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After the 1st year of practicing organic techniques, my yield decreased a bit, but I decided to keep using organic methods, to be patient, and now 5 years later, my yield increases, but even more important, my family is healthy. I tried to use chemicals, but I got very sick and lost time & money. I lost 2.5 million KIP and three months of field work because I got sick. With organic technique, we save money & make money, because we are healthy & the quality of my produce is better, so I get higher market price. (A local producer)

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## QUICK FACTS

### Location:

Vientiane Capital, Champasak, Bolikhamxay and Xiengkhouang provinces, Lao PDR

### Project Start:

Phase I in 2004

### Current Phase:

Phase II 2008-2011

### Current Phase Budget:

712,500 Swiss Francs

### Main partners:

- Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF)
- Department of Agriculture
- Provincial Agriculture & Forestry Offices
- Local organizations
- Local producers and related stakeholders

### Major Donors:

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

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## THE PERSPECTIVES

Organic products are increasingly in demand. Information widely disseminated by mass media of neighboring countries on the negative impacts of intensive agriculture is gradually changing people's awareness in Laos. Both consumers & producers are increasingly recognizing the socio-economic opportunities and healthier environmental benefits of organic agriculture & produce. However, the experience and knowledge of producing, processing and marketing of organic products remain to be at comparatively low levels in the Lao PDR.

With this in mind, the PROFIL project strategy includes:

- Supporting policy development
- Providing institutional support
- Developing an organic certification system
- Pursuing and promoting commodity development
- Marketing & value chain development
- Extending & ensuring gender inclusiveness pro-poor participation & empowerment
- Collaborating with & supporting private sector stakeholders interested in promoting & developing organic products



# PROFIL



## “The Promotion of Organic Farming & Marketing in the Lao PDR”

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Our mission is to contribute to improved living conditions in rural areas of the Lao PDR, the good health of consumers, the sustainable use of natural resources, and economic growth through the promotion of organic agriculture, a viable & profitable alternative.

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## WORKING AREA

In coordination with state agriculture agencies, and in cooperation with local producers & partners, and stakeholders, the PROFIL project works to ensure farmers benefit from better health and improved rural livelihood; promotes opportunities for consumers to have better access to healthy, safe fruits and vegetables; supports the responsible management and use of natural resources, and contributes to the growth of Lao PDR through the promotion of organic agriculture.

To achieve these goals, the project has adopted an inclusive, participatory and comprehensive approach, able to create & enable framework conditions for organic agriculture by supporting the production of organic products, prioritizing organic rice, vegetables & fruits, and promoting their sale on the domestic market, and the development of regional & international markets, focusing on 4 key areas:

1. Institutional development
2. Training
3. Certification
4. Market & value chain development



## THE CONTEXT

The promotion of organic agriculture and marketing in Lao PDR (PROFIL) project was started due to the general understanding that many farmers in Laos are organic by default. In comparison to neighboring countries (China, Thailand and Vietnam), the use of chemical inputs by Lao farmers is low.

The agriculture & forestry strategy of the Lao Government for the period 2006-2010 contains four key objectives: food security, commodity production, eradication of shifting cultivation, & sustainable forest management. The policy of commodity production involves increasing the supply of goods for both domestic and foreign markets. The government is establishing a 'Clean Agriculture Development Center' (CADC) and is launching the promotion of Clean Agriculture, which includes 4 production systems:

- Conventional traditional agriculture without chemical inputs
- Conventional chemical agriculture (GAP: Good Agriculture Practices and
- IPM: Integrated Pest Management)
- Pesticide Free Product (PFP)
- Organic Agriculture

Recognizing the opportunity to further strengthen the government's capacity to promote clean and organic agriculture production, PROFIL will support CADC activities in parallel with ongoing activities.

## THE PROJECT

The PROFIL project is part of and supported by HELVET-AS Swiss Intercooperation in Laos. It began with a Phase I in March 2004, ending in September 2007.

The current PROFIL Phase II is now in its second year of implementation, with core project activities in Vientiane Capital & Province, and the southern province of Champasak, with recent expansion in 2 new provinces Xiengkhouang and Bolikhamxay.

## ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- PROFIL assisted in the setup of an Internal Control System Unit and the **Lao Certification Body** which led to the creation and adoption of the **Lao Organic Standards** based on internationally accepted norms and the **Laos Organic logo**.
- PROFIL's support for organic production encouraged **over 10 villages** around Vientiane Capital to **switch to organic fruit and vegetable farming**, with many more farmers eager to join. These groups have taken on increasing responsibility for production planning, managing group revolving funds and implementation of Internal Control Systems (ICS) and in organic farming technologies such as compost making and organic pest control.
- PROFIL made a major contribution to the development of direct to consumer sales by setting up the **That Luang Organic Market**, which now operates twice a week in order to satisfy the growing demand.
- **Advanced training and certification** support has led to the autonomous operations of the Lao Certification Body as a certification agency and ten groups of rice farmers in Sangthong district were organic certified to national standards.
- A series of insightful **field studies** were carried out, including a comparative study on vegetable & rice groups illustrating opportunities and constraints.
- Various useful **instructional materials** were produced, including an illustrated bio-pesticide & liquid organic fertilizer manual, and visual aids were developed for ethnic language speaking farmers to gain understanding of organic principles, standards and options.