding members of WOCAT, a network of soil and water experts committed to documenting and sharing good practices of land use. Initially focused on conservation, they eventually developed the holistic concept of sustainable land management. This means using land resources – including soils, water, plants, and animals – to produce goods that meet changing human needs, while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions.⁴

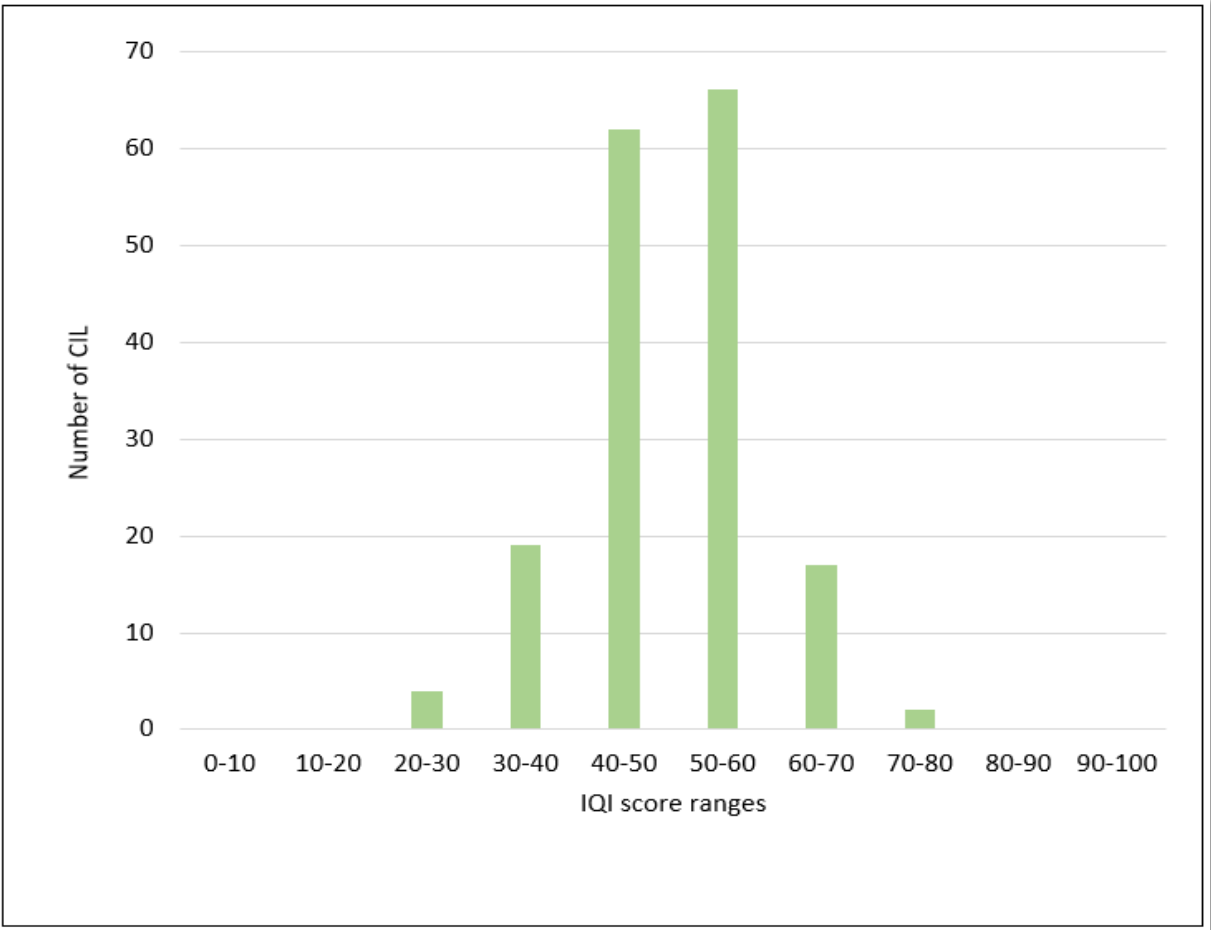
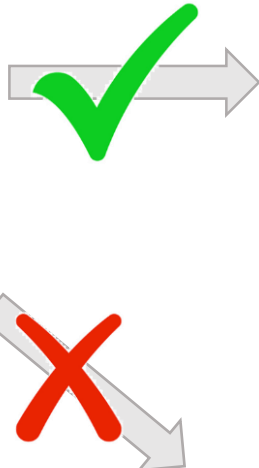
Online database: Today, WOCAT maintains an open online database of over 450 sustainable land management practices from 50 countries. Visitors may freely search, view, and download user-friendly materials covering the background, analysis, and "how to" of different practices. Sharing is encouraged! (<https://www.wocat.net/en/knowledge-base/technologiesapproaches.html>)

Questionnaires: The database is continually fed with new data collected in the field – from everyday land users and experts alike – using structured WOCAT questionnaires.

UNCCD endorsement: Since 2014, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification recommends use of the WOCAT database to its signatories (over 190 countries) in order to document best practices of land use around the world.

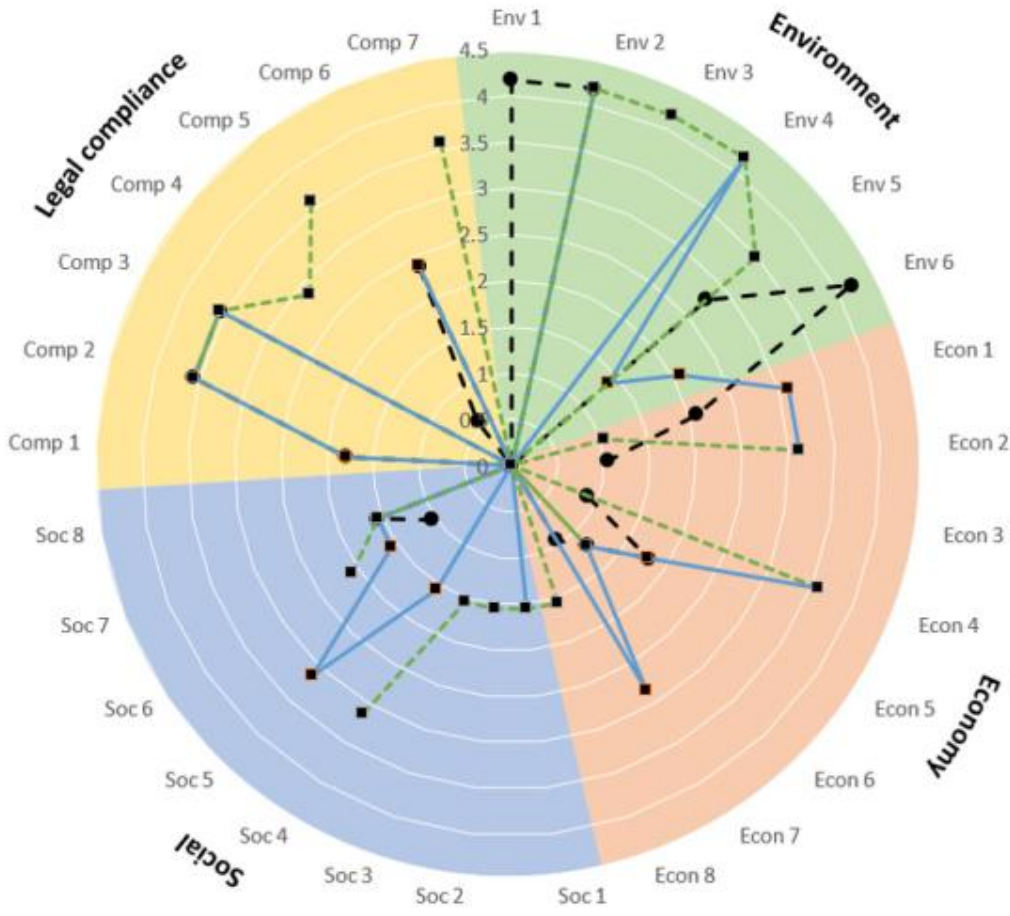
Elements of a brief (part 4)

7. **Tables and graphs** (1 - 2; if more, use less photos): graphs are better than tables. Keep simple. Must illustrate / help to better understand the topic.



8. **Photos** (max 3, incl. page 1 photo): good composition, relevant to the subject, carries a message. Descriptive caption, author's name, permission.

Env 1	Avoided clearing forests
Env 2	Conducted EIA
Env 3	Conducted environmental monitoring properly
Env 4	Proper chemical use
Env 5	No pollution
Env 6	Minimized impact on livestock
Econ 1	Avoided impact on household land
Econ 2	Paid compensation to impact households
Econ 3	Paid fees
Econ 4	Contributed to infrastructure development
Econ 5	Avoided clearing valuable land
Econ 6	Improved local incomes
Econ 7	Avoided impacting natural resources availability
Econ 8	Contributed to local economic development
Soc 1	Limited the use of foreign labour
Soc 2	Respected legal age & gender equality for workers
Soc 3	Paid fair wages
Soc 4	Provided good labour conditions
Soc 5	Employed workers from impacted villages
Soc 6	Minimized health and safety hazards
Soc 7	Avoided negative impact on food security
Soc 8	Provided technology transfer and social development
Comp 1	Land survey conducted and deal approved prior to clearing
Comp 2	Adhering to land deal boundaries
Comp 3	Respects concession agreement
Comp 4	Inclusive village consultation prior to land clearing
Comp 5	Village consent and grievance mechanisms established
Comp 6	Project progressing according to schedule
Comp 7	Progress reporting



Elements of a brief (part 5)

- 9. Further reading:** careful selection of 2 - 5 key references that allow reader to deepen their understanding. With web addresses. Promote your work.
- 10. Authors:** portrait photo, name, position, institution, e-mail
- 11. Imprint:** ref. if part of series, names of editors, reviewers, designers, printers

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Suggested further reading

Mekdaschi Studer R, Liniger HP. 2013. *Water Harvesting: Guidelines to Good Practice*. Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), Bern; Rainwater Harvesting Implementation Network (RAIN), Amsterdam; MetaMeta, Wageningen; International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome. <https://www.wocat.net/en/knowledge-base/documentation-analysis/recent-publications.html>

Schwilch G, Hessel R, Verzandvoort S. 2012. *Desire for Greener Land: Options for Sustainable Land Management in Drylands*. Bern, Switzerland; Wageningen, Netherlands: University of Bern, CDE; Alterra, Wageningen UR; ISRIC, World Soil Information; CTA, Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation. <https://www.cde.unibe.ch/Pages/Publication/2196/Desire-for-Greener-Land.aspx>

Schwilch G, Liniger HP, Hurni H. 2014. Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Practices in Drylands: How Do They Address Desertification Threats? *Environmental Management* 54(5), pp. 983–1004. DOI:10.1007/s00267-013-0071-3

WOCAT. 2007. *Where the Land is Greener: Case Studies and Analysis of Soil and Water Conservation Initiatives Worldwide*. Liniger HP, Critchley W, eds. Bern, Switzerland: CTA, FAO, UNEP, CDE. <https://www.cde.unibe.ch/Pages/Publication/1046/where-the-land-is-greener.aspx>

WOCAT website: <https://www.wocat.net/>
DESIRE website: <http://www.desire-his.eu/>
CASCADE website: <http://www.cascadis-project.eu/>

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The views expressed in this policy brief belong to the author(s) concerned and do not necessarily reflect those of CDE as a whole, the University of Bern, or any associated institutions/individuals.

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Keywords: Desertification, drylands, sustainable land management, WOCAT, DESIRE, CASCADE

Who are ALiSEA brief authors?



Strategy for an authorship that balances quality & productivity in a continuum between specialization and decentralization

Initiative comes from NKMC

- 1. Ms produce knowledge in their activities*
- 2. NKMC identify products with potential*
- 3. NKMC contact Ms to identify interest*
- 4. NKMC coach Ms to write briefs*
- 5. RKMC verifies and uploads the brief*

Initiative comes from the members

- 1. Ms produce knowledge in their activities*
- 2. Ms write a policy brief*
- 3. Ms approach the NKMC to ask to publish*
- 4. NKMC review the brief*
- 5. RKMC uploads the brief*

Professional is tasked with predefined targets

- 1. Ms produce knowledge in their activities*
- 2. NKMC identify products with potential*
- 3. NKMC contact Ms to assess interest*
- 4. Professional writer does the job*

How to coach ALiSEA brief authors?



Suggestion for a modular coaching concept

1. Applicable online or as an in-person coaching event
2. Based on iterative “writing – review” loops
3. Aiming to achieve a consolidated draft

Iterative Stages of writing and coaching process



1. Framing the topic and intention

- Central Message
- Target Audience, Entry Points, and Call for Action
- Agroecological contribution

- Coach and author agree on assignment and process
- Author frames the brief
- Author pitches his/her ideas
- Coach reviews and recommends

2. Developing the structure

- Using a mind map around the main message
- Determine main sections
- Keywords for content

- Author integrates recommendations
- Author develops structure
- Author fills content as keywords
- Author pitches his/her ideas
- Coach reviews and recommends

3. Writing the main Body Text

- Distributing material into the structure
- Refining into an advanced draft

- Author integrates recommendations
- Author elaborates text elements
- Author sends draft to coach
- Coach reads and reviews draft

4. Writing the synthesis elements

- Drafting lead text
- Dividing central message into 3-4 key messages
- Deriving main implications / recommendations

- Author reviews draft
- Author develops synthesis elements
- Author sends draft to coach
- Coach makes second review: finalise if good enough, or back to author

Stage 1: Framing topic and intention

Message

Give authors examples such as: *Commercial land investments and transition to wage economy are not always reducing poverty → Policies must focus on compliance with regulations, skills development, & diversification of rural economies) (K4D Policy Brief 6)*

Target audience and processes

Ask authors to identify who must know about this and do something about it. Ask them to reflect about promising entry points for something to happen (e.g. new national agricultural strategy or action plan, upcoming high-level event (COP), recent news)?

Call for action

Ask authors to reflect about their call for action: what do they expect it to achieve (adaptation of policy, re-allocation of funds, change of behaviour, more research, etc.)?

Agroecological framing

Ask authors to identify to what AE principle or category the brief contributes

Stage 3: Drafting main text



Equip authors with key principles

1. Verify that the content addresses the main idea of the section.
No out-of-scope information! One main idea per paragraph!
2. Verify the flow of the argument
There should be a **link between two paragraphs or two sections**
3. Be clear, concise and avoid redundancies
Use **short sentences** with simple structure.
4. Emphasize action
If possible, use **active tense** with clear subjects (e.g. "*farmers planted fruit trees*" instead of "*fruit trees were planted*")

Stage 4: Developing synthesis elements



Ask authors to identify and develop synthesis elements structuring the brief

1. **Title:** Verify if initial title still is appropriate or needs revision
2. **Key messages:** Must contain the few things authors want the reader to remember, even if they don't read the entire brief.
3. **Implications:** Must relate to the key messages but should be solution-oriented: what can be done, what are options or recommendations
4. **Text boxes:** Can fulfil different roles, for example to illustrate with a practical example or to define a concept or a term.
5. **Lead text** (sometimes called 'blurb'): Grabs the attention, introduces the topic, says why it is important, says why the reader should do something about it (thus building on all other parts of the brief).

Proposed workplan



1. Each national team to make a list of potential brief authors (based on prior and recent publications, ongoing research, perceived interest)
2. Joint regional-national communication to members to inform about and assess interest for an upcoming pilot coaching process
3. Selection of members based on subscription
4. Scheduling of coaching (staged to allow learning and sharing of experience)

Agenda



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17.00-17.15	Conclusion: Next steps and deadlines, need for additional support.	Discussion

what are most relevant institutions, organisations, forums, and networks working on agroecology in the Mekong region?

Regional Networks & Alliances

1. **ALiSEA** : The leading regional network for agroecology in the Mekong, facilitating knowledge exchange, research, and capacity-building.
2. **Mekong Youth Farm Network** : Connects youth, farmers, researchers, and local authorities across the Mekong to promote sustainable farming and agroecology

Intergovernmental & Regional Organizations

1. **MRC** : Intergovernmental body for water diplomacy and sustainable development in the Lower Mekong Basin.
2. **Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program** : Regional platform supported by ADB, promoting economic and social development.
3. **PROGREEN** (World Bank) : Supports green growth and participatory forest landscape management in the Lower Mekong

National & Local Institutions

Cambodia: (1) **CESAIN** : Sustainable agriculture, agroecology, and nutrition (linked to ALiSEA and regional conferences). (2) **General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA)**: Co-organizes agroecology forums and supports national agroecology strategies

Laos: (1) **NAFRI**: Collaborates with ALiSEA and CIRAD (France) on agroecological research and training. (2) **MRLG**: Works on land tenure and agroecological transitions

Vietnam: (1) **Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VAAS)**: Active in agroecology research and knowledge sharing via ALiSEA. (2) **National Consultation**

Meetings: Engages government, NGOs, and farmers to promote agroecology (e.g., PGS Vietnam, Mekong Organics)

Myanmar: Department of Agricultural Research (DAR): Limited but growing involvement in agroecological initiatives, often in partnership with regional networks

International Partners & NGOs

CIRAD (France): Research and technical support for agroecology

GRET (France): Supports agroecological transitions and community-based projects in the Mekong

FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization): Organizes regional symposia (e.g., 2015 Bangkok Symposium) and supports agrobiodiversity conservation

Biovision Foundation, GIZ, SDC

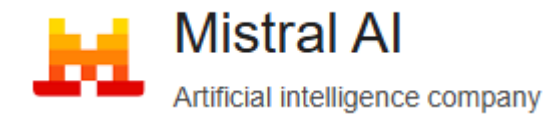
Forums & Working Groups

Sub-Sector Working Group on Agroecology (SSWG-AE) Laos:

ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB): Occasionally addresses agrobiodiversity in regional food security plans.

ALiSEA is currently discussing its future structure and governance.

Three scenarios are on the table: 1. Informal network of partner organisations, without registration and without clear hosting organizations for executive tasks; 2. Non-registered network with executive tasks (secretariat, communication, knowledge management, etc.) hosted by some member organisations in the 4 countries; 3. Formally registered network with an own office space and centralised governance structure



What are your comments on the above, considering that ALiSEA has secured funding by SDC until 2028 but no security beyond?

Informal Network of Partner Organizations	Non-Registered Network with Hosted Executive Tasks	Formally Registered Network with Centralized Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Flexibility •Low Overhead •Decentralized Ownership •Quick Decision-Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Balance of Structure and Flexibility •Cost-Effective •Local Embeddedness •Easier Transition •Donor Appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strong Institutional Identity •Clear Accountability •Long-Term Sustainability •Centralized Coordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of Accountability •Limited Visibility •Risk of Fragmentation •Funding Vulnerability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Dependency on Hosts •Potential Inequities •Limited Legal Personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High Overhead •Bureaucracy •Risk of Centralization •Uncertainty Post-2028
<p>Best for: Short-term agility, but high risk for long-term stability and scaling</p>	<p>Best for: Medium-term stability (2028–2030) with a scalable, low-risk approach. This model is recommended as a pragmatic intermediate step, especially given the funding timeline</p>	<p>Best for: Long-term ambition (beyond 2030), but only if ALiSEA can secure diverse, reliable funding sources and ensure inclusive governance</p>

Strategic Recommendations for ALiSEA

1. Short-Term (2026–2028): Adopt Scenario 2

Maximizes **stability and coordination** while keeping costs low. Hosting executive tasks with **member organizations** (e.g., one per country) ensures **local ownership** and **shared responsibility**.

2. Medium-Term (2028–2030): Pilot Hybrid Elements of Scenario 3

Test the waters for formalization **without full commitment**

3. Long-Term (Post-2030): Transition to Scenario 3 if viable

Conditions for Success: **Secured multi-donor funding** (e.g., from EU, ADB, or national governments); **Clear demand** from members for centralized services (e.g., policy advocacy, large-scale projects); **Governance model** that ensures **equitable representation** (e.g., rotating board seats among countries)