



**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Lao People's Democratic Republic**

PRESS RELEASE

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**FAO PROMOTES WILD FOODS AT LAO AND INTERNATIONAL FOOD
FESTIVAL**

Vientiane, 16.02.2009: An estimated 500 people dropped by and sampled wild forest foods such as beetles, crickets and frogs at the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) booth at the Lao and International Food Festival last weekend in Vientiane.

"Lao people are in the unique position of having collectable wild resources at their doorstep that are highly nutritious and delicious", says Mr. Serge Verniau, FAO Representative in Lao PDR.

FAO promoted wild forest foods as an important part of a traditional Lao diet at the Food Festival. The FAO food circle contained wild forest foods as a source for calcium, fruit, vegetables, protein, and fat.

"Despite 10 years of robust economic growth, 40 per cent of children under five years old continue to be affected by chronic malnutrition, denying them the right to reach their full mental and physical potential. Many also suffer from high levels of micronutrient deficiencies."

"Rice is the key staple food in Laos, but rice alone is not enough for good nutrition: access to and consumption of adequate quantities of a variety of safe, good quality foods are required to provide nutritional needs."

Poor rural households often rely on a wide diversity of wild foods such as fish and other aquatics, animals, insects, vegetables and fruits to guarantee their important protein, fat and micronutrient intakes.

"The sustainable management and protection of land, water, forests and biodiversity are of crucial importance in improving food and nutrition security in Lao PDR", says Serge Verniau. "It would be very costly to replace the qualities and quantities of wild foods with cultivated products."

"The FAO food circle shows the importance of the promoting the traditional wild foods as part of the diet – especially in the uplands, which are the areas where chronic malnutrition is at the highest levels."

Many visitors at the FAO booth were interested in buying these traditional foods, and hoped that next year some one would sell them at the food fair.

In addition to the samples of wild foods, the FAO booth also had a quiz that allowed people to test their knowledge on nutrition and wild foods.

The Lao and International Food Festival 12-14 February was organized by the Lao Businesswomen's Association.

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