



Module 2: Learning approach

Background

- In the past, most extension involved top-down activities to transfer technology or deliver policy instructions. New practices were recommended by researchers who did not always understand local conditions, and the role of extension workers was to take 'messages' to farmers who were expected to adopt the advice given to them. Past extension was also managed as isolated events, such as village meetings, short-term training or demonstration plots, without prior assessment or follow-up.
- The old top-down approach benefitted some farmers, usually those who were better educated and had more resources, but it failed to reach most small producers.
- New extension methods started to be introduced in Laos during the 1990s, such as Farmer Field Schools. This involved groups of farmers studying together throughout the production cycle, but the topics were still decided by outside experts. It was not until the early 2000's that a 'demand-driven' service started to be implemented, when the Lao Extension Approach (LEA) allowed communities to decide their own training needs.
- Green Extension builds on the experience of the LEA. This continues to be a demand-driven approach, but offers greater flexibility in content and methodology to meet the needs of commercial farmers who are faced by new challenges.

Concepts

- Green Extension involves participatory methods. This usually includes...
 - Decision-making about extension priorities is done by the community;
 - All members of the community are represented in the process, including different ethnic groups, poorer households, women and youth;
 - Learning activities are usually carried out in groups which can take many forms: production groups, water user groups, women's groups, youth groups etc.
 - If material assistance is provided, such as processing equipment and irrigation repairs, this is usually owned and managed by the community.
- Green Extension involves a learning process in which options are identified, practices are tested and adapted, and lessons are shared with others. This may include...
 - Farmers carrying out action research to test different practices (eg. types of compost, new pruning methods, animal feed mixtures);
 - Farmers sharing what they learn through farmer-to-farmer exchanges (F2F) or participatory videos;
 - The learning process is not just focussed on technology, but on economic costs and benefits, environmental impacts and social responsibilities.
- Green Extension involves a systems approach. This usually includes:
 - Recognising that farming families depend on multi-functional landscapes that need to be managed for food, income, culture and ecosystem services
 - Addressing production, processing and marketing issues in an integrated manner

Topics, Tools and Cases

Unit	Subject	Available Material
2.1	Extension for Everyone – an inclusive approach	LEAP booklet
2.2	GE Process: Details (to be translated)	APIRAS Best Practice
2.3	Agroecology principles (to be translated)	AliSEA materials
2.4	Action Research: Concepts, Cases and Methods	LURAS Manuals
2.5	PLUP procedures	MAF Manuals
2.6	Farmer to Farmer Exchanges	Videos
2.7	Case study – Phousan Tea	Videos and handouts

Examples

2.1 LEAP Booklet



2.2 APIRAS Best Practice Note



2.4 Action Research Manuals



2.5 F2F Videos

<https://youtu.be/g5d5c0rg-hw>
https://youtu.be/RYP3qx8Yh_8

2.6 Phousan Tea videos

<https://youtu.be/RM0X1QwkSTs>
<https://youtu.be/WIFyQ-IWKxY>
<https://youtu.be/YM2TU73fDEc>