

Highlight on farmers, agribusiness and rural development in Laos



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## NEWS DIGEST #22 May 30, 2022

### Lao PDR news

#### Forestry ministry targets planting of 35 million trees this year

VT Times, May 26, 2022.

Lao authorities plan to have at least 35 million saplings ready for planting on 36,950 hectares of land this year, as part of efforts to create more green areas and achieve forest cover of 70 percent by 2025.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which is preparing to mark National Arbour Day on June 1, said the land set aside for tree planting includes 5,500 hectares of protected forest and replanting in areas that have been denuded because of construction.

Another 27,500 hectares have been reserved for commercial tree plantations within forest production areas, while more trees will be planted on 3,590 hectares of public land.

The ministry is encouraging people to plant one or two trees per plot of vacant land, as well as along border walls and fences, in gardens, on building sites and roadsides, and around schools and offices.

Much more wood is needed by the timber industry, with 1,500,000 tonnes of wood felled from managed plantations required each year.

To mark National Arbour Day next week, forestry authorities will partner with provincial education and sports departments to encourage schools, colleges and other institutions to plant trees, especially in public parks and along roadsides.

These activities are becoming increasingly important on the road to achieving the government's forest cover target, as well as mitigating the effects of climate change and protecting biodiversity. The ministry has called on all sectors to participate in preparing trees for planting to achieve National Arbour Day targets.

The event aims to build awareness among the public, especially among young people of all ethnic groups, of the importance of planting trees to reduce the impacts of climate change, which directly people's way of life.

During the five years from 2021-2025, the Ministry of Agriculture and

Forestry issued an order to promote forestation and the restoration of natural forests, setting a target of 200,000 hectares to be forested.

The order also called for commercial tree species to be planted on 160,000 hectares of land, while more trees are to be planted on 40,000 hectares to protect water resources and the environment.

Another target is to restore 1,800,000 hectares of degraded natural forests across the country.

## **Luang Namtha SEZ attracts 260 investor companies**

VT Times, May 26, 2022.

The Boten Special Economic Zone in Luang Namtha province has attracted 260 companies to invest in the area, with registered capital of nearly 677 billion kip. Some 1,131 hectares of forest have been cleared to make way for the new companies and their facilities.

The cleared area will be divided into three zones – economic, trading and international finance – covering 266 hectares.

In addition, cultural and tourism activities including public health and education will cover nearly 733 hectares, while warehouses, a distribution and logistics area and processing industries will cover nearly 733 hectares, according to the Pasaxon newspaper.

The developments at the Boten SEZ, otherwise known as “Boten Beautiful Land”, are among the largest infrastructure investments in Laos.

The government first designated the area a Special Economic Zone in 2003 after which it was used to operate a casino from 2007 to 2011. Boten was shut and much of the population vacated the zone.

With China’s Belt and Road Initiative and the opening of the Laos China Railway, Boten’s strategic location has been seized on as an investment opportunity. Under a new Chinese developer, the SEZ is currently being refashioned into an urban and tourism centre, as well as a trade and logistics hub.

Boten is located in Luang Namtha province across the border from Mohan in Yunnan province, China. A border and frontier area, Boten has undergone dramatic changes over the past two decades. It has evolved from a remote border crossing to an active construction site and city-in-the-making.

<https://www.vientianetimes.org...>

## **Agro Innovation Market Fair launched**

KPL, May 30, 2022.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) opened on May 30 a four-day agriculture innovation fair that will also include a series of panel discussions and presentations.

With agricultural innovation having huge potential in the Lao PDR to increase farmers’ incomes, improve food and nutrition security and allow for sustainable management of natural resources, the aim of the event is to provide a

platform to highlight and exchange ideas and facilitate partnership between investors and policy makers.

More than 50 agriculture producers from throughout Laos have been invited to display and sell their agriculture products at the market fair.

Scheduled for May 30–Jun 2, the market fair constitutes a valuable opportunity to bring farmers' groups and associations, smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs closer to consumers.

The fair will have booths where agricultural innovations, products and services can be showcased and allow for discussion around potential collaborations and the public is welcome to attend.

The fair will also host a series of presentations and panel discussions with a focus to be placed on research and development in agriculture innovation and capacity development.

The first discussion includes panelists representing a number of government departments, the private sector and farmers' organizations to share views and discuss ways to improve agricultural innovation in the Lao PDR.

The second presentation aims to provide young farmers, researchers, students and entrepreneurs an opportunity to outline their stories and challenges in agricultural innovation to policymakers. A student debate and contest on 'Our vision for agricultural innovation' is also a highlight of this activity.

NAFRI will also chair a seminar presenting research reports on agriculture, forestry and rural development.

<http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.as...>

## **National Dialogue on Business Development to Accelerate COVID-19 Recovery Held in Laos**

KPL, May 25, 2022.

The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), organized a national dialogue on improving the business environment on May 23 in Vientiane.

"Robust dialogue among all stakeholders at the national and subnational levels is important as it provides essential insights on improving the business environment," said Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce Manothong Vongsay. "This dialogue can help boost the introduction and growth of productive enterprises, and in so doing accelerate the Lao PDR's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic."

The national dialogue discussed issues affecting private sector enterprises, including the regulatory environment, and identified potential solutions and areas for improvement. It underscored the importance of reforms by the government, such as those implemented through Prime Minister Order No. 02 of 2018 on improving business registration by providing tax identification numbers and enterprise registration certificates at the same time. The implementation of these reforms by subnational governments has reduced the cost and processing time of business registration by one-third and should be used as a building block for further initiatives.

“It is crucial to have sound mechanisms in place to ensure quality dialogue between the public and private sectors as this leads to agile policy formulation and quality programme implementation,” said ADB Country Director for the Lao PDR Sonomi Tanaka. “It also enhances transparency by allowing a space for stakeholders to share their concerns. ADB looks forward to continuing to support the government’s private sector and enterprise development through policy dialogue and knowledge operations.”

The joint LNCCI–ADB report was launched on Mar 31 with support from the People’s Republic of China Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund.

It focuses on six key areas: ease of starting a business, transparency and access to information, regulatory burdens, informal charges, consistency in policy implementation, and business friendliness of provincial administrations.

The report recommends the reduction and simplification of regulatory requirements to make company registration easier, improve transparency, and remove informal charges levied on enterprises.

A companion LNCCI–ADB report finds that women-led enterprises in the Lao PDR face greater challenges in accessing business-critical information.

About 30% of businesses run by women report to have access to procedures and forms for coordination with the government or access to information on public procurement opportunities. The report urges the government to train staff to overcome hidden gender biases and make it easier for women to create and run businesses.

The national dialogue was co-chaired by Dr. Vongsay, LNCCI President Oudet Souvannavong, and ADB Director General for Southeast Asia Ramesh Subramaniam.

About 150 participants from the public and private sectors as well as development partners joined the dialogue in person and online.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.

<http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.as...>

## CLMVT news

### **Company aims to increase yields, profit of cassava through partnership with local farmers**

Khmer Times, May 30, 2022.

A cassava company is aiming to increase its yields and profits through appealing to local farmers and people to cooperate and participate in the cultivation of the root crop, as well as purchasing cassava from farmers.

HLH Agriculture (Cambodia) Co., Ltd aims to work with the local people in Oral District, Kampong Speu to boost production and yield of the district’s cassava crops, as well as export it to domestic and foreign market.

The company spoke with local news on May 28 that the company has invested in 10,000 hectares of land along with a fresh cassava processing plant and has already planted cassava on more than 50 percent of the total area, so the company intends to find additional partners to expand cultivation.

People who want to try their hands at planting cassava on the company's land but lack the know-how and technical abilities will be assisted by a technical team. Partners will also be allowed to plant other crops.

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/5..>

## Hanoi builds safe agricultural production areas

Hanoi's agricultural sector has strengthened safe agricultural areas to ensure sustainable production and provide a source of clean food for domestic and foreign consumers living in the capital city.

VNA, May 28, 2022.

Hanoi's **agricultural sector** has strengthened safe agricultural areas to ensure sustainable production and provide a source of **clean food** for domestic and foreign consumers living in the capital city.

Nguyen Giap Dong, head of the Ba Vi District Economic Division, said that the district currently maintained a safe tea production area spanning 1,550ha and productivity of 10.5 tonnes per hectare per year. The output for the whole year is estimated at 16,275 tonnes of fresh buds, worth 350 million VND (14,900 USD) per hectare per year.

To help farmers maintain and expand safe production areas, Ba Vi district has supported and created favourable conditions for localities to innovate technology, ensure raw material sources and well manage tea quality.

It builds trademarks, product brands protected by intellectual property; builds good models of safe tea production and processing following Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practises (VietGAP) process.

Thanks to that, the district has successfully built the Ba Vi tea brand.

In Dong Anh District, Nguyen Anh Dung, deputy chairman of the district People's Committee, said that the district had 1,180ha of vegetable production area including more than 500ha of large-scale safe vegetable production.

To control safe vegetable products' quality, the district has promoted education to raise people's awareness about limiting pesticides. As the result, the amount of pesticides decreased by about 15 percent compared to previous years. Farmers have learned to use organic fertilisers, herbs and ensure food safety.

Regarding Hanoi's plans for safe agricultural production areas, Nguyen Thi Thu Hang, director of the Hanoi Sub-department of Agricultural, Forestry and Fisheries Quality Management, said that the whole city currently maintained over 5,000ha of safe vegetables areas including 43 vegetable planting models applying the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) with a total area of 1,700ha.

Hanoi also maintains more than 1,300ha of vegetables, fruits and tea according to VietGAP standards, 181ha of aquaculture in the direction of **VietGAP**, 88 livestock centres applying VietGAP standards and nearly 50ha of farms following organic agriculture standards.

Besides, **Hanoi** continues to develop 141 chains of safe agricultural products manufacture and consumption.

Safety-oriented production not only helps farmers sell at prices which are 10-15 percent higher than traditional products, but also helps sectors manage quality of products sold on the market.

To create sources of clean and safe food from large-scale production areas, Nguyen Manh Hong, director of the Duc Phat Hi-tech Agriculture Cooperative in Yen My commune, Thanh Tri district, said that Hanoi needed to invest in infrastructure in collective production areas, support cooperatives and enterprises in capital with preferential interest rates when building safe production farms.

<https://en.vietnamplus.vn/hano...>

## **Vietnam looks set to boost fruit exports to US**

thestar, May 30, 2022.

Vietnam has great potential to increase fruit exports to the US in the future, said Hoàng Trung, director of the Plant Protection Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

During Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính's trip to the US in early May, Vietnamese businesses accompanying the Prime Minister met US companies, and the two sides signed many fruit export contracts to the US market, according to Trung.

Accordingly, besides fresh fruit, exports of some frozen fruit products, such as frozen durian and many other kinds of fruit are expected to increase strongly to the US.

In addition, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Lê Minh Hoan and the US Secretary of Agriculture agreed on solutions to remove technical barriers to promoting the export of Vietnamese agricultural products to the US.

These two facilities have a total irradiation capacity of 30,000 tonnes per year. This will be a favourable condition for enterprises to export Vietnamese fresh fruit to the US market.

"According to the contract signed with the US partner, in September 2022, the first batch of fresh fruit will be irradiated to export to the US," said Vương Đình Khoát, chairman of Toàn Phát Irradiation Co. Ltd.

Khoát said the company had invested US\$10 million to build a new fruit irradiation factory in Long An. The factory has an annual irradiation capacity of 10,000 tonnes. Besides that, the company also had created cold storage with a capacity of 10,000 tonnes in the factory to meet customer demands.

Currently, Vietnam's fresh fruit exports to the US are limited due to high logistics costs, including marine and air transport costs, leading to high costs in exporting fresh Vietnamese fruit to the US.

"If the transport costs drop to the previous level or 10-20 per cent higher than the previous level, the purchasing power of the US market will increase much more," said Khoát.

Ngô Tường Vy, deputy director of Chánh Thu Fruit Import-Export Co, Ltd in Bến Tre Province, said that having more irradiation facilities for fresh fruits exported to the US will create more favourable conditions for businesses exporting fruits to the US.

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