

Meeting minutes

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

Date: Thursday 28th March, 2017

Time: 08:30 to 12:00

Venue: Crowne Plaza Vientiane Hotel – Vientiane

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Minutes & Content of Interventions	3
OPENING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR AND CO-CHAIRS	3
H.E. Dr. Phouang Parisak Pravongviengkham, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Chair of the SWG-ARD:.....	3
H.E. Mdm. Claudine Ledoux, French Ambassador to the Lao PDR, Co-Chair.....	3
Dr. Stephen Rudgard, FAO Country Representative to Lao PDR, Co-Chair	4
PRESENTATION 1: SWG-ARD SECRETARIAT	4
Mr. Xaypladeth Choulamany, D.G. of Planning and Finance, MAF, Secretariat of the SWG-ARD	4
Mr. Savanh, DDG, Planning and Finance, MAF. Presented on the Lao Census of Agriculture	4
Mr. Andrew Bartlett, advisor to the SSWG-Farmers and Agribusiness (FAB) secretariat.....	5
Dr. Bounthong Buahomh, DG of NAFRI, MAF, Chair of the SSWG-Agro-biodiversity (ABD).....	5
Mr. Saisamone Phothisak, DDG, DFRM, MAF, Chair of the SSWG-Forestry (F)	5
Mr. Claude Jentgen, Charge d affaires a.i. for the Duchy of Luxembourg	5
PRESENTATION 2: AGRO-BIODIVERSITY.....	5
Dr. Bounthong Buahom, DG, NAFRI, MAF, Chair of SSWG-ABD.	5
PRESENTATION 3: THE NEED FOR RURAL & AGRICULTURE FINANCE IN LAOS.....	6
Mr. Visone Saysongkham, Officer at the Financial Institution Supervision Department of the Bank of the Lao PDR.....	6
COMMENTS AND DIALOG	7
Mr. Koen Everaert, representing the EU delegation to the Lao PDR	7

Dr. Phouang Parisak response.....	7
Mr. Khampah, Community and Environmental Development Association	7
Sisomphone, MPI.....	7
Martin Hasler, representing SDC in Laos.....	7
Dr. Phouang Parisak responded	8
Mr. Sukaserm Phutisam, representing Lao Farmers Products (LFP).....	8
Margaret Jones-Williams, representing the UNDP-Laos.....	8
Andrew Bartlett, team leader for the LURAS project.....	8
Ms. Buavanh, representing a CSO working on rattan	8
Dr. Phouang Parisak responded	8
Ms. Saeda, Senior representative of JICA, co-chair of the SSWG-F.....	9
Conclusions and closing remarks.....	9
Dr. Stephen Rudgard	9
Mr. Matthieu Bommier, representing the Co-Chair.....	9
Dr. Phouang Parisak summarized and closed the meeting	9
Outcomes and Agreements of the meeting	10
Annex 1: Meeting agenda	11
Annex 2: List of Participants	13
Annex 3: SWG-ARD Structure, March 2017 – still need to be updated, as now proposed to have 5 SSWGs (tentatively approved 4 SSWGs).....	14

Introduction

The meeting was chaired by His Excellency Dr. Phouang Parisack Pravongviengkham, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and co-chaired by Her Excellency Mme. Claudine Ledoux, Ambassador of France in Lao PDR and Dr. Stephen Rudgard, Country Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The meeting was attended by more than 100 people, representing the Government of Lao PDR (GoL), the Development Partners (DPs) and Lao and International Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The full content of the agenda was approved and addressed.

Minutes & Content of Interventions

Opening remarks from the Chair and Co-chairs

H.E. Dr. Phouang Parisak Pravongviengkham, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Chair of the SWG-ARD:

Dr. Phouang Parisak greeted the collected government representatives, development partners and stakeholders. He provided context for the meeting and an update on developments in the sector. He related that the ARD sector has three priority work areas: 1) sustainable, commercial production applying green agriculture; 2) sustainable forest management; and, 3) rural development. In response to the increased responsibilities for MAF, the ministry has been restructured, as approved by the Prime Minister. Today, the collected representatives of the development partners, government, and other stakeholders can discuss the related topic of restructuring the SWG in response; we have proposed the continuation of the existing two SSWGs, the reintegration of one SSWG, and the addition of two more.

Regarding the commercial production system, the Government has a series of policies that support the development of the sector for commercial production, including 13 policies for improved rice production, 8 policies for improved forestry management, and 8 policies for livestock and fisheries. Implementing these policies effectively will require continued cooperation among the stakeholders in the SWG-ARD.

The concept of agro-biodiversity (ABD) is critical to the work on sustainable commercial production, and MAF has worked on this for a number of years. ABD provides a key element of the food production and nutrition systems, and MAF will continue to promote work on ABD.

Rural development is now within the agriculture sector and the Government has proposed a new SSWG to match the increased mandate. This will include opportunities to discuss support to SME (or micro-enterprises) which make up the bulk of business opportunities in Laos. Access to finance is a critical issue for this sector and MAF will work closely with the Bank of Lao (BOL) to continue developing solutions.

Dr. Phouang Parisak concluded by asking for the full participation of the collected partners and stakeholders.

H.E. Mdm. Claudine Ledoux, French Ambassador to the Lao PDR, Co-Chair

H.E. commented further on the challenges facing the sector: expressing concern over the growing use of pesticides in Laos and how agroecology can be a possible solution to the dangers. The Ambassador expressed optimism for addressing undernutrition, one of the country's most pressing challenges, emphasizing the convergence of initiative initiatives taken in the fields of agriculture, health and education. This is also a key objective to enable the Lao PDR to graduate from the Least Developed Country status. H.E.'s opening comments are reported in full in the attached document.

Dr. Stephen Rudgard, FAO Country Representative to Lao PDR, Co-Chair

Dr. Stephen Rudgard conveyed his formal greetings and thanked the Chair, Co-Chair, and stakeholders for offering FAO the opportunity to become the co-chair of the SWG-ARD and he thanked IFAD for its excellent support over four years as the outgoing Co-Chair. He had comments and raised various issues for discussion as follow:

- The mandate of the Ministry has expanded, and thus it is no surprise that there is a need to reshape the SWG in response. He urged the participants to share their views on how the proposed changes might work, noting that they reflected the High-level Round Table Meeting and the 2016 Implementation Meeting. There was a need to look formally at how to take up the topics assigned to the agriculture sector.
- The locust outbreak is already affecting 23 districts, and the nymphs will likely be on the march in May. Locusts are already affecting Vietnam, China, and Laos, and potentially Thailand and thus the FAO had supported an intergovernmental consultation to consider cooperation. Biological control agents will be tried this year, with hopes that they would be more effective than the chemical products used in 2016.
- The next Lao Agriculture Census will be moved up a year in order to be ready for 2020 planning.
- Pesticide use has become a major concern, catching the attention of the Government and development partners, particularly in the context of the banning of new banana plantations and approval of the new pesticide decree.
- Consideration of rural finance is timely, responding to the push for commercialization which requires investment.

The Chair then called for the first presentation to be facilitated by the SWG-ARD secretariat representative.

Note: All the presentations are available on the following link: <http://swgard.maf.gov.la>

Click on “Last Publications” on the home page or “Resource”, then “SWG-ARD”, then “presentations”

Presentation 1: SWG-ARD Secretariat

Mr. Xaypladeth Choulamany, D.G. of Planning and Finance, MAF, Secretariat of the SWG-ARD

Mr. Xaypladeth delivered the presentation of the SWG beginning with proposed revisions to the structure of the SSWGs—three existing SSWGs with two additional proposed: one on Rural Development and the other on Food Security and Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture. This should also include the policy think tank (PTT) to deal with policy discussions coming out of the SSWGs. Mr. Xaypladeth covered briefly each of the SSWGs: FAB, ABD, F, RD, with more detail regarding the approach and method proposed for the SSWG-FS&NSA. He covered the workplan for the SWG as received from the HRTM and RTIM and asked for feedback within one month from each of the SSWGs regarding the proposed assignment of follow-up actions for each. He also presented the locust outbreak, response, and plan.

Mr. Savanh, DDG, Planning and Finance, MAF. Presented on the Lao Census of Agriculture

Mr. Savanh presented a summary plan for the new Lao Census of Agriculture. By law, the census is organized every ten years. To synchronize with the development planning process for the 9th NSEDP, MAF and the Lao Statistics Bureau would like to commence data collection in the 2018 wet season, completing data collection in the 2018/2019 dry season. Work needs to start, after the organization of a steering committee, in March 2018 in order to have initial data to publish by October 2019.

Mr. Andrew Bartlett, advisor to the SSWG-Farmers and Agribusiness (FAB) secretariat

Mr. Bartlett provided highlights, 2016 results and 2017 plan for that SSWG. Highlights included a continuous set of SSWG meetings over 10 years, maintenance of two on-line discussion groups and digital libraries (Lao and English), support for the Lao Farmer Network, and initiating dialog on topics such as contract farming, farmer organizations, and farmer debt. Recent work included a study on the cardamom value chain, support for young agripreneurs, with plans for continued work on youth in agriculture, farming bargaining power, and tool development for farmer organization capacity building.

Dr. Bounthong Buahomh, DG of NAFRI, MAF, Chair of the SSWG-Agro-biodiversity (ABD)

Dr. Bounthong presented Highlights that included presentation of the National Agro-Biodiversity Programme II (2016-2025), and its implementation, presentation and discussion of 'Pesticides Use in Lao PDR—opportunities and risks', and promoting agro-ecological practices. Plans for 2017 include discussion of aquatic biodiversity in rice systems and opportunities for NTFP value chains.

Mr. Saisamone Phothisak, DDG, DFRM, MAF, Chair of the SSWG-Forestry (F)

Mr. Saisamone presented highlights of this SSWG that included 25 quarterly meetings since June 2006, with the exception of the recent period of reorganization; contributions to the Forestry Law revised in 2007, a review of the Forestry Strategy 2020 and wood trade data which led to the issuance of the PM Order No. 15 to respond to wide-spread illegal logging, and providing an on-going forum for REDD+ government/DP dialog. Plans for 2017 include following the implementation of the PM Order 15, boundary re-delineation of 3 forest categories, supporting revision of the forest law, and continued dialog on REDD+ and FLEGT.

Mr. Claude Jentgen, Charge d affaires a.i. for the Duchy of Luxembourg

Mr. Jentgen confirmed interest of Luxembourg to serve as the co-chair of the newly proposed SSWG-RD, and to provide support to the Secretariat. Luxembourg has experience in supporting rural development in various sites, with extensive experience in Bolikhamsay. He outlined the three potential focal areas of the SSWG being rural planning, rural finance, and rural infrastructure.

Presentation 2: Agro-biodiversity

Dr. Bounthong Buahom, DG, NAFRI, MAF, Chair of SSWG-ABD.

Dr. Bounthong Buahom presented on two topics: the National AgroBiodiversity Programme—II, and the results of several pesticide use studies and mitigation efforts. The work on pesticides included the following: 1) Report on pesticide regulation and use by DOA, MAF, showing a troubling gap between pesticide policy and law and actual use of pesticides. 2) Review of IPM and farmer field schools, supported by FAO, to improve understanding of integrated (chemical and non-chemical controls) pest control to reduce pesticide use and improve management. 3) A study conducted by LURAS which shows substantial use of pesticides, mostly herbicides, within maize farming in two districts in Xieng Khuang province. Pesticide use has translated into presence of pesticides (not herbicides) in the blood of nearly 700 community members tested. 4) Pesticide risk in commercial banana production: testing of samples from various plantations consistently (over 90% of the samples) found presence of multiple pesticides in samples. *Recommendations* from the SSWG-ABD included, in the short term, encouraging the DP and Gov't to better support education and awareness raising, and enforcement of pesticide regulations. In the long term, the recommendations suggest better analysis facilities, promotion of low- and no-pesticide-use farming systems, development of capacity of extension services, and continued research and study of the negative impacts on communities and farmers of the use of pesticides.

Presentation 3: The need for rural & agriculture finance in Laos

Mr. Visone Saysongkham, Officer at the Financial Institution Supervision Department of the Bank of the Lao PDR

This presentation covered the urgent need for farmers to access finance as they move to greater commercialization of production and the challenge they currently face. Particularly in rural areas of Laos, access to finance is very low, with roughly 45% of the rural population living more than 1 hour away from a bank branch or an ATM. In response, the Bank of Laos encourages the expansion of diverse financial service providers into rural areas. Village banks with support organizations, micro-finance instruments, and even digital financial services form part of the expanding solution for farmers who need to access finance.

Dr. Phouang Parisak thanked the presenters and initiated discussion with a request for the participants to consider the new structure and the workplan as presented by Mr. Xaypladeth. He reviewed the importance of work on reducing pesticide use, particularly addressing why the government cannot just ban the use of illegal pesticides. He explained that the Government has to deliver better services on green agriculture, to inform farmers more about the harm caused by pesticides, and to support farmers struggling to manage their environment. Clean and green value chains are key, as is protecting Agro-Biodiversity, and using this for high-value crops. An example is Khao Khai Noi (Little Chicken Sticky Rice), which is exported to Vietnam and China, but it is challenging to produce sufficient quantity at the high quality demanded by foreign consumers. Coffee exports are also growing in quality and quantity, and face the same challenges.

Regarding bananas, the model pursued in Laos is not promoted by the Chinese government, and it is the lower quality investors that cannot produce in China that come to Laos. So we need to promote better ways of production. TABI, supported by SDC, has been promoting Agro-Biodiversity for nearly 8 years and will now continue for another 4 years. We can see that we need to bring ABD into the debate more and more.

For finance, we can see that it is appropriate to get the banking sector involved to work together with the agriculture sector. Banking institutions can support micro-finance, while agricultural institutions support green production. It remains a challenge to extend coverage throughout the country, to reach areas not yet covered.

The long-established SSWG-Forestry is now returning to the SWG-ARD, with a list of priority responsibilities that is very challenging and represents serious work, including developing the FLEGT programme.

The proposed new SSWG on Rural development comprises 499 “concentration areas”, in 3 main groups, which creates a platform to focus investment on which there is a lot of work to do. The Government is grateful to Luxembourg for its interest in acting as Co-Chair.

With regard to the new SSWG on Food Security and Nutrition, he clarified that the subject areas are not really new, with the name being derived from the SDGs. The Government has a number of policies already that exemplify the multi-sectoral approach that is needed to address this sector. For example, MAF will work with the Bank of Lao for its role in financial services, with EDL to reduce by 50% the cost of electricity for clean farms, with MPI to concentrate investment in areas considered priority, with the Ministry of Science and Technologies on product standards and backup to clean agriculture, with the Ministry of Health on convergent approaches for nutrition.

Dr. Phouang Parisak encouraged comments from the floor for discussion.

Comments and Dialog

Mr. Koen Everaert, representing the EU delegation to the Lao PDR

Provided congratulations on the high level and quality of the meeting and the presentations; commented on the presentation on pesticide as being cause for extreme concern, from the development partners' perspective as well as from the consumers: expressed pleasure that this is topic is so high on the Government's agenda; observed that it is easier to get commodities on the export blacklist than to get them off of it, and the need for Laos to be serious about exports; suggested pesticides should be given an even higher priority in law enforcement and information/education because of the importance of the topic for human and environmental health, and trade; on the proposal for the SSWG-FS&NSA, was firstly pleased to see that the topic area is on the agenda as it is important; noted that the RTIM Pre-Consultation highlighted that the focus should be on the sub-national level to ensure action on the ground and that another central level mechanism may not assist the focus on sub-national; suggested that all other SSWGs (FAB, Forestry, ABD, Rural Development) could include nutrition-related topics on their agenda when it is relevant; noted that a fifth SSWG may dilute participation; concluded by encouraging the incorporation of nutrition within the other SSWGs, and would be very pleased to see this topic kept on the agenda.

Dr. Phouang Parisak response

The Chair considered whether there should be 4 or 5 SSWGs. Related to the area of Food Security and Commercialization of Commodities, he noted that there is a national steering committee with a dozen ministries and several private sector and CSO representatives, which deals with policy at a high level, and which has the support of several development partners such as ADB, IFAD, France, FAO, World Bank. The SSWGs such as the one on Agro-Biodiversity deal mainly at meso- and micro-level, but the Government is proposing a body that would work more at the macro policy level. Whether a fifth SSWG would create too high a workload is something for which he looked for feedback from the partners, because implementation will be a collective effort. He noted that the Government would accept either four or five SSWGs.

Mr. Khampah, Community and Environmental Development Association

Commented on the challenge with pesticides, and suggested that villages have an effective mechanisms, fining (300,000 – 500,000 kip) farmers who use pesticides; suggested that the Government could engage with this, supporting village action; regarding forests, he would like to suggest consideration of farmer cum community reforestation or afforestation efforts, which can be very effective because if a large number of farmers individually have their own, for instance, teak plantations, they protect these. We know have a challenge with water, depending on rain fall is not as consistent as before. If we pay 100,000 or even 70,000 kip per day for irrigation, growing even 5,000 kip / kg little chicken rice will be a loss-maker; thus the proposal for lower irrigation and electric rates for green farming is strongly encouraged. Communication with ethnic-group farmers is difficult, but can be done with more video.

Sisomphone, MPI

Mr. Sisomphone congratulated MAF for taking up in detail the work following up of the RTMs. Requests that MAF share updated TORs for the SSWGs with them as developed.

Martin Hasler, representing SDC in Laos

Provided greetings to the community and congratulations on high quality of presentations and inputs. Expressed that SDC shares the concerns regarding the use of chemicals. Regarding the proposed new

structure: five groups would be a lot of work. Acknowledged that Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture is an extremely important issue and needs a forum for high-level discussion, whether within a SSWG or by making it a cross-cutting theme for discussion in appropriate SSWGs; consideration must also be given to the need for interaction with the other stakeholders, such as with Health, not represented in the SWG-ARD.

Dr. Phouang Parisak responded

The Government has set two national Committees with the first being on Food Security and Commodities, chaired by MAF, focusing on production. But having access to food doesn't mean access to the right food. Secondly there is a Nutrition Committee, chaired by MOH, and MAF is part of the Secretariat. Of 22 nutrition interventions, 4 are for agriculture, 4 for education, 4 cross-cutting, and 10 for health. MAF is coordinating among others. Regarding policy coordination on nutrition, we are working together at the government level, and this is agreed to also be done on the Development Partner side. Agreed that when it comes to implementation and execution, the nutrition agenda is difficult especially at the local level.

Mr. Sukaserm Phutisam, representing Lao Farmers Products (LFP).

Congratulated MAF for holding this excellent, informative meeting. LFP also supports extension for commercial, organic rice to farmers in various locations, and processes fruit juices for export. This is following the policy of the government for green agriculture. Requested more assistance from the government: as a small business, LFP lacks in expertise and investment capital. While pre-order investments can help, this is insufficient. Nited that the "Fair Trade" model provides 1USD support to farmers for their own development for every 1kg of produce sold in Europe.

Margaret Jones-Williams, representing the UNDP-Laos

Reiterated thanks for the quality of the presentations and the significant level of participation in the room. Responded to Dr. Phouang Parisak's call for coordination and harmonization, particularly forestry and cooperation with the SWG-NRE. Suggested joint thematic meetings, on topics such as resilience and climate change and disaster response which sits under the SWG-NRE. Commented that regarding to finance, there is a strong need for climate-related financing, such as insurance for weather-related disasters and slow-onset disasters that reduce yields and viability for farmers. Emphasized the need to support, with FAO and NUDP, implementation of the NABDP-II.

Andrew Bartlett, team leader for the LURAS project

Announced availability for distribution on memory stick, of a video, in both Lao and English, discussing the impact of pesticides.

Ms. Buavanh, representing a CSO working on rattan

Presented the work they have done promoting production, processing, and export of high value rattan projects. She then related the difficulties encountered lately in that quotas, tariffs (100% VAT), and restrictions on harvesting have choked-off private sector capacity to buy for export of rattan products. She commented that this was frustrating because there is strong demand for the product and it is produced in a sustainable way, building forest protection.

Dr. Phouang Parisak responded

He reported that the situation is recognized and it is an unfortunate implementation artifact. He reiterated that the government wants to support SMEs and even micro-enterprises.

Ms. Saeda, Senior representative of JICA, co-chair of the SSWG-F

Recognized the high-quality meeting and appreciated the government's leadership, and iterated that they strive to align with the guidance and mandates within the sector. She requested that MAF disseminate the new organization structure approved under the Prime Minister's Decree 99 by providing the mandates and structure of all the departments, in order to support cooperation and help development partners adapt to the dynamics within.

Dr. Phouang Parisak responded

Notes that a summary of the new department names, as per Decree 99, in Laos and informally translated into English, has been published on LaoFAB.

Conclusions and closing remarks

Dr. Stephen Rudgard

Expressed appreciation for the responses regarding the quality of the presentations. In the context of the restructuring of the SSWG, noted that no comments had been made regarding the rejoining of Forestry and the creation of Rural Development, but that questions were raised over the need for the SSWG on FS&NSA and no interventions had supported its creation. In order to consider the various suggestions and comments, suggested a more detailed dialog among the Development Partners to propose a new resolution to the Chair and Secretariat.

Mr. Matthieu Bommier, representing the Co-Chair

Thanked FAO for supporting the SWG-ARD meeting, and appreciated the cooperation in the first joint France-FAO co-chairing of the meeting. There is a significant list of follow-up actions arising from the RTM process, which explains why the question of the number of SSWGs has come and explains also the impressive participation in the SWG. Noted that the issue of pesticide use is a major concern and that AFD, as other DPs, is keen to promote good practices but should also combat bad practices. Acknowledged the push for better quality rather than quantity with such products as tea, coffee, and NTFP, expressing AFD's intention to expand its programme to embrace tea. As a financial institution, stated that AFD would be very happy to discuss with BOL and other private banks regarding future collaboration.

Dr. Phouang Parisak summarized and closed the meeting

Food security is a must for the government to address, as is agro-biodiversity. Requested Dr. Stephen Rudgard to sit with the Development Partners and then circulate a short concept note for comment and agreement on the way forward on addressing the topics within the SWG-ARD structure.

Regarding pesticides, the specific problem is not bananas in themselves, but how the crop is managed. The growers must be persuaded to use less toxic legal pesticides in appropriate quantities. Farmers will ask, 'if you don't want me to use this one, please tell me what I can do to control pests'. It is a shared responsibility of the Government and the development partners to support solutions for farmers, not just to point to the problems.

In respects to restructuring of MAF, the Decree Number 99 can be shared. MAF has increased in size. Rural development is a major addition to the responsibilities of MAF, but it is not reflected in the Ministry's name for administrative reasons. MAF now has a new Department of Policy and Legal Affairs. The Government has

a national think tank on policy, and MAF has been asked to develop such a function as well, based on the current PTT but strengthened so that it can efficiently develop policies for the leadership to consider and endorse. Most new projects have a policy component, which is appreciated, but MAF requests more support for building the PTT.

MAF is formulating the mandates for the 14 departments and for the PAFO and the DAFO, FAO is supporting formulation of the mandate for the Department of Policy and Legal Affairs.

The SSWG-F can help with the mandate for the forestry sector. Forestry has been a particular challenge at the local, not the national level, in terms of securing participation from farmers. The forestry agenda has many items, and will keep SSWG-F very busy.

Rural development merging with MAF is also an important development. For this new SSWG, the Department of Rural Development will be the Chair and called for the SWG stakeholders to elect Luxembourg as the Co-Chair – which was then agreed by acclamation.

MPI has made it clear that there is substantial work at the SSWG level. The meetings are the formal expression of this work, but these are the reporting formats for the more substantial work that takes place outside. Some SSWGs also sponsor seminars and other events to present outputs such as reports and policy issues critical to development work. MAF encourages Development Partners to be as active as possible at the SSWG level.

The Chair thanked everyone being here for this meeting, comprising a very rich audience, and announced his best wishes for the Lao New Year and a happy and productive new year. The Chair announced that the meeting was closed.

Outcomes and Agreements of the meeting

- 1) The SWG structure as proposed is approved, with the exception of the SSWG-FS&NSA. Development partners will dialogue further to develop a proposal for filling the functions envisioned for that SSWG on food security and nutrition sensitive agriculture, given the expressions of support that they needed to be addressed.
- 2) The Secretariats of the four SSWGs will closely examine the RTM work plan as suggested by the SWG Secretariat and respond within one month to the proposed allocations of responsibilities. Once they have indicated acceptance, the SSWGs will be responsible for following up and reporting on the various points.
- 3) The irresponsible use of pesticides is a troubling development in the agriculture sector that will require continued cooperation among the stakeholders to develop viable solutions, and the recommendations for action brought forward from the SSWG-ABD were approved.
- 4) Rural finance is an important contemporary topic and will only increase in importance as the agriculture sector commercializes; addressing this topic will require cross-sector cooperation, particularly between agriculture and finance.
- 5) The approach for addressing nutrition challenges in Laos, as described in the National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action, is a convergent one and MAF is fully engaged in this, and encourages all parties to do so as well, with as much coordination as possible.

Annex 1: Meeting agenda

Date: 28th March 2017

Time-duration: 08:30 to 12:00

Venue: Crowne Plaza Vientiane Hotel, 20 Samsenthai Road, Nongduang Nue Village, Sikhottabong District, Vientiane

Time	Topics	Speakers
08.15 – 08.30	Arrival, registration	SWG-ARD Secretariat's (DoPF / DIC)
08.30 – 08.35	Introduction, objectives, agenda	<u>MC:</u> Mr Phanisone Samontry, DIC DoPF MAF
08.35 – 08.50	Opening remarks by the chair of the SWG-ARD Opening remarks by the co-chairs of the SWG-ARD	<u>Chair:</u> MAF Deputy Minister: H.E. Dr. Phouang Parisak Pravongviengkham <u>Co-chairs:</u> French Ambassador: H.E. Mme Claudine Ledoux FAO Country Representative: Dr. Stephen Rudgard
08.50 – 09.25	Presentation 1: SWG-ARD Secretariat - Various ⇒ SWG-ARD revised structure and cooperation arrangements ⇒ Summary of the Round Table decision result frame work and work plan ⇒ Special update on efforts to reduce the impact of the locust outbreak	Mr. Xaypladeth Choulamany, Director General, DoPF, MAF
	⇒ Update on Lao Census of Agriculture (LCA) ⇒ Update on Sub-Sector Working Group on Farmer and Agri-business ⇒ Update on Sub-Sector Working Group on Agro-biodiversity ⇒ Update on Sub-Sector Working Group on Forestry ⇒ Update on Sub-Sector Working Group on Rural Development	Mr. Savanh Hanephom DDG of DoPF, MAF Mr. Andrew Bartlett Advisor to SSWG-FAB Dr. Bounthong Buahomh DG NAFRI, MAF Mr. Saisamone Phothisak, DDG DFRM, MAF Mr Claude Jentgen, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Luxembourg Embassy to Lao PDR
09.25 – 09.45	Presentation 2: Agro-biodiversity ⇒ National meeting on pesticide ⇒ National agro-biodiversity Plan II	Dr. Bounthong Buahomh, Director General, NAFRI, MAF
09.45 – 10.15	- Questions / Remarks/ Recommendations	All members and participants
10.15 – 10.30	Coffee break	
10.30 – 11.00	Presentation 3: Rural Finance 'The need for rural and agriculture finance in Laos'	Mr. Visone Saysongkham, Deputy Director General of Financial Institution Supervision Department, Bank of Lao PDR
11.00 – 11.50	- Questions / Remarks / Recommendations	All members and participants
11.50 – 12.00	- Closing remarks	Chair and co-chairs

12.00 – 13.30

Lunch

Annex 2: List of Participants

** Sorted in alphabetical order*

To be updated in the next version

Annex 3: SWG-ARD Structure, March 2017 – still need to be updated, as now proposed to have 5 SSWGs (tentatively approved 4 SSWGs).

