



# ALiSEA Charter

Version of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

*A framework document for a shared vision, a common objectives and a member driven governance of ALiSEA*

## **Background**

### **South East Asia at a crossroads: from agricultural intensification to ecological matters**

It is estimated that about 87 per cent of the world's 500 million small farms (less than 2 ha) are in Asia and the Pacific region (IFPRI, 2007). In this region, the ecosystem provides jobs for 60% of the working population and generates a quarter of the region's gross national product (ESCAP, 2008).

In the Mekong region more especially, farmers have historically practiced subsistence-based integrated farming combining crops, livestock and trees in complex landscape mosaics. Paddy rice is main staple food all over South East Asia. Agricultural practices relied on strong ecological knowledge built over many generations by subsistence farmers, all based on agroecology principles.

Over the last decades, population pressure combined with government policies for the conversion of temporary land use to permanent land use led to decrease of shifting cultivation. All countries in the South East Asia have engaged in a process of so-called 'modernization' of agriculture by applying the agricultural practices of the Green Revolution to export-led monocropping.

Depending on their respective history, demographic changes, economic development patterns and agroecological potential of their landscapes, agriculture intensification has evolved at different pace and had variable ecological impacts throughout the region (land degradation and biodiversity depletion associated with the generalization of input-intensive cropping practices).

### **Agroecology: a modern solution for smallholders**

Agroecological practices can respond to different types of problems: wind or rain erosion; loss of organic fertility and/or soil minerals; poor water management; reduction of biodiversity; parasite attacks; frequent unforeseen weather occurrences and climate change; lack of farm autonomy (related to chemical inputs, animal feed, energy, etc.); mediocre food quality; contaminations of the environment, products and people; and price fluctuation, etc.

By relying on production diversification, reducing use of external inputs, increasing recycling of locally available natural resources, and mobilizing labour and knowledge intensive practices, agroecology offers broad range of solutions to family farmers that:

- improve nutritional and food quality,
- increases incomes and creates employment
- helps reduce risks for the environment and the health of populations

At territorial level, there are also indirect impacts on incomes and employment (industries created, local trade boosted, etc.).

Agroecology methods are favourable to biodiversity and ensure soil fertility. This makes it possible to recover land that has become unproductive, improve resistance to climate incidents (diversity of activities, soil protection practices) and participate in the fight against climate change.

Agroecology approaches are thus convincing and evidence-based alternatives to the current agrifood system. They aim at strengthening innovation capacity of family farms, as well as the recognition of their contribution to food sovereignty in the region.

Across South East Asia, there is a strong shared interest for bridging and synergizing existing agroecology initiatives, in order to share and enrich experiences, to increase the visibility of the practices and scale up their adoption by farmers. Meanwhile, there is a need also to include such practices in public policies, and to increase main agroecology stakeholders' capacity for fund raising in order to strengthen existing networks.

## **Name**

The proposed name for the regional alliance is “ALiSEA” – the Agroecology Learning alliance in South East Asia.

## **Vision**

An increased credibility and visibility of agroecology practices at family farmers, consumers and policy makers level spearheads the redesigning of the landscapes, the livelihoods and the mindscapes in the Mekong Region.

Such regional agroecology transition supports the emergence of healthy and resilient food systems and the creation of innovative and fulfilling jobs for the rural youth while sustainably preserving natural resources.

## **ALiSEA Mission**

ALiSEA is a network of Agroecology practitioners and supporters (sharing and supporting common goals on AE) that actively engages its members into information/knowledge sharing and vibrant collective actions promoting an agroecological transition, and providing meaningful benefit for all participants.

The network intends promoting a unifying agroecology concept for gaining higher visibility and influence, generating public support, and establishing a learning process to facilitate an agroecology transition in the region (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam), i.e. supporting farmers in transitioning from their current practices to agroecological practices through gradual transformation of their farming systems.

ALiSEA functions as a platform to share and discuss real issues encountered at multiple levels (i.e. from grass-root level actors to policy makers) and influence on policy dialogue. It provides reflexion and feedback mechanisms for all stakeholder groups.

The stakeholders/members have complementary knowledge and capabilities which, when combined through the network, will

- (i) scale up the knowledge created in the innovation process
- (ii) facilitate the dissemination of innovative practices through the enabling environment created,
- (iii) engage in policy dialogue on agriculture and rural development issues (e.g involve in consultation process of policy reviews),

- (iv) be inclusive for local communities involvement (experimentations and innovations, social movement and process for change), and
- (v) provide supports for resource allocation and service delivery

### **ALiSEA objectives:**

- To analyse current regulatory, socio-economic and institutional constraints in order to improve the environmental conditions for agroecology transition and development
- To share learning from and capitalise on the knowledge and key experiences of different actors (research centres, academia, government agencies, CSO/NGOs, Farmers' Organizations or Federations, private sector) that are supporting farmers in their agroecological transition
- To generate, aggregate and disseminate broad Information, Education & Communication materials (video, reports, handbooks) targeting farmers, development practitioners and consumers about agroecology
- To map outstanding agroecology sites across the Mekong region and to facilitate Farmer to Farmer and multi stakeholder visits
- To assess local conditions, potentials, and build shared strategies for scaling up successful agroecology practices
- To encourage / promote agroecology local and healthy food (building consumers' confidence, private sector engagement and producers' certification...)
- To foster policy dialogue in order to include agroecology in national / regional strategies
- To support co-development of performance indicators to assess agroecology impacts and facilitate its field testing

### **Principles of ALiSEA**

ALiSEA will operate based on the following main principles

- ALiSEA aims to support small farmers to gain sustainable improvements in their livelihood whilst preserving the environment
- Voluntary basis – members of ALiSEA will participate in the network on a voluntary basis
- Not for profit – ALiSEA does not operate on a profit-making basis
- Non-discrimination – ALiSEA works to support all and does not discriminate on the basis of political affiliation, gender, race, religion or any other basis

### **Members of the ALiSEA**

ALiSEA is an open coalition of stakeholders active on agroecology within the Greater Mekong Sub-region, including

- Civil Society Organizations (Farmers' Organizations, Local and International NGO, Consumer associations...)
- Research centers, universities, colleges and institutes with a research focus on agriculture and rural development
- Private sector operators

- Government agencies responsible for Agriculture, Fishery, Livestock, Forestry and Rural Development

*Members pledge to respect ALiSEA charter and to actively engage in promoting an agroecology transition in the Mekong region through participation to experience & knowledge sharing and collective actions.*

## **Proposed governance for ALiSEA**

### *At each country level*

#### **A National Secretariat**

A **National Secretariat** of ALiSEA is hosted by an existing institution already involved in networks, with broad areas of intervention (agriculture related). Its main areas of work are to support:

- Agroecology Knowledge Gathering & Sharing (undertake agroecology related issue watch, collect case studies, success stories, stakeholders' testimonies...)
- Networking and event organizations (support identification & organization of thematic workshops, Enlarge ALiSEA member basis & strengthening agroecology alliance, Facilitate national & regional studies, research, collective actions...)
- Small Grant Facility

Such secretariat receives financial support and technical backstopping from GRET.

The national secretariat is renewed on a yearly basis in order to increase involvement of ALiSEA member in its governance.

#### **A National Board of Experts**

Pluri-disciplinary board of experts (4-5 people) has been established at national level and provides meaningful inputs to ALiSEA on

- Small Grant Facility (SGF): each national expert is part of the ALiSEA SGF selection committee and contributes to formulation of specific calls for proposals, selection and improvement of concept notes and project proposals, evaluation...
- ALiSEA formulation of ToR for thematic workshops and consultancies / research

National experts are recognized and motivated scientists and development practitioners open to the wider "agroecological transition" approach promoted by ALiSEA. They help bridging scientific /academic communities with development practitioners. The national experts are graduated (at least a master degree) in the field of agroecology, agriculture, forestry, environment or community development.

#### **An Annual General Assembly (AGM)**

Such ALiSEA collective moment at national level has three folded objectives:

- Presenting **main progresses** done during the year for promoting the agroecological transition in the region (e.g.: outstanding studies, case studies and videos, multi-stakeholders round tables with scientists, farmer leaders, development practitioners, policy makers...)

- Addressing the **governance of ALiSEA**, including the composition and functioning of the board of experts, the selection/renewal of secretariat members, the achievement and review of the Small Grant Facility, the funding and financial management of the network, etc.
- Discussing and validating the **strategic action plan** (e.g. priorities) and the detailed **annual action plan** of ALiSEA. The elaboration of the plans can be done in advance by the secretariat members than presented to the GA.

### *At regional level*

#### **Regional Secretariat**

The **Regional Secretariat** of ALiSEA is currently hosted and facilitated by GRET with one regional coordinator based in Laos and 2 national coordinators based in Cambodia & Myanmar.

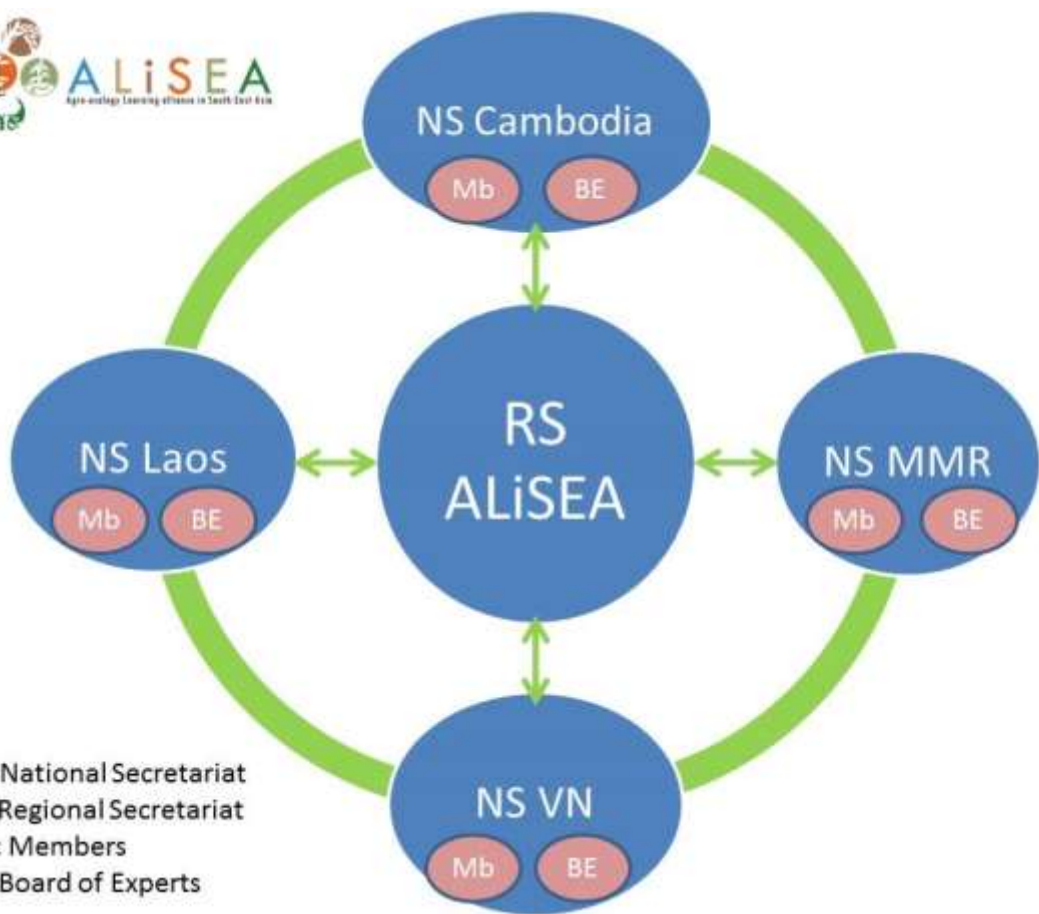
Its main areas of work are to support:

- ALiSEA network functioning and governance support
- Agroecology Knowledge Gathering & Sharing (undertake agroecology related issue watch, collect case studies, success stories, stakeholders' testimonies...)
- Networking and event organizations (support identification & organization of thematic workshops, Enlarge ALiSEA member basis & strengthening AE alliance, Facilitate national & regional studies, research, collective actions...)
- Small Grant Facility

#### **Regional General Meetings (once every 2 years)**

Such ALiSEA collective moment at regional level has three folded objectives:

- Presenting **main progresses** in regards to the agroecological transition in the region (e.g.: outstanding studies, case studies and videos, multi-stakeholders round tables with scientists, farmer leaders, development practitioners, policy makers...) → Sharing similar ongoing initiatives at regional level to foster synergies and experience exchanges, networking
- Addressing the **governance of ALiSEA**, including the composition and functioning of the board of experts, the selection/renewal of secretariat members, the achievement and review of the Small Grant Facility, the funding and financial management of the network, etc.
- Discussing and validating the **strategic action plan** (e.g. priorities). The elaboration of the plans can be done in advance by the secretariat members than presented to the RGM.



NS: National Secretariat  
RS: Regional Secretariat  
Mb: Members  
BE: Board of Experts