

## Govt, international organisations discuss food security project

Written by Thippaphone Chanphengxay

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Agriculture officials and international organisations met in Vientiane yesterday to discuss and share experiences for ensuring food security and to make sure that agricultural development provides reasonable benefits to all stakeholders in a process of agricultural growth.

By 2020, the Lao population would increase to 7.5 million, the government estimated, and would require about 4.7 tonnes of paddy rice alone among other food crops to support the population.

Food security has been named as one of the top priorities by the government and the National Food Security Programme has been established with involvement of all relevant stakeholders. It is noted that food security in Laos has been basically achieved at the national level since 2000. However, at lower levels there are many cases where food security and nutrients are not at appropriate levels.

Reasonable supporting policies, availability of resources such as institutional capacity, technologies, extension services, and sufficient financial support for enhancing crops are all necessary to achieve food security for all groups in the country.

The issue was discussed at the National Inception Workshop for Agriculture Transformation and Market Integration in the Asean Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns in Vientiane on Thursday, and was attended by Deputy Director General of Department of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Mr Bounchanh Kombounyasith, international organisations, and officials.

The meeting is very important as it gives an opportunity for all participants from relevant sectors to discuss and share experiences for ensuring food security and to make sure that agricultural development provides reasonable benefits to all stakeholders in a process of agriculture growth.

The programme for Agriculture Transformation and Market Integration in the Asean Region: Responding to Food Security and Inclusiveness Concerns, is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) as the lead and the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) as a partner. The purpose is to strengthen the capacity of the targeted Asean Member States (AMS) to develop policies and programmes to support the adjustment of the smallholder farm sector to changes on sub-regional agriculture and food markets.

Cooperation in food security and agricultural development among AMS is enhanced through the preparation of strategic programmes and measures in the areas of R&D, food safety and quality standards and investment in food and agri-based industries.

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