e-Commerce by Farmers and Agripreneurs in Lao PDR

Credit Helvetas/Simon cote

The Lao Uplands Rural Advisory Service (LURAS) is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Government of Laos, implemented by Helvetas in partnership with the Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives (DAEC).

Version: November 2025 © 2025 Helvetas

Address: House No. 143, Ban Phonthan Neua, Unit 15 Rue Phonthan, Vientiane, Laos PDR

Consultant: EDC

Suggested citation:

EDC (2025). e-Commerce by Farmers and Agripreneurs in Lao PDR (a snapshot). *LURAS, Helvetas Laos Policy study,* Vientiane.

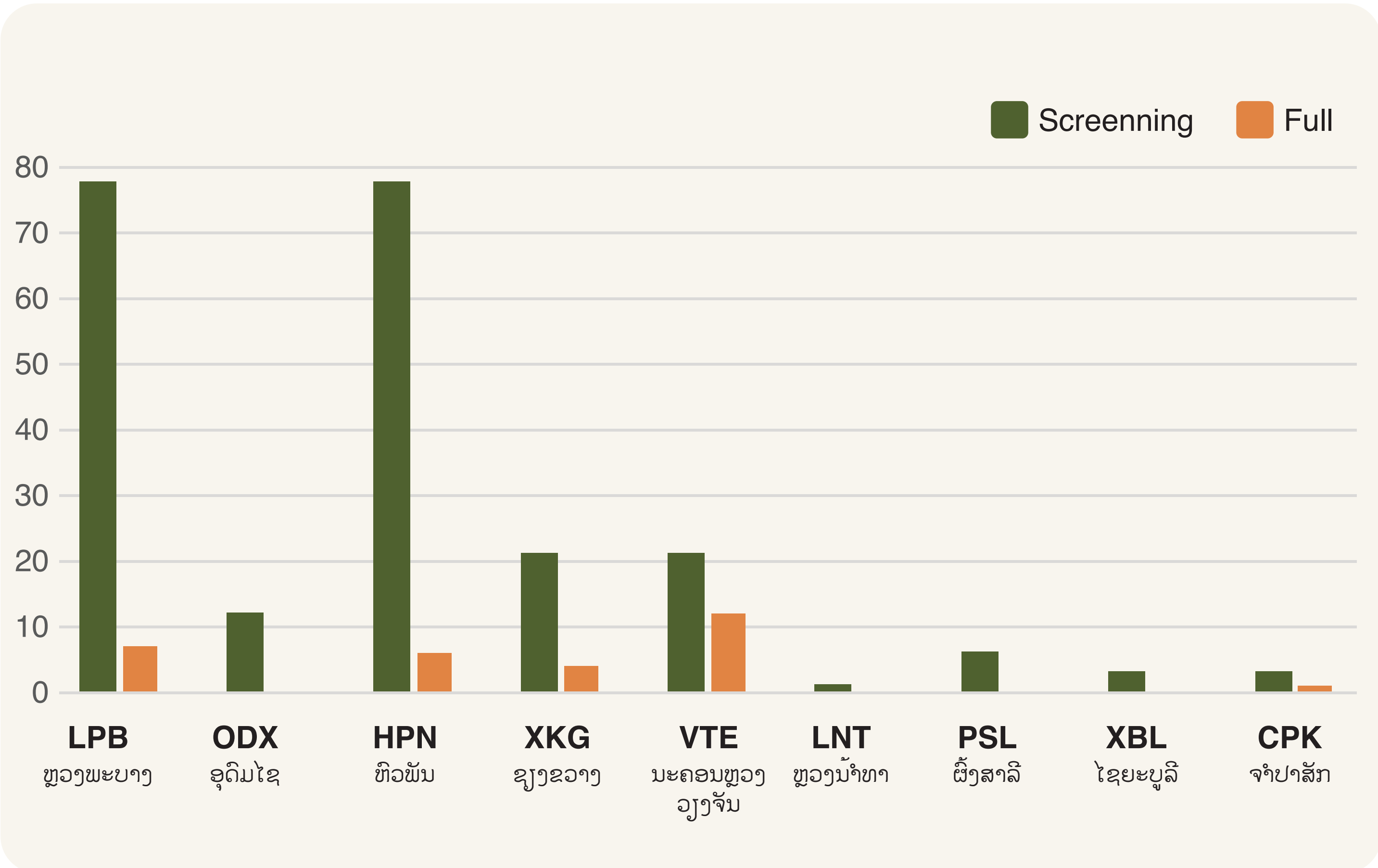
Table of contents

1 Introduction

Laos PDR's domestic e-commerce has grown substantially with food delivery and logistics company services expanding during the COVID-19 pandemic, and market access for small agripreneurs increasing. With no existing data on this emerging sector, LURAS commissioned a qualitative survey of agrifood e-commerce in Laos to identify: the addressable market; high potential products; a typology of online agripreneurs; and best practices. The survey was designed to provide quick win recommendations for agripreneurs seeking to increase their revenues, with a focus on the four Northern provinces in which LURAS is active.

The study comprises a desk review of existing research on Laos's e-commerce and digital economy applicable to farming agrifood processing. Key stakeholders were interviewed, including donors, Government, and support service providers. The study team identified agrifood e-commerce innovators, among the young agripreneurs supported by LURAS and Laos Farmers Association (LFA) members. These interviews were complemented by external referrals and additional research, covering a wide array of potential value chains. The team conducted 223 screening interviews (see Figure 1 below). The 30 respondents most engaged in e-commerce participated in structured remote 'deep dive' interviews. The team further conducted an on-site visit in the Luang Prabang city area and in Huaphan province.

Figure 1: Respondents of screening and full interviews by province



2 Main Findings and Recommendations

Main Findings

This study considered ‘e-commerce’ as when at least one of the steps of a sale is conducted online: promotion; terms of transaction; payment; packing and delivery; and aftersales. It confirms that e-commerce offers strong potential for certain agricultural products in Laos. High-value items such as tea, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), vegetables, fruits, and processed foods stand out as the most promising for online sales through platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp. In contrast, commodities with well-established supply chains—such as rice, maize, and cassava—are less suited to e-commerce because they rely on traditional bulk trading systems.

Agripreneurs can extract better value for high-quality niche produce, sell intermittent production batches, and, very importantly, diversify their sales outlets to become less dependent on middlemen at the farmgate. No upfront investment is needed, just a smartphone with a good internet connection, a mobile-banking app to receive QR code payments, and time to spend online.

In particular e-commerce can:	
	• Expand and improve efficiency to traditional sales channels like marketplaces • Link to buyers to a wider geographic region • Facilitate resupply orders

Agrifood e-commerce involves both Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumers (B2C). Online sourcing of produce, especially organic, for specialized agricultural inputs and equipment is common in B2B.

Agrifood e-commerce is mostly practiced by women, reflecting a traditional gender division of labor in the household, with men producing and women selling. The women who conduct most e-commerce, almost have been in business longer and their sales experience has been transferable to online opportunities.

Agripreneurs engaging in e-commerce fall broadly into two categories. Opportunists use online channels sporadically, mainly for business-to-consumer (B2C) sales, often as a complement to traditional markets. Activists, on the other hand, have integrated e-commerce into their business model and actively combine B2C and business-to-business (B2B) channels to expand their reach.

Interestingly, e-commerce is most commonly practiced by women with longer experience in business. Their prior knowledge of traditional sales channels gives them an advantage in adapting to online platforms. Entry barriers are low —most agripreneurs already own smartphones and have bank accounts for QR code payments. However, gaps remain in essential skills such as packaging, marketing, and customer service.

Despite the opportunities, several challenges persist. Logistics companies do not provide cold-chain services, and delivery times are inconsistent, making it difficult to guarantee product quality. After-sales service is rare, and domestic e-commerce platforms like BCEL OneX, and LFN Mart remain underutilized due to limited visibility and technical constraints. Requests for support from interviewees were few and scattered, focusing mainly on production issues such as irrigation and input costs rather than digital skills. Marketing and certification were rarely mentioned.

Beyond social media, platforms such as LFN Mart offer promising opportunities for agripreneurs to connect directly with buyers and reduce reliance on costly intermediaries. By improving market transparency and facilitating matchmaking between farmers and traders, LFN Mart could become an important tool for scaling e-commerce in Laos.

Recommendations

To unlock the potential of e-commerce for agripreneurs, the following actions are recommended to support the agripreneurs with improving their e-commerce activities:

01 Screen and train motivated Agripreneurs; develop a scorecard to identify candidates willing to invest time in e-commerce. Provide practical, modular training across six key dimensions: product and packaging, promotion, terms of sale, payment systems, delivery, and after-sales service.

02 Support Opportunists to scale, through hands-on coaching and monitoring over six months, including real transactions, to help opportunists move beyond sporadic online sales.

03 Assist Activists with advanced needs, through tailored consulting services, certification pathways (GAP, GHP, OA), and performance-based agreements to strengthen their business models.

04 Invest in Infrastructure only when buyer commitment exists. Avoid short-lived platforms based on voluntary data entry. Focus instead on solutions backed by committed buyers and strong market demand.

05 Leverage Strategic Partnerships: collaborate with banks (BCEL, ACLEDA), logistics firms, and actively promote the use of LFN Mart for farmer-to-buyer connections. For products with long shelf life, such as tea, explore consignment models through trusted platforms.

Conclusion

e-commerce represents a significant opportunity for Lao farmers and agripreneurs to diversify markets and increase revenues with minimal upfront investment. Success, however, will depend on targeted capacity building, improved logistics, and strategic partnerships rather than large-scale infrastructure projects. By combining practical training with innovative platforms like LFN Mart, Laos can accelerate the adoption of e-commerce and create new pathways for rural economic growth.

Figure 2: The 'honest marketplace' ຮ້ານຄ້າຄົນຈິງໃຈ *in the Ministry of Industry & Commerce hall epitomizes the nature of e-commerce in Laos: disintermediated, trust bias, pervasive QR code payments. All products on sale are agrifood.*

3 Unabated Growth of e-commerce, Opportunity for Agripreneurs

3.1 Regional trend

e-commerce in the ASEAN region is increasing on the back of colossal investments by e-Commerce global giant Alibaba (parent company of regional brands like Lazada which operate in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam). It's been recently challenged by American blank-cheque companies fueled by US private equity, e.g. the Grab ride app which has received a total of $10.6 bn equity investment and is listed on the NASDAQ since December 2021. Started in Malaysia Grab now operates throughout ASEAN countries, except Laos,

As a result of massive investments, particularly in marketing and promotion sales, Laos's neighboring countries have experienced great displacement of sales from brick & mortar retail (commercial malls and megastores) to domestic e-commerce. In Thailand, 92% of consumers shopped online in the past six months, while just 4% never shop online. e-commerce in Thailand is now estimated to represent 13% of retail commerce and is expected to reach 18% by 2028. In Vietnam e-commerce accounts for 6.5% of total retail revenue.

3.2 Growth in Laos Undocumented but Inferred

While there are no definitive estimates of e-commerce volume in Laos, proxy indicators suggest broad and high growth:

- High internet coverage and usage is evidenced by 3.75 million active Facebook users in January 2024, (76% of the adult population) a 17% increase in one year. Notably 46.7% of users are female;
- Cities offering food delivery services saw a boom in e-commerce business during the COVID-19 lockdown;
- Three domestic logistics companies sidelined Lao Post during the pandemic, with a huge network of 600-700 agents each nationwide: Hung Aloun Ltd. (HAL), Anousith, and Mixay Express.

Figure 3: Unboxing of a sewing machine ordered online and paid Cash-on-Delivery at an Anousith rural agent

Laos differs from its ASEAN neighbours with the glaring absence of Lao e-commerce platforms:

- No regional e-commerce behemoth formally expanded into Laos, although Taobao, Lazada, and Shopee are accessed by Lao customers from their overseas domains and apps, or through local informal facilitators like FoodPanda;
- Domestic e-commerce platforms are still nascent with monthly transaction numbers in the thousands vs. the regional behemoths with numbers in the millions. They will remain sidelined in the absence of large marketing investments, or successful harnessing of captive traffic (see BCEL OneX not benefiting from the pervasiveness of BCEL One).

E-marketplaces launched by the domestic logistics companies may fare better (as standalone apps) but still need intensive marketing promotion for mass-market usage.

3.3 e-commerce opportunities for agrifood and agripreneurs

Box 1: Scope of e-commerce in this study

EDC took a very large acceptation of e-commerce to capture the multitude of online practices that would add revenues to agripreneurs, hence, any of the steps below of a full online transaction would qualify:

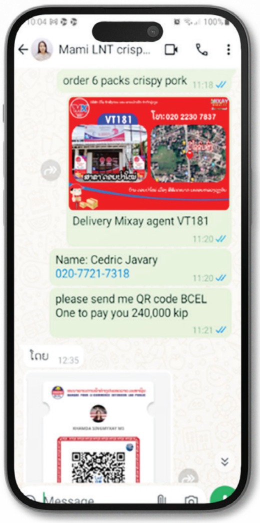
The quantification of share of sales facilitated by an online step as estimated by the agripreneurs would be the main indicator to identify out of screening interviews the e-commerce trailblazers.

e-commerce is particularly well suited to sell niche products and produces with higher added value, however:

- Sourcing is difficult because these products are uncommon;
- Higher value not always recognized by traditional collectors and middlemen visiting villages.

Most important may be that e-commerce allows for the diversification of buyers. Farmers are typically dependent on the rare, if not sole, intermediary who visits the village. The goal would be to avoid a monopsony, i.e. being dependent on a single B2B buyer. e-commerce is perfectly adapted to sell small quantities and infrequent production batches that are often difficult to forecast as they are dependent on weather events. e-commerce allows sellers to advertise when batches are about to be harvested. e-commerce requires very limited investment, only an active bank account to receive QR Code payments and an active Smartphone with Facebook and WhatsApp.

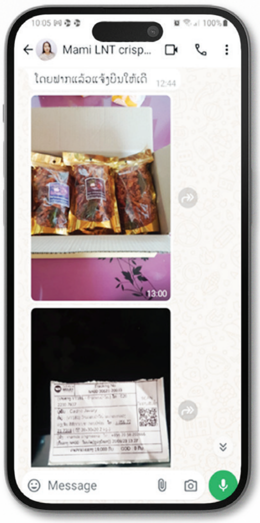
A full online transaction is not challenging: the sequence below shows how a full online transaction can be executed, using WhatsApp, QR code payment and a logistic company.



START

⓪ *Customer sees seller's ad or get phone number on pack to reorder. Customer and seller determine terms of order (over the phone or private message)*

① customer indicates delivery mode



② customer receives seller's bank account QR code, pays via mobile banking and send screenshot back

③ seller prepares box and sends receipt from logistics company to customer

④ customer follows-up with receiving logistics agent, fetches the box and pays for shipment

END

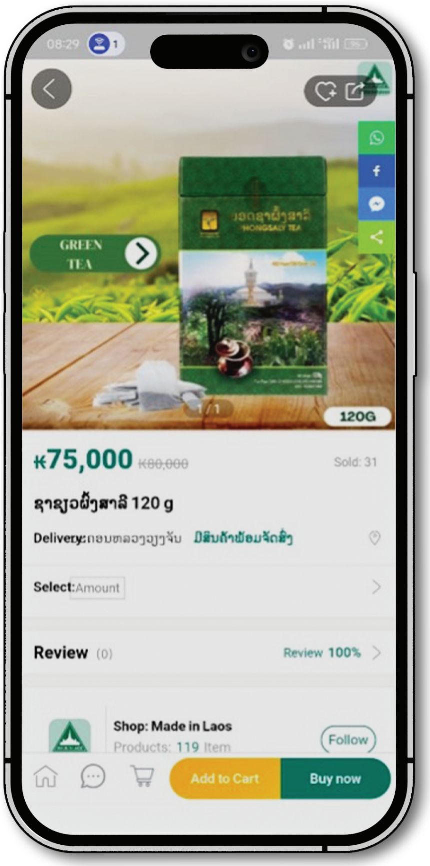
4 Typology of Online Agripreneurs

4.1 Use cases of e-commerce for agrifood

e-commerce can be used for any product, but the potential is highest for high-value produce (per kilogram) and produce with a long shelf life. Both benefit from the possible use of logistics companies. A bearable share of transportation costs may be as high as 15%.

Online activities significantly facilitate sale of a wide range of agricultural products including:

- Specialty crops: tea, vegetables, fruits
- Husbandry of any type for live animals (for fattening or consumption)
- NTFPs
- Processed food



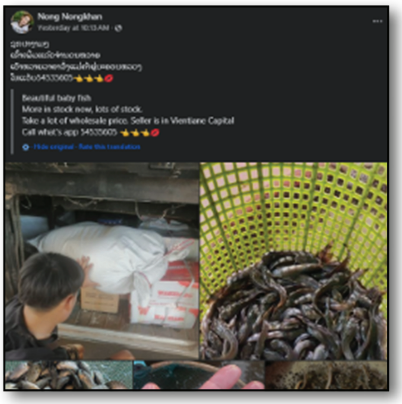


Figure 5: Samples of agri products advertised, sold, delivered online

Tea, NTFPs, fruit, vegetables, and processed foods offer the greatest sales potential through e-commerce. Products with well-established processing chains and field collectors, like rice, maize, cassava, latex do not tend to sell through e-commerce.

Online activities prove useful for sales particularly to:
- Extend traditional sales channels: marketplaces
- Link to buyers in other geographies
- Facilitate resupply orders

e-commerce practices are widespread: a quarter of the screening interviews revealed use of online advertising and promotion.

4.2 Agrifood e-commerce is Both B2C and B2B

B2C is the most apparent type of e-commerce. It is particularly enticing for agrifood suppliers to supermarkets with no waste resulting from sales on consignment or hefty retailer margin.
B2B e-commerce appears in a significant number of instances:

- Buyers sourcing online, searching for organic produce. The B2B sources interviewed insisted on particular aspects of this type of e-commerce:
    - Ordering small quantity to test produce
    - Point-to-point fast delivery to accommodate the absence of refrigeration.
- Modest buyers source online: e.g. kai pen producer in the Luang Prabang area was sourcing online riverweed since the Nam Kan river's depletion (likely because of the altered waterflow patterns induced by upstream dams);
- Producers of seeds, fertilizers, and fingerlings commonly source online;
- Traders traveling from province to province have very limited time for sourcing, favouring resupply orders that can be carried out online, with an appointment set for delivery of produce;
- Successful B2C agrifood online sellers are sourcing externally to meet growing demand, going online for their own sourcing;
- Commodities in high demand: e.g. coffee beans
  The forming coffee roaster association has not been able to formulate a common sourcing practice due to intense competition for a limited supply of quality coffee beans in Laos.

4.3 e-commerce Opportunists or Activists?

Interventions differentiate e-commerce 'opportunists' vs. activists' based on agripreneurs' level of e-commerce activity.

Tentative typology of online agripreneurs

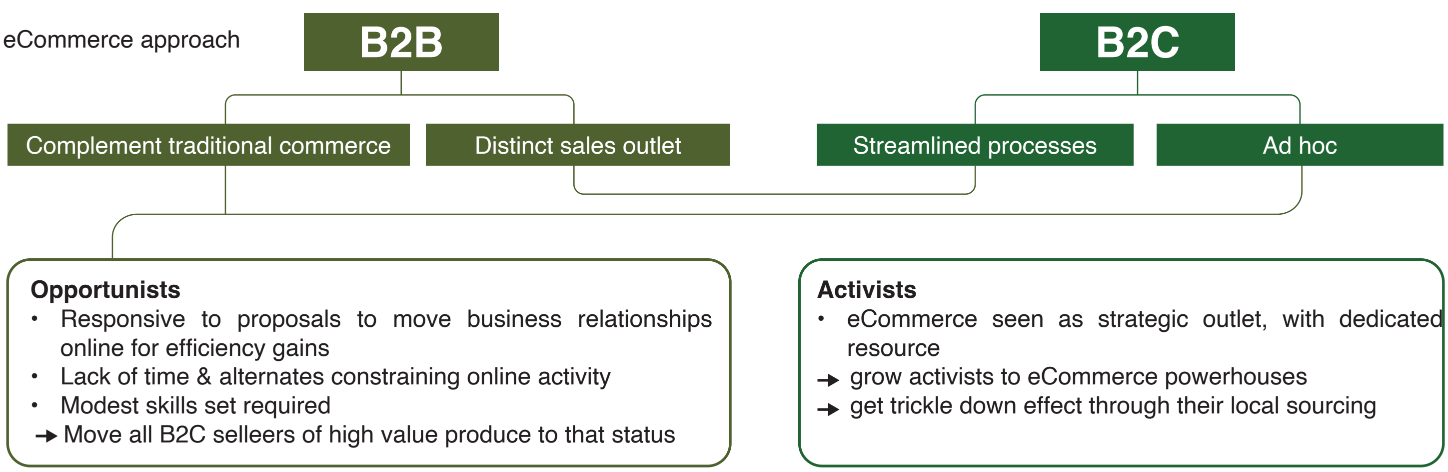


Figure 7 below shows that e-commerce is practiced slightly more by farmers in urban areas, however e-commerce activists tend to be located more often in rural areas. e-commerce may solve issues of access to markets for them. There is no example of e-commerce from rural areas without yearlong road access (only six respondents).

Figure 7: Quantification of e-commerce in total sales by respondents' location

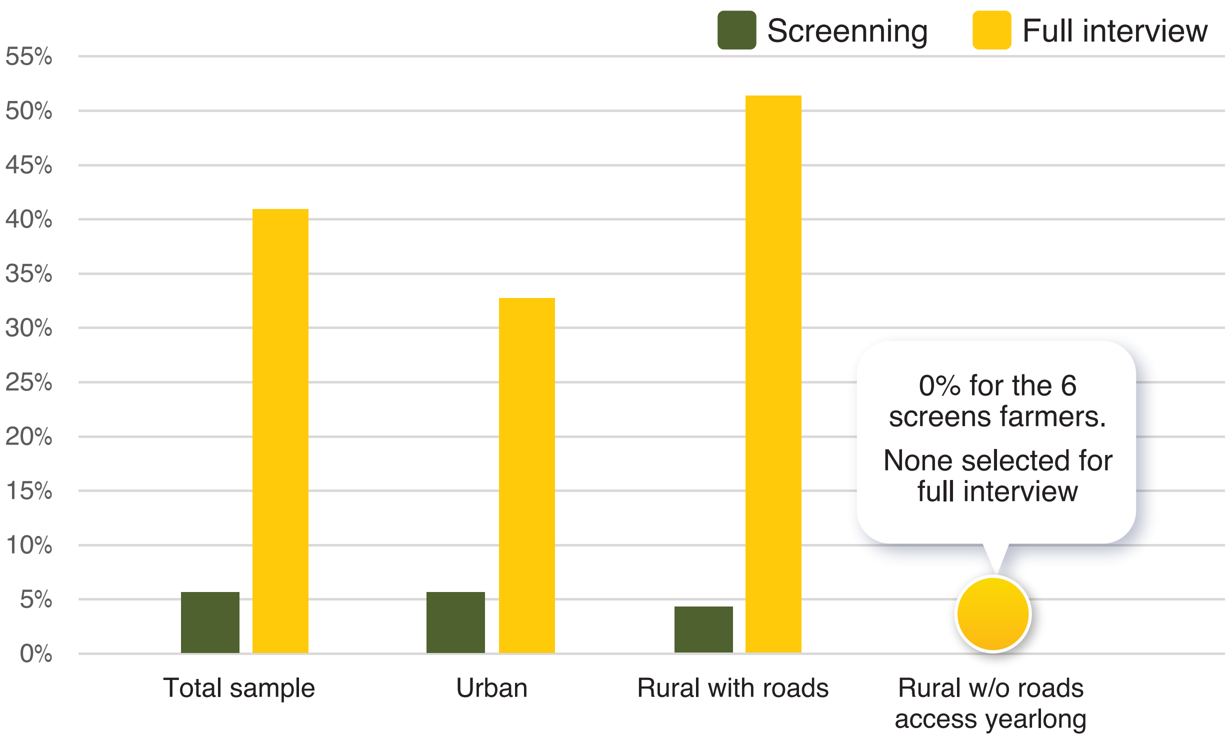


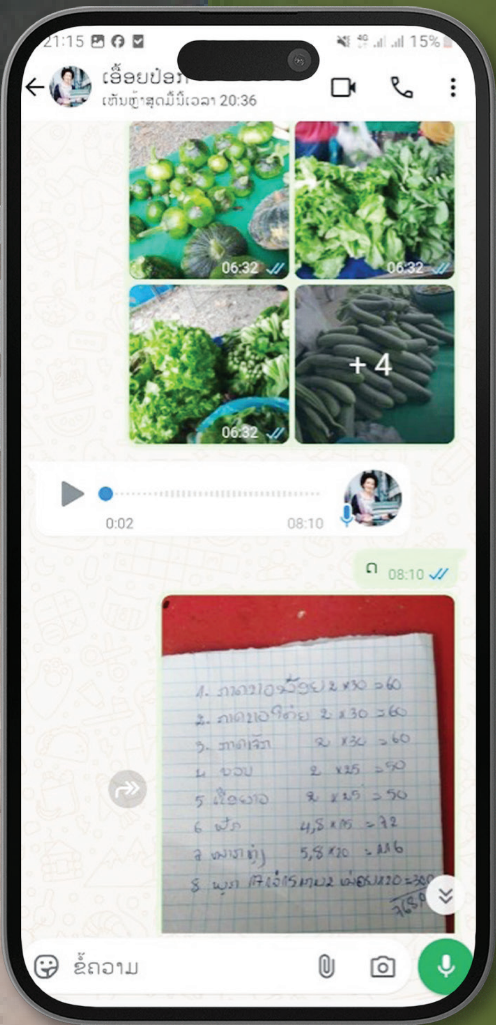
Figure 8 below shows that e-commerce is practiced mostly by women, reflecting a traditional division of labor within the household: men in charge production and women tasked with selling. Counterintuitively not the younger generation but women over 40 years lead in e-commerce sales. This is due to their ability to transfer knowledge gained from long prior experience in traditional sales.

Figure 8: Age and gender of e-commerce practitioners vs. non-practitioners

Screening itws with agri VC declared (#1 & #2)		Nb	Age	Female	Male
Advertise online	24%	53	30.0	70%	30%
DO NOT Advertise online	76%	171	25.9	46%	54%
Terms & conditions	18%	41	38.8	76%	24%
DO NOT Terms & conditions	82%	183	24.2	46%	54%
Payment online	20%	45	35.3	73%	27%
DO NOT Payment online	80%	179	24.7	46%	54%
Delivery online	21%	46	34.5	74%	26%
DO NOT Delivery online	79%	178	24.9	46%	54%
Aftersales online	15%	33	48.2	76%	24%
DO NOT Aftersales online	85%	191	23.2	47%	53%
		224	29.8	51%	49%

Education level was not surveyed but does not appear to be a limitation to e-commerce practice, based on observations from the deep dives.

Box 2: Case study of an e-commerce Opportunist



Ms. Mong, living close to Luang Prabang city, has 2 hectares for cattle, duck, chicken, fruit tree.

In the dry season she grows all kinds of vegetables such as broccoli, Hot pepper, cabbage, salad, green onion, gai choy, and coriander. She feels what the market wants and produces accordingly, her B2B buyers making no specific request re. production. She occasionally posts on FB.

She sells direct B2C 70% thru the organic market of Luang Prabang city, and B2B 30% to 4 hotels & restaurants and one trader from Xieng Khuang that she met one day at market. For B2B clients she developed an effective online promotion practice:

- Text them 1 by 1 via WA and call them to inform about new produce so that they can order before produce goes on sale to B2C;
- Pick-up at her market stall as soon as she arrives. Payment in cash or bank transfer.

She would like to develop online sales but doesn't know how to. For instance, she never thought about informing B2C customers of her FB page or WA posting. She had heard about Door-to-Door (D2D) delivery but hasn't thought about testing it.

She seems to source some equipment online: she likes the FB page of a seller of agricultural equipment, Buy products ສິນຄ້າ ສຳຫຼັບຄອບຄົວ ລາຄາ ໂຮງງານ.

5 Observations on Agri-Food e-Commerce Practices

Observations on the agripreneurs practices were classified by the EDC team by steps of an e-Commerce order (see Box 1), with the addition of Product/Packaging (what is actually sold and how it is protected during transportation).

- Product/Packaging
- Advertising/Promotion
- Terms & conditions
- Payment of order
- Packing & Delivery
- Aftersales service

5.1 Product/Packaging

The product in the image below is presented with a photograph and barely any description. Technical specifications are usually not indicated in the announcements. Short videos to indicate when live animals for sale (e.g. fish-lings, piglets for fattening…) are helpful in providing information about the product.
Packaging is important to preserve the quality of the product during transportation but can be basic. Rudimentary packaging should not prevent potential agripreneurs from trying e-commerce.
Key insights:

- Packaging conveys the identity of product. Tea boxes with Chinese script sourced from an e-marketplace, for example, may incorrectly indicate to Lao consumers that the product is made in China;
- Packaging is also important for bulk produce: e.g. vacuum-packed green coffee beans were greatly appreciated by a coffee roaster, and, therefore, a priority sourcing option;
- It is possible to forego packaging, e.g. buffalo skin to chew “ໜັງຍໍາ” bagged in regular second-hand rice bags as the produce is very resistant to mould and humidity.

Figure 9: two examples of packaging for Phongsaly tea

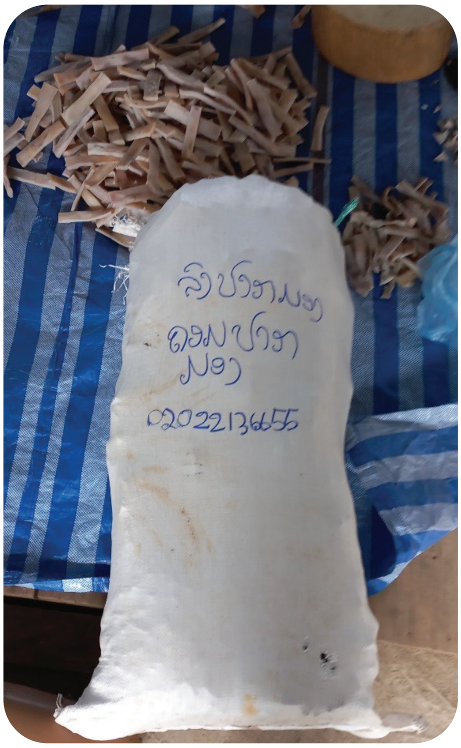


Figure 10: packaging of buffalo skin to chew “ໜັງຍໍາ”

5.2 Product/Packaging

Twenty-five percent of the samples screened, promoted and advertised online. No specific skills are required. Facebook (FB) pages and posts are a very effective starting point. WhatsApp is preferred over FB messenger for follow-up by private message.
e-commerce platforms are barely used by the e-commerce trailblazers:

- Mostly used for B2C and impulse purchases.
- There is no Lao equivalent, or subsidiary, of e-commerce giants like Alibaba (Taobao, Lazada), Shopee, or Grab;
- Lao's most significant initiative is bank-related: BCEL OneX. Other banks like ACLEDA e-commerce is now emulating (although ACLEDA Bank Laos is following the steps of the parent ACLEDA Bank Cambodia).

Online marketplaces devoted to agrifood are sprouting up but their business model is doubtful, as no initiative is yet driven or endorsed by buyers. The provision of market information in those schemes relies on regular input from volunteers. What incentives do they have to publish on platforms if buyers seem to ignore them?

5.3 Terms & conditions

Pre-payment of an online order for first-time customers appears to be the norm for remote delivery. Flexibility is often offered for repeat customers.

Accurate lead times for delivery are important, requiring the seller to inquire beforehand with transportation/logistics companies.

5.4 Payment of order

The QR Code payment (intrabank & interbank) is now mainstreamed among all full interviewees:

- Screenshot of payment is sufficient evidence
- There was no mention of payment fraud
- There was no mention of merchant acquisition fee

Cash-On-Delivery (COD) is never used in the context of agrifood, even by fully online agripreneurs. This is understandable given the stated 50% return rate on COD goods . Proximity payment would use a mix of cash & QR Code payments.

Figure 11: Sample of Cash-On-Delivery bill

Figure 12: Sample of an agripreneur's bank account QR Code

Digital payments may benefit from cash flow financing at the start:

- ACLEDA Bank Laos: specific overdraft facility without collateral for sellers with proven QR code sales records;
- BCEL: strong advantage in credit assessment for applicants who demonstrate more than 50% of their revenues through receipt of electronic payments;
- Maruhan Bank Japan: noticing new breed of online merchants, with the characteristics of proven sales (QR code payments) but little collateral (no prime location shop).

5.5 Packing & Delivery

Established logistics companies are not a solution for delivery of agrifood: none offer a refrigerated transportation chain or guaranteed lead times. Added value services like packaging and good warehousing are unavailable, requiring agents to sort these themselves. Agrifood is a low priority for transportation companies. Competing methods are used by online agripreneurs:

- Delivery by logistics companies: agrifood tolerated, but sidelined
- Delivery point to point by specialized transporters: night buses, Lao Airlines
- Delivery directly by seller: meeting point arranged
- Chartered trucks

Box 3: the Lao logistics companies

3 dominant market players with large franchise network.
- Anousith & Hung Aloun (HAL) aiming for 700 agents nationwide end 2024.

~1,200 employees excluding agents. Also Mixay Express.
- Other notable players: Flash Express, ZTO: Logistics

Importance of consumer e-commerce mostly Cash-on-Delivery (COD)
- 70% to 90% of deliveries at Anousith! (Rate of return of 50% stated once)
- Low fees due high volume: Anousith 1,000 kip for every 500,000 collected

Agent network very heterogenous with uneven quality standards
- Turf not clearly delimited
- Small share of revenues but growing activity
- Add-on services at discretion of agent: D2D, packing

Not yet differentiation
- HAL hopeful on technology: rated ++ on traceability, super App ambition, linkage with rail (claimed with Sinotrans but challenged on the ground). HAL e-marketplace, HAL Pay, merchant lending in future
- Anousith perceives its strength on Value for Money, for shipping & COD

Agrifood not strategic for them, accepted without bespoke services
- HAL concluded ~2021 against investing in cold storage chain
- Anousith insists agrifood produces should be capable to undergo 3 to 5 days without refrigeration
- No specific packing service offered, up to the agents. No plastic boxes rented or sold, few agents properly equipped.
- Claim Next Day Delivery to VTE from: Luang Prabang – Oudomxay – Huaphan (Anousith only) – Xieng Khouang (HAL only)

5.6 After-sales service

After-sales service is uncommon among e-commerce trailblazers. Dispute resolution is ad hoc. Few online agripreneurs have experience in proactive aftersales service (see Paksong organic farm). Different variations for handling shipment incidents include:

- Request return of shipment of rotten/damaged produce to send a new batch.
- This is costly for the seller. The method could be replaced by filming the unboxing in presence of the logistics agent at the destination.
- Split some shipment costs
- Voucher for future orders of same value

6 Recommendations

Interviewees primary request was for support in production capacity and infrastructure issues, not online activity, confirming the observations of both LURAS and LFA technical staff. They requested assistance with:

- Irrigation
- Financing
- More affordable (imported) inputs
- Improved and affordable transportation options

Process upgrade was rarely mentioned, but observations during deep dives showed need in this area, specifically in food processing hygiene and food safety. Support for marketing was requested at varying degrees of skill.

6.1 Helping willing agripreneurs to become e-commerce opportunists

Anyone can become an e-commerce opportunist because no capital expenditure is required upfront. However, candidates need to have reasonable expectations and be ready to invest the time required. Dipping a toe in as an addition to their current business activities is possible. A gradual start may be best for most. e-commerce trailblazers encourage peer agripreneurs to try e-commerce relying on word-of-mouth to see benefits.

LURAS can support motivated candidates with the following capacity-building intervention:

6.1.1 Candidate screening

To enroll in the support intervention, candidate agripreneurs should weigh the costs and benefits of going online, before confirming their commitment to the intervention:

Identify potential gains	Measure the efforts to undertake
• What is the expected source of additional revenue? Would it be a better price for existing production, or from diversifying sellers to have more bargaining power? • To whom are you selling? • Can you handle delivery? Do you own a transport solution and have time to make deliveries yourself? Can you find a transporter?	• Must be responsive to online queries and calls: there should be a focal point in the household. • Commit to time online to promote the household business • Be ready to gradually improve product, packing and shipment

A brief scorecard would be helpful to screen the beneficiaries with the determination and potential for e-commerce.

6.1.2 Format of training proposed

Product/Packaging *includes Hygiene in food processing* | **Advertising /Promotion** | **Terms and conditions** | **Payment of order** | **Packing and Delivery** | **Aftersales service**

A highly practical modular training focused on practicing e-commerce is recommended for screened candidate to become e-commerce opportunists:

- Quick individual diagnosis of online skills
  - Potentially tied to a scorecard
  - Structured around the 6 dimensions (Box 4)
- Thematic training through actual transactions, comparing baseline and post-training
  - FB post presenting the agribusiness and actual produce
  - Practice remote QR code payments
  - Practice delivery of own produce in remote transaction(s)
- Coaching and mandatory monitoring +6 months
  - Problem solving
  - Monitoring & evaluation to measure impact vs. baseline


Credit Helvetas/Simon cote

Helvetas or other supporters could alternatively consider forming a partnership with online platforms and/or traditional retailers to sell on behalf of agripreneurs who are willing and able to accept deferred sales and returned inventory:

- Commission for retailer
- Unsold stock is returned, very difficult to sell after expiry date

This scheme would be relevant only for produce with long shelf life, typically tea. BCEL OneX has expressed interest to pilot such a scheme.

6.2 Proposed support for the e-commerce activists

6.2.1 Technical assistance

Helping this category would require introducing systems and processes to boost their efficiency based on a fine understanding of their current and future business models.
Beware of high transaction cost as this involves the provision of technical assistance

- Diagnostics of agri-business needed
- Tailor Performance-Based Agreements to justify extensive support

It's anticipated that it will be challenging to find suitable qualified Technical Services Provider(s) for such ad hoc work.

6.2.2 Develop certification pathways with relevant ministries/entities

Certificates can distinguish some sellers, and are most useful to:

- Reinforce the trust from prospective buyers, both B2C and B2B
- Offering a relative brand protection from copycats

Certificates are no longer an option for sales to retailers and some B2B transactions: GHP for instance is a pre-requisite for all VTE supermarkets.

Any agripreneurs receiving such a certificate should display it prominently.

MAF	• Organic Appellation (OA) • 0 chemical • Good Agricultural Practice (GAP)
MoH	• Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) *near must for processed food*
MoIC	• One District One Product (ODOP)
LNCCI	• Made in Laos *more geared for export?*

Box 5: Lao certifications relevant to agrifood

6.3 Support e-commerce infrastructures only if buyers committed and backing

Initiatives of online market information based on volunteering or government fiat tend to be short-lived:

- The 'Devil is in the Details for market data: different prices for different quality gradients require frequent updates to remain relevant which can be very demanding
- Understanding of pre-existing relationships between producers that can back up such initiatives. Some transaction data is too sensitive to share in a competitive market.

Currently, buyers appear too divided to use a common infrastructure or service (e.g. Coffee roasters association). It may be advisable to watch market developments and provide support when a group of buyers commits significantly.

Credit Helvetas/Simon cote

7 Luras Follow On

7.1 What does LURAS do and how?

As part of its ongoing efforts in the region, LURAS is now undertaking practical training for Lao E-Commerce agripreneurs to address knowledge gaps throughout the five stages of the e-Commerce sales process:

Product /Packaging

Advertising /Promotion

Terms and conditions

Payment of order

Packing and Delivery

Aftersales service

7.2 What has been achieved so far?

LURAS has trained 150 youths across four project provinces in essential e-commerce skills, including photography and videography for marketing, as well as strategies to integrate e-commerce into their businesses.

The training also covered practical knowledge on product packaging, online customer service, and digital marketing techniques, enabling young agripreneurs to effectively promote and sell their products through social media and other online platforms.

Based on recommendations from the 2025 Study, LURAS also developed five short, simple videos to support e-commerce. These videos are available on the LURAS YouTube Channel.

Production Presentation

Promotion through e-Platform

Trading conditions

Payment system

Customer service

8 Appendices

8.1 Acronyms

B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Consumer
COD	Cash-on-Delivery
D2D	Door-to-Door Delivery
FB	Facebook
GAP	Good Agriculture Practice
GHP	Good Hygiene Practice
GoL	Government of Laos
GoV	Government of Vietnam
HAL	Hung Alun Ltd.
LFA	Lao Farmers Association
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce & Industry
LURAS	Laos Upland Rural Advisory Services
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoIC	Ministry of Industry & Commerce
MSMEPA	Micro- Small- & Medium-size Enterprises Promotion Agency
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
OA	Organic Appellation
ODOP	One District One Product (initiative from GoL/MoIC)
WA	WhatsApp
WB	World Bank

8.2 Screening and full interviews

EDC screened 223 farmers with coordinates provided by LURAS and LFA through a quick interview: 30 of these with most sales from online activities were interviewed at length (full interviews).

Table 1: geographies of screened and full interviewees (LURAS' 4 provinces of operation in yellow)

Province Eng	Province Lao	Screening	Full
Vientiane Capital	ນະຄອນຫຼວງວຽງຈັນ	21	12
Luangprabang	ຫຼວງພະບາງ	78	7
Oudomxay	ອຸດົມໄຊ	12	0
Luangnamtha	ຫຼວງນໍ້າທາ	1	0
Phongsaly	ຜົ້ງສາລີ	6	0
Xayabury	ໄຊຍະບູລີ	3	0
Huaphanh	ຫົວພັນ	78	6
Xiengkhuang	ຊຽງຂວາງ	21	4
Champasak	ຈໍາປາສັກ	3	1
Total		**223**	**30**

8.3 Agricultural products with largest e-commerce potential

The table below classifies the screening and detailed interviews by agricultural products, based on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) agricultural census list, with additional categories for food processing. Each screening interview covered up to two products, while the 30 in-depth interviews included up to three products per respondent.

The key column shows the share of e-commerce-assisted sales in the agripreneur's total revenue, as reported by the interviewee. For each step of the e-commerce process, respondents were also asked whether they carried it out online.

Table 2: e-commerce practices & intensity by interviewed sample

	Inquiry on **2** produces								Inquiry on **3** produces						
	Screening interviews								Full interviews						
AgriVC_list_Eng	Nb	Quantif e-Ce	share N/A	Advertise online	Terms & conditions	Payment	Delivery	Aftersales	Nb	Quantif e-Ce	Advertise online	Terms & conditions	Payment	Delivery	Afte
****crop*****	**79**	**12%**	**8%**	**41%**	**33%**	**37%**	**37%**	**30%**	**26**	**45%**	**100%**	**88%**	**100%**	**100%**	**73%**
Total upland rainfed paddy	1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0						
Sweet Potatoes	2	0%	0%	50%	50%	50%	50%	0%	1	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Coffee	2	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0						
Tea	31	7%	3%	23%	16%	16%	16%	16%	3	43%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Leafy Stem Vegetables	8	41%	0%	88%	75%	88%	88%	75%	8	53%	100%	88%	100%	100%	75%
Root, Bulb and Tuberous	4	30%	0%	100%	75%	100%	100%	75%	4	43%	100%	75%	100%	100%	75%
Fruitbearing and Leguminous	3	67%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	5	61%	100%	100%	100%	100%	80%
Fruit Tree	6	5%	0%	67%	50%	67%	67%	33%	4	31%	100%	75%	100%	100%	50%
Cantaloupe and other melons	1	25%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	1	25%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Other (crop)	18	0%	22%	22%	17%	17%	17%	17%	0						
****Husbandry****	**103**	**0%**	**2%**	**14%**	**9%**	**9%**	**9%**	**4%**	**14**	**28%**	**86%**	**50%**	**50%**	**50%**	**14%**
Cattle	9	0%	0%	22%	11%	22%	22%	11%	2	40%	100%	50%	100%	100%	50%
Pig	20	0%	0%	15%	5%	5%	5%	0%	3	23%	100%	33%	33%	33%	0%
Goat	3	0%	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%	1	50%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Local chicken	16	1%	6%	19%	13%	13%	13%	6%	2	16%	100%	50%	50%	50%	0%
Commercial chicken	2	0%	0%	50%	50%	50%	50%	0%	1	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Duck	7	4%	0%	29%	29%	0%	0%	0%	2	16%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Fish	20	0%	5%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	2	25%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Frog	10	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Others (husbandry)	16	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0						
****NTFP****	**32**	**8%**	**0%**	**22%**	**19%**	**22%**	**25%**	**16%**	**7**	**46%**	**86%**	**71%**	**100%**	**100%**	**43%**
Grass (broom)	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0						
Bamboo	6	0%	17%	17%	17%	17%	33%	17%	2	45%	50%	50%	100%	100%	0%
Mushroom	8	0%	0%	13%	0%	13%	13%	0%	1	70%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Medicinal herbs	2	73%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	1	45%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Ornamental plants	2	0%	0%	50%	50%	50%	50%	0%	1	20%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Bee: honey, wax,...	1	20%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	1	20%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Others (NTFP)	10	10%	0%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	1	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
****Non-agri****	**9**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**1**	**75%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Food processing	9	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total	**223**	**5.5%**	4%	**24%**	**18%**	**20%**	**21%**	**15%**	**48**	**41%**	**94%**	**75%**	**85%**	**85%**	**52%**
Urban	97	5.6%	5%	27%	21%	22%	22%	15%	27	33%	89%	67%	78%	78%	33%
Rural with roads	94	4.2%	4%	22%	18%	20%	20%	16%	21	51%	100%	86%	95%	95%	76%
Rural w/o road access yearlon	6	0.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0						

8.4 Few and diverse requests for support from interviewees

The interviews revealed that current e-commerce agripreneurs expressed very limited and highly varied needs for support. Out of the 30 respondents, nearly one-third (nine) reported no specific challenges at all, suggesting either confidence in their current practices or a lack of awareness of potential improvements. Among those who did articulate needs, the most common area was production-related issues, cited by six respondents. This reflects a continued emphasis on the basics of farming rather than on digital or marketing skills.

Other requests were scattered across different themes, with only two or three mentions each. These included difficulties in selling produce online, raising customer awareness, and coping with transportation costs and delays. A few respondents highlighted the high cost of imported inputs and the need for better marketing techniques. Interestingly, only one person mentioned product certification, and another flagged work overload as a concern—indicating that more advanced aspects of e-commerce, such as compliance and scaling, are not yet top priorities for most.

Overall, the diversity and low frequency of these requests suggest that e-commerce agripreneurs are still in an early stage of adoption. Their focus remains on core production challenges, while digital sales and marketing issues appear secondary. For future interventions, this points to the importance of screening candidates who are genuinely motivated to expand their online presence, as well as tailoring support to bridge the gap between production capacity and effective e-commerce practices.

---

[i] Source: Crunchbase.com accessed on 17 December 2024.

[ii] Statista, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104434/thailand-wholesale-and-retail-sales-value/ GlobalData's 2023 Financial Services Consumer Survey

[iii] Vietnam Ministry of Industry and Trade's E-Commerce and Digital Economy Department cited by US Dpt of Commerce (www.trade.gov)
https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/vietnam-e-commerce
https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/thailand-e-commerce

[iv] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-laos: the number of Internet users is about the size of the adult population! No statistics on Tiktok & Instagram users.

[v] Interview of a rural Anousith agent, Luang Prabang province.

[vi] see for instance www.laoproduct.com developed under WB Laos Agriculture Competitiveness Programme, which is no longer active

Credit Helvetas/Simon cote