

Working Group on Agricultural Information Management (AIM)

Minutes of Inaugural Meeting

10th January 2006, NAFES

1. Background to the meeting

This meeting was organised as follow-up to the Research-Extension Linkages Workshop, held jointly by NAFES and NAFRI in November 2005. One of the five key proposals coming out of the workshop was as follows:

“Establish jointly managed information systems. For example, at the central level a working group on information management should be created with representation of both NAFRI and NAFES. The working group should aim to make technical information and practical experience more accessible to Provincial and District staff, and create channels for feedback.

In preparation for the inaugural meeting of the Working Group, informal discussions were held between staff and advisers of the NAFRI Information Management Division (IMD) and the NAFES Extension Systems Unit (ESU). These discussions led to agreement on the date, location, participants and agenda for the meeting (see Annexes 2 and 3).

2. Summary of presentation and discussion

2.1 NAFRI made a PowerPoint presentation of the structure and functions of the Information Management Division, with details of on-going activities (see Annex 4). An additional presentation was made concerning the Lao Agricultural Database (LAD). This is a searchable collection of more than 1,000 research papers and reports that will be accessible via the internet through the nafri website (www.nafri.org.la). The status of the Uplands Resource Book was also reported; the English version of Vol 2 will be ready for distribution by the end of January, with Lao edition following in 5 vols over the next few months.

2.1 NAFES made a verbal presentation of current information activities, focussing on activities carried out by the Extension Systems Unit (formerly CETDU). These activities include an organisational newsletter, a set of training booklets (methodological and technical topics), posters and video. In addition, a small library has been created in the ESU and a simple website launched in English. The ‘Wisdom Bag’ was demonstrated, a means for displaying various information materials at the Province and District level.

2.3 During discussion, the following five issues were identified:

- a) NAFRI and NAFES should have a better joint understanding of what information capacity and materials *already exists*.
- b) There should also be a better understanding of what information *is needed* by stakeholders, especially those at the province and district levels
- c) There should be a *planning mechanism* to ensure that media/information production meets the agreed needs.
- d) There should be capacity-building to ensure that NAFRI and NAFES can actually produce what is needed.
- e) There should be some immediate opportunities for collaboration that will demonstrate the benefits of working together.

2.4 Ideas were shared about how the WG members could gain a better understanding of *existing materials and capacity*. Information must be collected and analysed, with participation of both NAFES and NAFRI. The terms 'mapping', 'baseline', 'inventory' and 'classification' were all used to describe this process. It was agreed that a sub-group should produce a short concept paper, to be submitted at the next meeting.

2.5 Concerning the *assessment of new information needs*, it was suggested that this should be a topic in the agenda of seasonal or annual conferences and meetings, particularly at provincial and district levels. It was important that national units responded to the needs of provinces and districts, and not just produce materials in a top-down manner.

2.6 Regarding collaboration between NAFRI and NAFES during *planning and production* of media and materials, it was recognised that a range of options existed, as shown in Annex 5. The best option was not fixed but depended on circumstances. We need to take account of the type of material, the subject matter, and the available expertise. The most suitable level of collaboration for any particular information activity or material should be decided at the planning stage.

2.8 Immediate opportunities for collaboration include:

- a) providing feedback to each other about posters and other print materials that are already at the draft stage
- b) providing information for each other's newsletters (ie. NAFRI writes one page for the NAFES newsletter, and vice versa).
- c) developing a joint strategy for working with Lao TV

2.7. The role of the working group itself was discussed. All participants agreed that meetings should be held on a regular basis with the aim of following up on all of the issues mentioned above.

3. Decisions

- i) The working group will meet on a monthly basis, at least for the next couple of meetings. The frequency of meetings can be reviewed and changed at a later date.
- ii) Participants of future WG meetings will be selected by the Heads of ESU and IMD (ie. Somxay and Khampay). There is no need to seek higher approval for the establishment of the working group.
- iii) The organisation of meetings will alternate between NAFES and NAFRI. The host will be responsible for finalising the date, place and agenda for the meeting. The location of meetings can be at NAFRI, NAFES or in the Provinces.
- iv) Two people from each side will work together to prepare a short concept paper (1 or 2 pages) concerning how to carry out an inventory/mapping exercise. The concept will be reviewed at the next meeting of the WG.
- v) It was agreed that each organisation will allocate one page in their newsletters for contributions from the other side.

Annex 1. Attendance

NAFRI		NAFES	
Khampay Manivong	Head of IMD	Somxay Sisanonth	Head of ESU
Bandith Ramangkoun	Deputy Head, IMD	Chipasong Chalath	Deputy Head, ESU
Manoluck Bousihalath	ICT section	Niphonxay	Deputy Head, PMU
Phonepaseuth	ICT section	Chaluen Daoheung	ESU staff
Khanhkhram Oun	Publications section	Thitpachan Inthilith	ESU staff
Phetsamone	Publications section	Phanomphay	PMU staff
Pome Panthavong	Library	Phoutthasin	LEAP staff
Michael Victor	Adviser (Info. Services)	Andrew Bartlett	Adviser (LEAP-CTA)
Joakim Lagerqvist	Adviser (ICT)	Andrea Schroeter	Adviser (LEAP-TA)

Annex 2. Agenda

Time	Activity	Who
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and introduction to each other	Somxay
9:15 – 10:00	Update on current interesting activities in regards to information services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-15 minutes presentation on-going activities from both sides • Questions and discussion included 	NAFES - CETDU NAFRI – Bandith
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break with material and information display from NAFES and NAFRI	
10:30 – 11:00	Discussion on how NAFRI and NAFES can share information more effectively (what, how, roles and responsibilities) – Based on activities discussed in presentation.	Both sides
11:00 – 11:45	Discussion on possible activities for further collaboration	
11:45 – 12:00	Closing and agreement on next steps and possible meeting	Khamphay and Somxay
12:00	Lunch	

Annex 3. Presentation from NAFRI Information Management Division

Why collaboration between NAFRI and NAFES is important

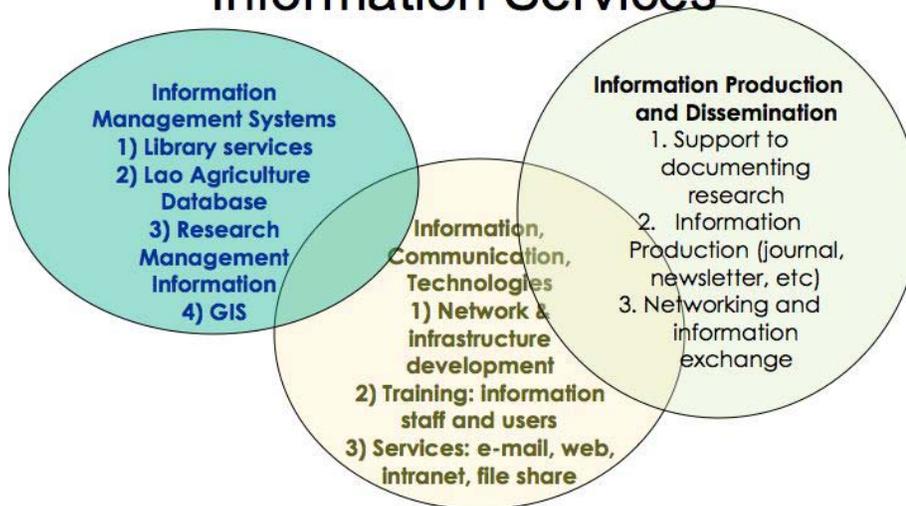
- Avoid duplication of work
- Avoid producing conflicting and contradictory information
- Way for researchers and extensionists to know what each other are doing
- Limited amount of resources (human and financial)
- Greater reach of information materials if produced and disseminated jointly

Process for developing information services at NAFRI

Developed information service strategy (2004 - 2010) using the following steps:

- Assessed NAFRI capacities and needs on shared Agriculture and Forestry Information Framework
- Assessed external environment and needs of users (farmers, PAFO/DAFO staff, policymakers, etc).
- Developed the Strategy itself and broad scope of work
- Reorganization of Division
- Linkages and partnerships to other organizations and institutions is key element of the strategy
- Organizational Setup of Information Management Division

Main Activity Areas of NAFRI Information Services



Activities where there is already collaboration

- **Lao Uplands Sourcebook**
 - Production and development - next steps for producing new information
 - Dissemination of sourcebook (provincial level workshops)
- **Market Information Systems Development**
 - National level task force
 - Workshop in South (February 06)
- **Ban Na Pasuk Program with Lao IRRI and NAFES:** Ideas to focus primarily on uplands and local language

Areas where more collaboration is possible

- Joint production and testing of technical guidelines and posters
- Inclusion of information into NAFRI/NAFES newsletters
- Video production and collaboration with Lao National TV
- Organizing joint workshops on hot topics between the two (follow up linkage workshop)
- **Information Management**
 - Library development
 - Share publications for Lao Agriculture Database and NAFES wisdom bag
 - ICT - Fiber network? Joint web development? Support to NAFES ICT?

Annex 4. Options for collaboration between NAFES and NAFRI in information management

