

Mekong Expert Group on Agroforestry for Food and Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Land Restoration

BACKGROUND

The Mekong Expert Group on Agroforestry for Food and Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Land Restoration was formed in early 2018 with support from the Swedish Agriculture Network Initiative (SIANI) to help address major land-use challenges in the region. The SIANI support ended in December 2018 but the Group continues, facilitated in the meantime by World Agroforestry (ICRAF) Southeast Asia.

In most of Southeast Asia, agriculture and forestry are managed separately, which has been shown to exacerbate poverty, food insecurity and marginalization. Agroforestry is increasingly seen as the bridge between the two domains. It was specifically included in the *Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry*, which states under Strategic Thrust 4: Increase resilience to climate change, natural disasters and other shocks: 4.5 Expand resilient agroforestry systems where ecologically and economically appropriate.

ASEAN has put climate change as a priority with alignment of forestry, agriculture, food security and climate change seen as critical to fight negative impacts. ASEAN has recognized the role that agroforestry can play in facing the challenges, both in adaptation and mitigation. Agroforestry can be effectively deployed on degraded forest land and in restoration and agroforestation of degraded agricultural landscapes to increase carbon stocks and farmers' resilience. What is needed to maximize agroforestry's economic and environmental benefits is a coordinated approach to reducing barriers in policy and implementation.

Against this backdrop, the formation of the Mekong Expert Group was timely in bringing stakeholders together, with a focus on ensuring the active involvement of the 'least-developed' countries in the Mekong Region.



Mekong Expert Group members at the inception workshop in Bangkok.
Photo: RECOFTC The Center for People and Forests

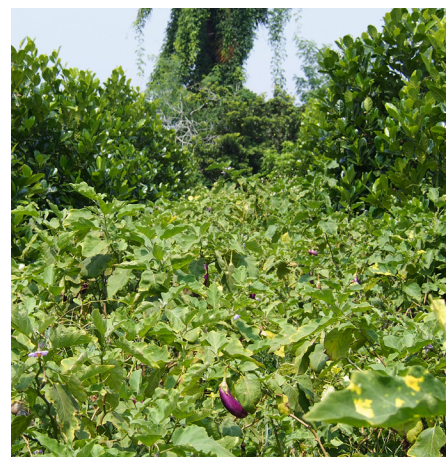
AIM

The aim of the Group is to support the wider adoption of agroforestry for food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and land restoration in ASEAN Member States. The main strategy has been to bring together experts from many of the Member States, with a particular focus on Cambodia, Myanmar and Viet Nam owing to those countries' demonstrated commitment and frequently expressed requests for support, especially with building capacity.

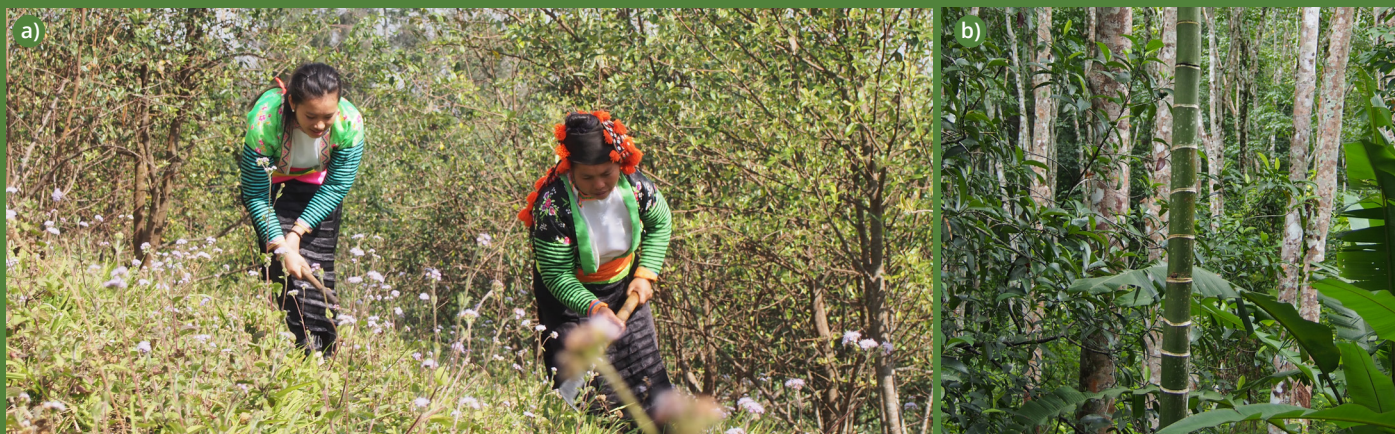
IMPACT

- Members of the Group have supported the progress of the *ASEAN Guidelines for Agroforestry Development*, most notably at an inception meeting in Bangkok in January 2018 and at a working conference organized by members in Da Nang, Viet Nam preceding the annual meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry and the steering committee meeting of the ASEAN Multi-sectoral Framework on Climate Change and Food Security, in which members also participated. Members provided their expert input to discussions on implementation of the *Guidelines* in ASEAN Member States. The Group

was specifically thanked in the Foreword and Acknowledgments of the *Guidelines*, which were ratified at the 21st Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials of Forestry in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 12 July 2018 and endorsed at the 40th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 8–12 October 2018. The Ministers Meeting declared that, "We endorsed the *ASEAN Guidelines for Agroforestry Development* to promote the role of agroforestry in simultaneously achieving economic, environmental and social outcomes at farm, household and landscape levels and help ASEAN Member States achieve their targets related



Citrus and crop system in Lao PDR.
Photo: World Agroforestry/Robert Finlayson



a) H'mong farmers in Dien Bien Province, Viet Nam in their fodder grass and 'son tra' agroforestry system. b) 'Jungle' rubber system, southern Thailand. Photos: World Agroforestry/Robert Finlayson

to food security, sustainable growth, reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions, land restoration, watershed protection, gender equality, social/community forestry, climate-change adaptation and mitigation and, more generally, the Sustainable Development Goals."

- Member states, with support from Mekong Group members, have already begun working on implementation of the *Guidelines*, particularly, Cambodia and Myanmar, which are establishing 'road maps' for agroforestry development.
- The ASEAN Senior Officials of Forestry commissioned a training of trainers in agroforestry curriculum and an agroforestry practitioners' field guide, developed by Group members.
- The ASEAN Secretariat has requested a template for 'road maps for agroforestry development' for Member States, also being developed by Group members.
- Group members have also supported the national working group on agroforestry in Viet Nam, particularly, focusing on agroforestry's contributions to the country's nationally determined contributions to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- The Philippines has also initiated a process to develop a national agroforestry policy or similar

guiding document, inspired by Mekong Group membership.

MEMBERS (AS OF DECEMBER 2018)

Aaron Russell (Green Growth Institute, Myanmar), Andrew Noble (Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia), Anja Gassner (World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) Philippines), Bao Huy (agroforestry consultant, Viet Nam), Chawapich Vaidhayakarn, Daniel Jongejan (Purprojet), David Gritten (RECOFTC The Center for People and Forests), Delia C. Catacutan (ICRAF Southeast Asia), Dian Sukmajaya (ASEAN Secretariat), Doris Capistrano (senior advisor, ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change), Ei Ei Swe Hliang (Forestry Research Institute, Myanmar) Elisabeth Simelton (ICRAF Viet Nam), Florian Reimer (Purprojet), Göran Bergkvist (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)), Htet Zaw Htun (agriculturist, Myanmar), Horst Weyerhaeuser (agroforestry consultant, Thailand), Justine Sylvester (Village Focus), Kamphone Mounlamai, Karoline Kan, Kim Soben (Royal University of Agriculture, Cambodia), Kristina Downey, Kristofer Karlsson (WeEffect), La Nguyen (ICRAF Viet Nam), Long Ratanakoma (Directorate of Community Forestry, Cambodia), Mai Van Trinh (Institute for Agricultural Environment, Viet Nam), Maria Estrella A. Penunia (Asian Farmers Federation), Nathsuda (Mahidol University, Thailand), Niall O'Connor (SEI Asia), Ngo The An (Viet Nam University of Agriculture), Nguyen Tien Hai (ICRAF Viet Nam), Nguyen Van Bo (Policy Advisory Council, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, Viet Nam), Ohnmar Khaing (consultant, Myanmar), Peter Mortimer (Kunming

Institute of Botany), Robert Finlayson (ICRAF Southeast Asia), Ronnakorn Triraganon (RECOFTC), Sararin Phaengam (RECOFTC), Sengphachanh Sonethavixay (Policy Think Tank, National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute, Lao PDR), Sigrun Dahlin (SLU), Somvang Phimmavong (Faculty of Forest Science, National University of Lao), Stepha McMullin (ICRAF Kenya), Srichai Saengcharnchai (RECOFTC), Su Yufang (ICRAF East and Central Asia), Thomas Hofer (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO)), Tran Minh Tien (Soils and Fertilizers Research Institute, Viet Nam), Trinh Thang Long (International Bamboo and Rattan Organization), Yurdi Yasmi (FAO), Zam Deih Khual (Sustainable Development Knowledge Network, Myanmar).

Senior advisor: Ingrid Öborn (SLU and ICRAF Southeast Asia)

SELECTED STORIES

- [Rooting agroforestry in the Mekong Region](#) (17.11.2017)
- [Mekong Group grows support for agroforestry in ASEAN](#) (05.02.2018)
- [ASEAN is rising to the climate-change challenge facing agriculture and forestry](#) (09.02.2018)

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