



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

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## **RICE ASSESSMENT PROJECT TO HELP GUARANTEE FOOD SECURITY**

### **First national Lao PDR rice survey to be released in July**

**Vientiane, 17 March 2009:** The first statistics-based assessment of the situation and outlook of rice in Lao PDR will be finalized by July, resulting in a better understanding of the rice situation in the country and increased capacity to plan for agricultural (rice) production development and environmental or economic change.

Funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and supported by funds from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the assessment started in July last year and will take 12 months to complete. It covers capacity building that will prepare the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) to undertake similar large scale statistical activities in the future.

Says Serge Verniau, FAO Representative in Lao PDR, "The lack of up-to-date information on rice production and consumption was one of the critical gaps identified by MAF and the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)."

The rapid assessment team is led by statistics expert Generoso De Guzman – who has worked for FAO in over 20 countries – working alongside four counterparts in MAF.

"It is an ambitious project with an innovative set-up: a joint government/World Vision International through SDC supported household and village field surveys. MAF and MPI should be applauded for the way they have embraced it," says Mr De Guzman.

"The interdepartmental collaboration and commitment to hard work is commendable on this project. MAF and Department of Statistics (DoS) have been working overtime and even on weekends to ensure timely completion of the project."

The project includes village and household surveys, secondary data analysis and a rapid assessment of stocks and marketing systems for rice in the Lao PDR. Data entry for the survey returns from 17 provinces is 90 percent accomplished up to present.

The report of the survey will be disseminated through provincial and national workshops, and published for the wider community.

In urgent response to heavily erratic food and fuel prices that first hit the country in May 2008, MAF and MPI called upon FAO to assist in limiting the impact of fluctuating prices on food security and nutrition in rural areas and limiting the right to food of the poor.

"The ultimate beneficiaries will be Lao farmer's for whom food security is a concern. It is critical that the Government has a clear picture of the state of their largest and most relied upon commodity and now they will," says de Guzman. A clear understanding of the current rice situation and outlook is as well an important basis for the formulation of a national Food Security Strategy.

"With appropriate incentives and policy environment, the farmers of Laos can be the powerhouse of development for this country."

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