



REVITALIZING AGRICULTURE IN DROUGHT ZONES OF LAOS:

The success of Soil, Water and Nutrient Management (SWNM)

In Laos, subsistence agriculture is still the primary economic activity of a majority of the national labour force. In the drought-prone areas of the country, local farmers face a critical challenge: the degradation of soil and scarcity of water severely limit their agricultural production, leading to low yields and reduced incomes. These harsh conditions lead many young farmers to leave their rural homes and migrate in urban areas or abroad for opportunities, threatening the sustainability of local agriculture but also straining community bonds.

Working with communities in the most vulnerable areas

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Laos, with the supported from Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF), implemented a transformative project from April 2021- January 2024 focused on improving soil, water, and nutrient management (SWNM) to revitalize agriculture in these tough terrains.

The project was implemented in 12 villages across six districts in three provinces, directly involving about 30 farm households. The project's objective is to educate and empower these farmers with the knowledge and tools necessary for sustainable farming practices.



VEGETABLE SELLING IN CHAMPASACK PROVINCE



Our goal

- Mastering of best agricultural practices in soil, water, and nutrient management;
- Boosting in farm productivity and higher incomes;
- Ensuring food security and economic sustainability;
- Fostering greater community cohesion and resilience.

Solutions brought to life and impact

Enhanced economic well-being of individual farmers & strengthened agricultural sustainability of communities across rural Laos

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Farmers in three provinces of Laos (Savannakhet, Saravane, and Champasack) were introduced several innovative strategies to manage agricultural resources more effectively. After meeting and interviewing them to assess their difficulties and needs, various on-field technical supports and theory trainings were successfully delivered.

They learned to enhance their land's fertility and conserve water by using simple yet effective techniques, such as water retention systems, composting and diversified cropping.



FERTILIZER APPLICATION IN OUTHUMPHONE DISTRICT


The real measure of the project's success is seen in the lives it has changed.

Participating Lao farmers have seen their agricultural yields significantly increase since joining the SWNM project in 2021:

- **Mr. Song**, who manages 1.7 hectares of rice, sweet corn, vegetables, bananas, and fish cultures in Savannakhet Province, saw his income rise from 17,000,000 LAK to 56,000,000 LAK by 2023.
- **Mr. Somvang** elevated the income from his 2.9 hectares of farmland in Champasack Province from 25,500,000 LAK to 115,000,000 LAK during the same period of time.



By focusing on accessible agricultural improvements and providing the right support, the SWNM project not only enhances the economic status of individual farmers but also bolsters the agricultural sustainability of entire communities in rural Laos.

 Ultimately, the ongoing support and expansion of similar initiatives are crucial for ensuring that vulnerable populations are prepared to face emerging environmental issues and equipped to secure a prosperous and sustainable future.