

Sector Working Group: **Agriculture and Rural Development** **(SWG-ARD)**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

As part of the Government work to improve aid effectiveness in Lao PDR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) originally gave the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) the mandate to oversee the Sector Working Group on Agriculture, Natural Resources Management and Rural Development (SWG-ANR). The SWG-ANR structure was developed and officially established in June 2005 with the first plenary meeting in February 2006. Four Subsector Working Groups (SSWGs) were soon established—Agribusiness, Forestry, Irrigation and Uplands—together with a Core Working Group to facilitate the dialog process. The SWG-ANR and the Core Working Group were first co-chaired by the Office of the Permanent Secretary of MAF and the Representative of the French Development Agency in Lao PDR.

In September 2011, as a result of the establishment of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), the SWG-ANR and its SSWGs were restructured. The SWG-ANR became the SWG Agriculture and Rural Development (SWG-ARD) and retained the four SSWGs (Agri-Business, Forestry, Irrigation, and Uplands). Each SSWG had a chair (GoL) and a co-chair (DP) as well as a technical secretariat, and each secretariat was usually backstopped by external technical assistance. In 2013, the SSWG on Irrigation was officially closed, the SSWG on Forestry became part of the SWG on Natural Resources and Environment (SWG-NRE), and the SWG-ARD took the decision to create a SSWG on Agro-biodiversity. The SSWG on Uplands was officially closed in 2016.

Since the establishment of the SWG process, the SWG-ANR/ARD has made a number of key achievements and provided strategic inputs in enhancing the sector by providing an active and open forum for dialogue on:

- MAF 2020 Agriculture Strategy, the master plan and investment plan (2011 – 2015),
- Reports on achievements of plans 2006-2010 and future plans 2011-2015 of WREA, MEM, NLBRDPE, NLMA,
- Agriculture census preparatory phases (2009),
- Agriculture sector issue paper (WB 2007),
- ADB ANR sector review (2007/08),
- Farmer organizations strategy,
- Activity reports from the SSWGs.
- Review of MAF Project Implementation Units providing practical recommendations for integrating further PIU functions with government systems and structures.
- Elaboration of the 5-year road map for strengthening a comprehensive MAF M&E system, led by the MAF DOP/Division of Planning.
- Preparation for the annual RTIM meetings (reporting on VD-CAP implementation)
- Promoting the use of a program based approach and the promotion of the realization of the commitments made by Development Partners in Paris and under the Vientiane Declaration.
- Supporting and guiding the operation of SSWGs
- Agriculture Development Strategy to 2025 and Vision to 2030

- National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and Plan on action to 2030
- Upland Development Strategy and Upland Development Programme
- 8th National Socio Economic Development Plan 2016-2020
- Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (VDII)
- Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan II (VD-CAP II)

The SWG-ARD, as of September 2017, has the following sub-sector structure:

- SSWG-Farmers and Agri-Business (FAB)
- SSWG-Agro-Biodiversity (ABD)
- SSWG-Forestry (reassigned to SWG-ARD in 2017)
- SSWG-Rural Development (created in 2017)

- ❖ Core Working Group—comprising representatives of each of the SSWGs, the Secretariat, and the co-chairs and appropriate technical support
- ❖ Thematic Task Forces (Ad hoc) – for example on Food and Nutrition Security
- ❖ Policy Think Tank.

Objectives of the SWG-ARD:

Overall objective

The overall objective of the SWG-ARD is to support the implementation of the Government's National Social Economic Development Plan (NSED) and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015 At the Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015, Lao PDR adopted the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In line with the previous MDG framework, some SDGs are particularly relevant to the SWG-ARD and form part of the overall objective:

- SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere);
- SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture);
- SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts);
- SDG 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss);
- SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development).

Specific objectives

- Provide a forum for dialogue and coordination between the GoL and Development Partners and other stakeholders on sectoral development matters or cross-cutting issues specific to the Agriculture and Rural development Sector.
- Promote the development of the concerned sectors including policy dialogue and joint priority setting, domestic and external resources' mobilization, result-oriented management and monitoring of progress and achievements.
- Facilitate the implementation of sector-related actions and targets embodied in the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (VD-CAP).
- Ensure coherence and linkage between the Round Table Meetings as overall coordination forums and coordination at the sectoral level. Ensuring the follow up and implementation of RTM guidance.
- Guidance and Monitoring of the Sub-Sector Working Groups (SSWGs) under SWG-ARD.

TOR SWG-ARD

The SWG-ARD is established under the guidance of the GoL to promote the aid effectiveness principles enshrined in the Vientiane Declaration and its related Country

Action Plan. The Vientiane Declaration was revised in 2015 to better reflect the Lao context in evolution. The five principles embedded in the initial VD were reformulated and three additional principles were included: 1) Ownership, 2) Alignment, 3) Harmonization and Simplification, 4) Inclusive Partnerships for Development Results, 5) Transparency, Predictability and Mutual Accountability, 6) Domestic Resource Mobilization, 7) South-South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing, 8) Business as a Partner in Development.

The tasks of the SWG-ARD are as follows:

- Contribute actively to the formulation and implementation of sector strategies and associated sector plans and programs, through inclusive participation of all the stakeholders of the sector(s);
- Promote alignment between government policies, plans and programs and development partner support;
- Promote the mobilization of resources, both domestic and external, to implement those sector strategies, plans and programs;
- Facilitate monitoring of projects and programs and reporting on use of resources by the core ministries (MAF, Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), Ministry of Finance (MOF));
- Monitor progress towards key sector-specific national development goals, especially the MDGs, as well as contribute to annual NSEDP reviews, and annual budgeting and Public Investment Program (PIP) exercises.
- Facilitate cross-sectoral coordination as the need arises;
- Promote the integration of cross-cutting issues, especially mainstreaming gender and environmental issues in sector programs;
- Mainstream the VD-CAP on Aid Effectiveness into the sector policies and activities, including promoting harmonization and simplification of donors' practices, procedures and missions, the promotion of program-based or sector-wide approaches, use of national systems, and assessments and strategies for capacity development; promote information sharing and access to information;

Chair and Co-chairing arrangements

The Chair of the SWG-ARD is the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF).

The Two DP Co-Chairs are: France and FAO (since 2017).

The responsibilities of the SWG-ARD Chair and Co-Chair(s) are:

- Provide leadership and direction of the SWG-ARD;
- Oversee operation of SWG Annual Work Plan;
- Lead the SWG-ARD discussions;
- Facilitate contributions to discussions from participants;
- Summarize meeting proceedings and recommendations to facilitate decision-making by MAF;
- Activate Task Force as required;
- Ensure that the SWG Secretariat is adhering to agreed-upon timelines and is accountable in meeting benchmarks.

SWG-ARD Secretariat

The Secretariat of the SWG-ARD is provided by MAF – the Secretariat is led by the DG of the Department of Planning and Finance (DOPF) who is member of RTM national steering committee. The Division of International Cooperation (DIC/DOPF/MAF) will act as secretary of the Secretariat, with advice and support by the Co-Chairs.

The main functions of the Secretariat are:

- Manage logistics and organization regarding the holding of SWG meetings (agendas, invitations, minutes, preparation of content and presentations) in consultation with the Core Working Group;

- Prepare and monitor the implementation of the SWG-ARD Annual Work Plan;
- Suggest key policy issues that the SWG should address;
- Keep abreast of ongoing policy research and recommend selected research projects to be presented at SWG meetings;
- Liaise with MPI- DIC with regards to RTM and RTM follow-up actions;
- Act as a link between the SWG activities and the ministry;
- Facilitate Government ownership of the sector development process and dialogue with donors/DPs;
- Provide a link to the work of the SSWGs, Policy Think Tank and thematic task forces established under the SWGARD;
- Promote cross sector collaborations and joint planning/actions.

All communications to the SWG including the agreed agenda, minutes and meetings should be channeled through the secretariat. The agenda will be set jointly, with Government and DPs free to contribute agenda items. The minutes of meetings and discussions will be consolidated with input from the Core Working Group and distributed by the secretariat; the Co-Chairs will act as focal point for all DPs.

SWG-ARD Annual Work Plan (AWP)

The AWP is prepared by the Secretariat of SWG-ARD and presented for approval to the SWG-ARD at its first meeting of the year (January). The AWP provides a timeframe for SWG activities taking into consideration major events at the level of the sector, such as NSEDP assessment and preparation (1st quarter following previous implementation year), national budget preparatory process (June/July), PIP formulation (July/August), RTIM (November), and other dealings related to the sector itself, as the deliberations of the SWG meetings could usefully feed into these processes.

Frequency of meetings and working modalities

The SWG-ARD will meet for a minimum of two meetings per year. The SSWGs may meet as many times as necessary. The secretariat, however, can request ad hoc meetings based on emerging issues and inform SWG members of new initiatives identified by the chair and co-chairs.

Co-chairs can be modified in agreement with government and development partners.

Meetings under the SWG-ARD will be organized on an annual basis as follows:

- Meeting A: Annual Workplan and RTIM/RTM Follow-up meeting: focus of this first meeting of the year for the SWG will be on agreeing on the annual workplan, reviewing the outcome of the RTIM/RTM and identifying follow up actions for the year.
- Meeting B: Thematic meetings (minimum one per year): focus on particular policy issues.
- Meeting C: RTM preparation meeting (administrative focus): the outputs of the meeting will contribute to the preparation of RTIM/RTM. This meeting will be held in second half of year, two months prior to the RTM).

The Date and Venue for the next meeting shall be agreed at the end of each meeting.

Meetings will provide time for reports by SSWGs and inter-sectoral working groups

Reports from all meetings will be available to the public through the website of the SWG and RTM and through other channels which could include the LaoFAB website.

SWG-ARD Membership and Attendance

Membership of the SWG-ARD consists of the following representatives:

- The Chair: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF).
- The Two DP Co-Chairs: France and FAO

- Government agencies: MAF's departments, MOFA, MOF, MEM, MONRE including Land Management Authority, NLCDRPE, MPI and MAF Program/Project representatives (*on cross cutting issues (for example nutrition - MOE and MOH will also be requested to attend)*).
- Development Partners (DPs): ADB, Australia, EU, FAO, Germany (BMZ), IFAD, Japan, KOICA, SDC, UNDP, UNEP, WB and others.
- Non-State Actors representatives: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)¹, Private Sector organizations and INGOs.
- Sub-Sector Working Groups – All SSWGs under SWG-ARD will be members (3 representatives from each group).
- Policy Think Tank (NAFRI - Policy Research Center)
- SWG-ARD Secretariat.

Each organization will be requested to nominate one representative (with the exception of the SSWGs, which will have three representatives each). An alternate member should also be nominated in case of the absence of the nominated member. Broad attendance and participation at meetings will be encouraged.

A SWG-ARD Task Force may be appointed to address specific themes and ad hoc issues. The function of the task force is to conduct detailed investigations and reviews of issues relevant to the SWG-ARD and to report back on its findings. Members will be considered as are needed based on needs and activity of task force.

Modification of the Terms of Reference SWG-ARD

- SWG-ARD may recommend and agree on modifications to this TOR.
- Any modifications of this TOR shall be approved by the SWG-ARD meeting.

Generic Annual Work Plan for SWG-ARD

Planned Activities	Timeframe	Expected Outcomes
1) First SWG Meeting	January of each year	Review RTIM RTM and confirm Workplan for current year
2) SWG-ARD Thematic meetings:	TBC in annual workplan	Focus on particular policy issues which can be organized more than once per year. This will help the SWG-ARD to have high status of the policy discussion and there will be lots more to report on technical discussions.
3) SWG-ARD RTIM/RTM preparation meeting	Sep (or 2 months prior to RTIM RTM)	Prepare documentation for presentation at RTIM RTM
4) SWG-ARD Mini Round Table (provincial RTIM RTM)	Tbc in Annual workplan	Support provincial Round table process – alignment with SWG-ARD – provincial SWG initiative – promote activities in target province of Mini RTIM/RTM

[TOR Agreed and Cleared on 27 September 2017 at the SWG meeting]

¹ CSOs must be registered under Decree of Association