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REPORT OF THE ARISE Plus LAO PDR PROJECT

(JANUARY – JUNE 2021)

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Project Review Committee meeting # 4

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Acronyms

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ARISE Plus	ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ATIGA	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement
DFTP	Department of Foreign Trade Policy
DIMEX	Department for Import and Export
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DoF	Department of Forestry
DoIH	Department of Industry and Handicraft
DoSM	Department of Science and Metrology
DPC	Department of Planning and Cooperation
DTP	Department for Trade Promotion
EBA	Everything But Arms
ER	Expected Result
ERIIT	Economic Research Institute for Industry and Trade
EU	European Union
FDD	Food and Drug Department
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit
GoL	Government of Lao PDR
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITC	International Trade Centre
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LDC	Least Developed Country
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MoC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
NIU	National Implementation Unit
PCO	Project Coordination Office
PPC	Plant Protection Centre, MAF
PRC	Project Review Committee
QCs	Quality Champions
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SME	Small and Medium-sized enterprises
SPS	Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
SYMST	Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade project
TBT	Technical barriers to trade
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
WTO	World Trade Organization

I. Introduction

Adapting to the global outbreak of COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic still dominated the first half of 2021 with the economy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) being heavily impacted by the pandemic. In January 2021 the World Bank reported that the "COVID-19 outbreak had intensified the growth slowdown, plunging the Lao economy into its first recession since the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s." However "recovery is expected over 2021 and in the medium term."¹

Despite the global outbreak, Lao PDR had successfully managed to prevent the spread of the pandemic and had reported only very few positive COVID-19 cases in 2020 and early 2021. In April 2021, however, positive cases were detected which then led to a broader community outbreak in the country. These positive cases led the Government of Lao PDR to implement a lockdown which started on 22nd of April, initially for two weeks, but was then extended two times (so far) until 19th of July 2021 with varying measures for different provinces depending on the number of positive cases detected. Some villages with a high number of cases are being considered a 'red zone' and no one is allowed to enter or leave these villages for a period of two weeks.² As of 27 June 2021, there were 2110 positive COVID-19 cases detected and 3 death reported.³

It is against this background that the EU-funded ARISE Plus Lao PDR (The ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU Plus – Lao PDR) project has continued adaptation and adjustments in its modes of delivery, in order to ensure a smooth implementation despite the restrictions on international travel, meetings and working from home during lockdown. Counter measures were implemented for ARISE Plus activities were appropriate, including the use of online and collaborative tools and the flexible approach between "full online" and "hybrid" modes. At the strategic planning level, ITC contributed the development of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021 to 2026) addressing COVID-19 responses throughout the framework.

Going forward the team continues to respond in a flexible manner, addressing the needs of the Lao stakeholders within the scope and agreed objectives of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project.

ARISE Plus Lao PDR

Over the past decade Lao PDR has strengthened economic ties to global and regional partners. It joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2013 and committed to regional integration in form of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) that entered into force in 2015 and the AEC Blueprint 2025. Resource-intensive exports, however, result in only limited structural transformation and thus gains for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Existing opportunities from economic integration are not fully seized and compliance with sectoral market requirements, such as the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) that prevents EU-bound imports of illegally sourced wood-based products, remains inadequate. The economy also suffers from complex regulatory procedures and limited export diversification. Thus an integrated effort is needed to diversify economic activity to ensure inclusive economic growth and sustainable job creation for the future.

In order to assist the Government of Lao PDR to promote inclusive economic growth, increased climate change resilience, mitigation of vulnerability and job creation, the ARISE Plus Lao PDR (The ASEAN

¹ World Bank (2021) Lao Economic Monitor, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lao/publication/lao-economic-monitor-january-2021-supporting-economic-recovery>

² See also PM Order No.15, Notification No. 671/PMO, Notification No. 595/PMO

³ <https://www.facebook.com/CIEH.MoH.Lao/>

Regional Integration Support from the EU Plus – Lao PDR) project was launched with funding from the European Union (EU). The project is implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and is oriented towards the improvement of the overall business environment and the increased participation in global value chains for two priority sectors: wood processing and coffee.

As described in the Description of the Action, the project has three Expected Results (ER):

1. ER 1. Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025.
2. ER 2. Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Everything But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA).
3. ER 3. Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), reduction of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products).

The ARISE Plus Lao PDR project started in Q3 2019 (official start on 1 November 2018 and official signature on 4 July 2019). The inception phase ended on 4 January 2020. The official duration of the project (as per the Contribution Agreement) follows the retroactive start date of the project. Hence, the key dates of the project are as follows:

- **Inception phase:** 1 November 2018 – 4 January 2020
- **Year 1:** 5 January 2020 – 31 December 2020
- **Year 2:** 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021
- **Year 3:** 1 January 2022 – 31 October 2022

This report is covering the period from **1 January to 30 June 2021**. It summarizes key achievements, reflects on challenges encountered, including due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights priorities for the upcoming six months (1 July to 31 December 2021).

II. Achievements January to June 2021: overview

Budget performance

The overall budget performance of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project reached approximately 66% of the available budget from its inception until 30 June 2021. This reveals the budget utilization of the project: how much the project has used the funds made available to date.

Expenditures by Expected Results between November 2018 and June 2021

Pillars	Expenditures (= total expenditures 1 November 2018 - 30 June 2021)	Budget (=total budget released 1 November 2018 - 30 June 2021)	Difference	% of released budget spent
E.R. 1 Regional Economic Integration	367,187	733,971	366,784	50%
E.R. 2 Trade Preferences for Exports	532,927	754,634	221,707	71%
E.R. 3 Value Chain Development	685,410.25	1,141,998.40	456,588	60%
Project Management, Partnerships and Coordination	758,545.81	923,706	165,160	82%
Total	2,344,070	3,554,309	1,210,239	66%

Source: ITC calculations, based on ITC Project Portal – 2 July 2021.

This shows a slight increase in comparison with the previous report (63% of released budget spent in December 2020). It demonstrates a tendency to an improvement in the budget efficiency of the project, especially in ER 1 (50% in June 2021 vs. 43% in December 2020) and in ER 2 (71% in June 2021 vs. 62% in December 2020). Practically speaking, it means that the project is faster in converting the funds into concrete activities.

Summary of key achievements for the period of January to June 2021

During the first six months of 2021, 14 out of 15 activities as per the Description of the Action were continued. The work plan as presented and approved during the third Project Review Committee (PRC) meeting (10 December 2020) and the Project Executive Committee (PEC) meeting (25 January 2021) was implemented as much as possible, with continued adaptations to the 'new normal'. The objectives of this period were fulfilled: continue smooth implementation of work plan and project activities despite the continued challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, complete most of the desk research; conduct a series of consultations in order to engage with key stakeholders from the private and public sector to further ensure ownership of the project; organization of 16 events.

In terms of key achievements, the first six months of 2021 could be summarized as below:

- Endorsement of the two sector export roadmaps for the wood processing and the coffee sector by H.E. Khemmani Pholsena, former Minister, Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC)
- Presentation of the Lao PDR Coffee Export Roadmap at the Lao Coffee Festival 2021 in Pakse
- Kick-start of a series of trainings for stakeholders of the Lao coffee and wood processing sectors
- Validation of the Lao PDR Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap
- Successful implementation of a series of trainings for trade negotiators including in the provinces, titled "Understanding Principles and Utilization of Multilateral and Regional Trading Arrangements" in close collaboration with the Economic Research Institute for Industry and Trade (ERIIT)
- Successful implementation of first workshop on trade policy modelling
- Smooth implementation of the Quality Champions Programme with monthly workshops organised in close collaboration with the Lao Chamber of Commerce (LNCCI)

- Kick-start of a series of trainings and activities implementing the recommendations from the 2020 conformity assessment on Lao PDR's quality and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) infrastructure
- Presentation of the study on 'Trade implications of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status' at the Trade and Private Sector working group
- Successful contributions and presentation to the government of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021 to 2026.

Summary of activities completed in the first half of 2021

Expected Results	workshops and events	consultations	publications
E.R. 1 Regional Economic Integration	4	15	
E.R. 2 Trade Preferences for Exports	6	12	
E.R. 3 Value Chain Development	5	20	1
Project Management, Partnerships and Coordination	1	22	
January - June 2021	16	69	1

Source: ITC, June 2021

This table also shows a difference with the previous report: a marked increase in the number of events and training workshops organized (16, vs. 4 in the previous period). After a period of adaptation and testing on the "new normal", the project seems to have reach a steady pace in the organization of activities.

Summary of key project set-up and management results

In terms of Project Governance and Management, the project has carried out a number of critical actions during the past six months:

- The 3rd PRC meeting of the ARISE Plus project was organised on 10th of December 2020 and a PEC meeting was organised on 25th of January 2021, which were followed by the endorsement and approval by H.E. Minister Khemmani Pholsena of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR work plan for January to June 2021.
- This endorsement of the work plan also confirmed again the responsibility by department for each expected result (ER) area of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project, namely Department of Import and Export (DIMEX) for ER1, Department of Foreign Trade Policy (DFTP) for ER2, and Department of Trade Promotion (DoTP) for ER3.
- In addition, the main focal points by sub-activity were re-confirmed, for example Department of Industry and Handicraft (DoIH) for the wood processing export roadmap (activity 3.1), Department of Trade Promotion for the coffee export roadmap (activity 3.1) and related activities for sector stakeholders (activities 3.3, 3.4, 3.7), the Lao Chamber of Commerce (LNCCI) for the Quality Champions Programme (activity 2.4), the e-learning course on cross-border procedures for Lao exporters (activity 2.5) and possibly the Quality for Trade Platform (activity 2.3).
- Due to COVID-19 related travel and meeting restrictions, the last in person mission to Vientiane was the 2nd stakeholder consultation for the wood processing sectoral export roadmap from 24 to 28 February 2020. Since then, the ITC team and Lao stakeholders have adapted meeting modalities via online platforms (e.g. Zoom) in order to ensure continued implementation of project activities. For instance, with the new lockdown in place, a training for coffee sector stakeholders was conducted fully online during the lockdown period from 22 to 24 June 2021 with more than 70 people participating virtually.
- The communication working group continued to meet, with the aim of operationalizing the communication plan of the project; and ensuring that the communication activities are implemented in line with the communication strategies and visibility plan. A meeting of the working

group was organized, with the participation of the European Union Delegation to Lao PDR, and the UN Resident Coordinator Office.

- A mid-term evaluation of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project was supported by the project team, participating in key meetings with the evaluation stakeholders, providing information on project stakeholders and project outputs to the evaluation team, and compiling in a timely manner a total of 50 documents to be read by the evaluator.
- A progress report for the past six months and a work plan for the upcoming six months has been prepared, to be presented during the 4th meeting of the Project Review Committee.

These actions allowed to provide a solid structure for a smooth implementation of the project despite the ongoing restrictions due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Achievements January to June 2021: Expected Result 1

ER1: Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025.

Activity 1.1 – Gap analysis of ATIGA implementation in Lao PDR

The activity is to conduct a diagnostic assessment of the current level of implementation, in Lao PDR, of the ASEAN Trade in Good Agreement (ATIGA) and related ASEAN Economic (AEC) Blueprint 2025 commitments. The objective of the assessment is to identify existing gaps, and understand the constraints and challenges faced by Lao PDR in the implementation. The findings of this study will feed into the development of an executable roadmap for structured and coordinated implementation of reforms (Refer Activity 1.2); and form the basis for determining further technical assistance, that can be provided under the scope of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR Project, in order to accelerate implementation and reduce related gaps (these technical assistance activities, once determined, will be covered under Activity 1.3).

Methodology and Results:

Upon receipt of endorsement of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) of Lao PDR last year, discussions were held with the Department of Foreign Trade Policy (DFTP) of MoIC to commence work on this activity, desk research was undertaken, and an introductory workshop was conducted for key stakeholders of the public and private sector on the diagnostic study and importance of this exercise to enable Lao PDR to better integrate into the regional framework and leverage the benefits of the regional trading partnership. Following the workshop, questionnaires were disseminated to stakeholders, responses were analysed, follow-up consultations were held, and an initial draft of the ATIGA gap assessment was developed and revised based on internal reviews.

During the period covered under this progress report, the following activities were undertaken:

- *Gap Analysis of ATIGA Implementation drafted and finalised based on stakeholder feedback.*

The draft ATIGA gap assessment was shared with DFTP for their review and for circulation to other relevant stakeholders for feedback and validation of the findings of the gap assessment. The draft gap assessment shared with stakeholders comprised of a 'commitments matrix' which set out each of the provisions covered in the 11 chapters of the ATIGA, the corresponding focal points/agency in Lao PDR, and an assessment of the 'implementation status' of the provision based on the research undertaken, including any insights on technical assistance/support that will be required by Lao PDR to implement the provisions. The 'implementation status' of the provisions were based on three levels 'fully implemented', 'under implementation', and 'not yet implemented and not yet under implementation'.

At this stage, the gap assessment did not contain the recommendations and the roadmap, as the focus was to receive feedback on, and validate the assessment and implementation status accorded to the commitments under the ATIGA.

Based on the draft ATIGA gap assessment, a follow-up meeting was organized online between DFTP and ITC, where ITC's experts presented again the key findings of the ATIGA gap assessment, and DFTP provided their feedback (as well as that received from other government departments) and discussed further technical assistance needs. Additionally, ITC also reached out to the other government departments (namely, the Customs Department, DIMEX, National Accreditation Body and National Metrology Centre in DOSM, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Department of Food and Drugs in the Ministry of Health), referencing the discussion held with DFTP and revised gap assessment, and requested for any final inputs before proceeding to develop the recommendations and strategic roadmap.

Upon confirmation from the government departments of the assessment, the ATIGA study was updated with specific recommendations and a strategic executable roadmap.

The updated study with the recommendations and strategic executable roadmap has been shared with DFTP in June 2021 for validation (further discussed under Activity 1.2)

Challenges and adaptations due to Covid-19:

Due to international travel restrictions, the entire fact-finding mission had to be undertaken remotely by ITC's experts. ITC's National Consultant, based in Vientiane, supported the process by following up with stakeholders over phone and email; and follow-up consultations/meetings were organized as necessary over Zoom to discuss the technical aspects of the study. Follow-up questions/comments were shared with stakeholders over email in advance of the meeting – to ensure that the stakeholders time was properly utilised and they were prepared for any technical questions.

Next Steps:

Upon receiving feedback from DFTP on the recommendations and strategic roadmap, ITC plans to work in collaboration with DFTP to organize a validation event where the results of the study, recommendations and strategic roadmap will be presented and the proposed monitoring framework for implementation of necessary reforms will be discussed. (Refer to Activity 1.2)

Activity 1.2 – Review of the gap analysis results with GoL, and the private sector and agree on specific trade measures to be addressed (with a focus on targeted sectors)

As noted above, the gap assessment undertaken in Activity 1.1, was utilised to formulate specific recommendations and a strategic executable roadmap for a structured and coordinated implementation of reforms in order to strengthen implementation of the ATIGA and related commitments of the AEC Blueprint 2025. The updated assessment with the recommendations and roadmap has been shared with DFTP for review in June 2021.

Methodology and Results:

The roadmap sets out the specific recommendations, the responsible agency, along with implementation period for each of the recommendations, and priority level (high, medium or low) for implementation of these recommendations.

At the end of the roadmap, a monitoring structure for implementation of these recommendations is also discussed, and will also be presented at the validation event, and be further refined based on the feedback received. Upon validation, another column may be added to the roadmap indicating the support that is currently being received/ongoing, and support/technical assistance that will be agreed upon/implemented under the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project with respect to the recommendations.

Next Steps:

As noted under Activity 1.1, upon receiving feedback from DFTP on the recommendations and roadmap, a validation event will be organized to present the findings of the assessment, the recommendations and the roadmap, and discuss the proposed structure for monitoring of the roadmap.

Following this, ITC will engage with DFTP on further support that can be provided under the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project to implement recommendations formulated in the study and supporting the monitoring framework.

Activity 1.3 - Technical assistance and capacity building in the area of policy definition, regulations and procedures, product and environmental standard adoption

The activity consists of several sub-activities:

Sub-activity 1.3.1: Lao PDR's Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap

The Lao PDR Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap (FTNR) was undertaken, at the request of the DFTP, to ensure coherence in and promote Lao PDR's economic interests in the ASEAN economic integration process and negotiation of trade agreements at large, including the country's role in regional and multilateral trade negotiations.

Methodology and Results:

Desk research, bilateral consultations and the consultative workshop formed the basis for the in-depth analysis and drafting of the Roadmap study. The study comprises an analysis of the important current and future export markets for Lao PDR in geographical and product terms; assessment of the ease of, and existing barriers, to access identified key export markets; review of FTAs concluded by identified trading partners with third country; an analysis of the institutional structure in Lao PDR for FTA negotiations and implementation.

Challenges related to COVID-19 have been incorporated into and addressed in the Roadmap study.

The Roadmap Study was finalized based on comments and feedback received by DFTP and at the validation event organized for public and private sector stakeholders on 23 February 2021.

Event Details

The validation event was organized at the Muong Thanh Luxury Hotel in Vientiane and chaired by Mr. Saysana Sayakone, Director General, DFTP – MoIC, and Ms. Souphaphone Thavonsone, Programme Manager at the European Union Delegation (EUD) to Lao PDR.

Details of participants were as follows:

Total Participants	Gender Breakdown		Categories*	
	Male	Female	Public sector	Private and Academia
63	37	26	33	27

**The number does not add up to 63 participants – as 5 participants had not entered their designation.*

Structure of the event:

- Opening remarks were delivered by Director General (DG) Saysana Sayakone, DFTP- MoIC, Ms. Souphaphone Thavonsouk, EUD, and Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal, Chief – Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business Section, ITC.
- ITC's expert, Dr. Derk Bienen, presented the Lao PDR Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap 2021 – 2025 over online platform (zoom), and responded to questions/comments from the participants.
- Following the presentation, a panel discussion was held comprising of the following members:
 - o Mr. Santisouk Phounesavath, Deputy Director General, DFTP – MoIC (Moderator)
 - o Mr. Somphone Phady, Deputy Director of Trade in Goods Division, DFTP - MoIC (Panellist)
 - o Mr. Phonethavong Singhalath, Director, Department of Investment Promotion, Ministry of Planning and Investment (Panellist)
 - o Ms. Somsanook Khounthikhoumman, Deputy Director of Economic Integration Division, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Panellist)
 - o Dr. Xaybandith Rasphone, Vice President of Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)/President of the Association of the Garment Industry of Lao PDR (Panellist)
 - o Dr. Bounlerth Vanhnalath, Faculty of Economics and Business Management, National University of Laos (Panellist)
- The session concluded with a Q&A and discussion session, and closing remarks were provided by Deputy Director General (DDG) Santisouk Phounesavath, DFTP, MoIC.

Below are impressions from the validation workshop of the FTNRM.



Next Steps:

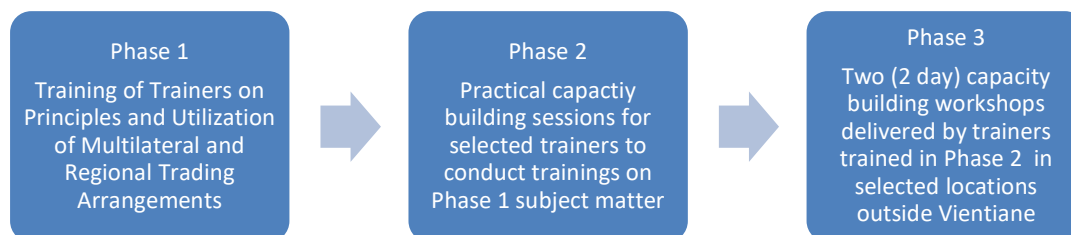
The Roadmap was translated into Lao language at the request of DFTP, in order to be presented for endorsement. Based on this, ITC will engage with DFTP to identify areas of support for implementation of the Roadmap, in line with the objectives of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project.

Sub-activity 1.3.2: Tailor-made training on trade negotiations for policymakers

ITC, in collaboration with the Economic Research Institute for Industry and Trade (ERIIT), delivered a targeted training programme on the topic 'Understanding the principles and utilization of multilateral and regional trading agreements'. (Topic proposed by ERIIT).

Methodology and Results:

Based on discussions undertaken with ERIIT and DFTP on the expected results of the training programme, key topics/issues to be covered, and the target audience – the training programme was developed comprising of three phases.



Each of these phases are discussed below in more detail:

Phase 1: Training of Trainers on subject matter relating to principles and utilization of multi-lateral and regional trading arrangements	
<i>Overview:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1 focused on officials with the mandate to train and build up capacity of other officials on related subject matter in Lao PDR – particularly focusing on officers from DFTP and ERIIT, as well as selected participants from the private and academic sector. - The training programme covered key principles relating to the WTO and ASEAN frameworks and how better to benefit trade in the country using these frameworks; the support/access available to Lao PDR as a least developed country (LDC); and Lao PDR's preparations in light of further regional integration (such as under RCEP, the AEC Blueprint 2025 and ASEAN Vision 2040).
<i>Timelines:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The curriculum and presentations were developed in November/December 2020; and - The Phase 1 training was delivered in 7 half day sessions from 25 January to 02 February 2021.
<i>Location and Mode of delivery</i>	The participants were present at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce; with ITC's expert delivering the training over online platform (given the ongoing travel restrictions).
<i>Participants</i>	Total – 25 (Male – 13; Female – 12)
<i>Results</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was over 80% attendance for each of day of training. 15 participants from the 25 participants attended all days of the training. - An assessment was provided at the end of the training programme and 62% of the participants who undertook the assessment passed it. - The sessions were conducted as interactive trainings - The general feedback from the training was positive, with participants responding favourably to the questions on the extent to the training enhanced their understanding of Lao PDR's multilateral and regional trading agreements; and their understanding of the importance of Lao PDR's regional integration and complying with regional commitments.
Phase 2: Practical capacity building sessions for ERIIT trainers on conducting trainings	
<i>Overview:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 2 focused on building up the skills of ERIIT trainers to be able to develop and deliver trainings on related topics to broader groups of stakeholders themselves. - ITC's Subject Matter Expert worked directly with 8 trainers selected by ERIIT (5 from ERIIT, 1 from DFTP, 1 from DIMEX, and 1 from the National University of Lao PDR) training them on developing/reframing material depending on the target audience; and providing insights into research tools and platforms. - The selected trainers were then assigned to develop training material for topics assigned to them, which they were then to deliver in Phase 3 at provincial workshops. - ITC's Expert delivered 2 sessions – the first session to prepare the officers for delivering trainings; and the second session being a practice run to present their content and obtain feedback.
<i>Timelines:</i>	11 – 17 February 2021
<i>Location and Mode of delivery</i>	Delivered over Zoom – with participants in Lao PDR either gathering at the ERIIT offices or logging in online.
<i>Participants</i>	Total – 8 (Male – 5; Female – 3)
<i>Results</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each of the 8 trainers delivered a session at the provincial workshops delivered in Phase 3. - Feedback received from the trainers on the whole programme noted that the training was useful and would be helpful in their duties.
Phase 3: Delivery of two capacity building workshops for trade officers in selected locations	
<i>Overview:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on the agenda developed in Phase 2, the selected trainers delivered two day capacity-building workshops in the Vangvieng District and Thakek District in Lao PDR. - ITC's expert who delivered the Phase 1 and 2 trainings – participated online, to provide guidance to the trainers and respond to questions.

	- The training covered topics relating to the WTO, ASEAN, Regional cooperation frameworks, GSP and Lao PDR's preparation for LDC graduation.
Timelines:	- Vangvieng district – 25 -26 March 2021 - Thakhek district – 01 – 02 April 2021
Location and Mode of delivery	- Vangvieng district – Thavisouk Riverside Hotel - Thakhek district – Phonepadith Hotel The participants and trainers participated in-person in the above locations, while ITC's expert participated virtually via online platform.
Participants	Total in both workshops: 50 (Male – 40; Female – 10)
Results	- At the end of the workshops, the participants were given an assessment on the content covered in the training. From the participants at both sets of trainings, 69% of the participants that took the assessment passed it. - Participants from the training noted that the content covered was useful, as training on such content had not been delivered before. They also requested for longer training periods to cover such complex material.

Below are some impressions from the trainings:

Phase 1 – Training from 25th January to 2nd February 2021



Phase 3 – Provincial Capacity Building Workshops – Vangvieng District and Thakhek District



Challenges and adaptations due to Covid-19:

Given the travel restrictions, ITC's expert had to deliver the trainings virtually via online platform. The structure of the Phase 1 trainings were reorganized as half-day sessions instead of full day sessions, in order to ensure that the training would not be too tiring for the participants and the trainers. For Phase 3, the trained trainers were able to take the lead based on the guidance/training received by ITC's expert during Phase 2 – thus enabling the provincial trainings to be delivered by Lao trainers in-person.

Next Steps:

This activity has been completed. ITC's expert developed an end-of-assignment report which included lessons learned and recommendations for the future, which called for continuing the capacity building initiatives for the provinces, cooperate further with academia, and undertake capacity building on the COVID-19 recovery process, making use of preferential trading schemes, and LDC graduation.

ITC will continue to engage with ERIIT in upcoming stakeholder events under the ARISE Plus project – particularly for validation of the ATIGA gap assessment (Refer Activity 1.1 and 1.2), and presentation of/trainings based on the EU EBA Business Guide (discussed below under Activity 2.2).

Sub-activity 1.3.3: Trade In Services Support – Regulatory Assessment for Transport and Tourism Services

The focus of the period covered under this progress report was the regulatory assessment for the transport services sector. (The request from the Trade in Services division of DFTP was to undertake the regulatory assessments for the two services sectors separately, and to commence with the transport services sector).

Methodology and Results:

A regulatory assessment is an in-depth assessment of horizontal laws, regulations and policies affecting the relevant service sector. Transport services have sector specific laws and regulations and will also be affected by horizontal laws which impact on all economic activities (investment regime, cross-border payments, etc.).

Lao PDR undertook regulatory assessments for certain services, including transport and tourism, in 2015. Since then, several changes have taken place within the national and regional context, particularly, in light of the signing of the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA) in April 2019, and other regional negotiations and partnerships currently underway. Therefore, updated regulatory assessments are being undertaken for selected sectors to assist the Government of Lao PDR in the context of the ongoing negotiations relating to services trade, and to identify relevant regulatory reforms required to meet commitments being undertaken and facilitate regional integration.

The assessment, based on desk research and stakeholder consultations, will feed into an analysis of the trade restrictions/inconsistencies based on the current regulatory framework and relevant commitments, and set out the reform measures to be taken to meet commitments undertaken or sought to be undertaken by Lao PDR and to facilitate integration into the regional framework.

The regulatory assessment for the transport sector covers four specific sub-sectors, namely air transport, rail transport, road transport, and internal water ways transport (As selected by DFTP – MoIC).

The first draft is currently being finalized and will be shared with DFTP for review and feedback.

Challenges and adaptations due to Covid-19:

Due to ongoing international travel restrictions, ITC's expert is unable to travel to Lao PDR to meet with stakeholders and discuss specific issues found in reviews of the legislative and regulatory frameworks. Overall the team experienced challenges in obtaining relevant information – particularly in terms of ensuring that the implementing regulations/laws being referred to/available online are indeed the latest versions or still valid; and to also clarify points based on the material reviewed. The team is continuously following up with relevant departments on laws/regulations and policies reviewed, and wherever necessary, will be organizing online consultations between ITC's expert and the Lao stakeholders, with the support of the National Consultant.

Further, the lockdown imposed in Vientiane in May 2021 also slowed down efforts to obtain information, as the National Consultant was unable to meet with officials directly at the relevant departments, and there were delays in connecting with relevant officials over email and phone.

Next Steps:

The draft report for the regulatory assessment for transport services was to be ready for review in the second quarter of 2021. However, with the constraints to following up on information/material due to the lockdown, more time will be needed to ensure that analysis is taking into account the latest available regulations, including any recent updates. (For instance, in some instances, it was noted that certain implementing regulations had been passed, but these were not available or referred to online – and so it was necessary to engage directly with the relevant department of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to obtain access to this information).

Upon clarifying the outstanding points raised in the analysis, and finalising the first draft, ITC will share the draft report with DFTP; and undertake revisions based on the feedback received. Subsequently, the regulatory assessment will also be presented at a public private dialogue to invite feedback and comments from a broad range of stakeholders, following which the report will be finalized taking into account any additional information and inputs. ITC's expert will also be available for follow-up advisory sessions based on the report, as deemed necessary by DFTP, to discuss recommendations and next steps; and support can be designed as possible based on the scope and budget available under the ARISE Plus project.

The regulatory assessment for the tourism sector will also commence this year, upon completion of the transport services sector assessment.

ITC will continue to engage with DFTP, including the Trade in Services division, to discuss any further support in relation to services trade, particularly in the context of initiatives which can support to strengthen regional integration and also based on recommendations from the regulatory assessment. (All activities proposed will be assessed to ensure it is aligned with the objectives of the ARISE Plus project).

Sub-activity 1.3.4 : E-Commerce Guides

In 2020, a number of consultations were held with DFTP on e-commerce support for Lao PDR and a concept note was shared on the potential areas of support. Based on these discussions, support is currently being provided to develop a series of guides on selected e-commerce topics.

Methodology and Results:

ITC has commenced the development of four e-commerce guides covering the following topics:

- (i) International Trade Aspects of E-Commerce - Guide unpacking recent developments in the cross-cutting area of e-commerce and trade negotiations, with focus on specific e-commerce issues at the heart of ongoing multilateral and regional negotiations. The Guide will focus on perspectives of developing countries/least-developed countries (LDCs), and the potential implications of these developments for such countries, including how it can benefit from/leverage upon such multilateral and regional cooperation. Priority will be given to those negotiations/agreements that Lao PDR is party to, such as the ASEAN agreements.
- (ii) E-commerce transactions (e-contracts, e-payments and e-signatures) - Guide exploring the types of e-commerce transactions, including the concepts of electronic payments and electronic signatures and how these are applied; efforts being taken at the multilateral level for rules on e-commerce transactions; steps taken by other countries, and key lessons for developing countries.
- (iii) Data Protection and Privacy for Developing Countries - Guide assessing the importance of data protection legislation; developments at an international level and data protection regulations developed by other countries; as well as recommendations for regulations on data protection in developing countries.
- (iv) Consumer Protection - Guide exploring aspects relevant for consumers and traders engaged in online trading in comparison to in-person trading; outlines the importance of having relevant provisions governing such online trading; and presenting international guidelines/best practices for such regulations.

Lao specific legislation, guidelines and policies will be incorporated into these Guides, and wherever relevant, specific aspects relating to LDCs will also be discussed.

The work plan for these guides was approved in May 2021. The first step is to develop outlines/structures for each of the guides – which will be shared with DFTP for validation. DFTP plans to request for inputs from academic institutions as well – as it intends for these guides to be made available to a larger audience in Lao PDR. The objective is to build capacity among the public, private and academic sectors in Lao PDR on e-commerce trade and thereby build up knowledge and understanding on e-commerce and enable stakeholders to be better prepared to support and engage in activities in this regard.

ITC will develop the Guides based on the validated outlines/structures and share with DFTP for feedback/comments. The finalized Guides will be made available in English and Lao languages, and training workshops will be delivered to stakeholders on each of the above mentioned topics.

Sub-activity 1.3.5: Conformity Assessment

Under Expected Result 1, ITC implements technical assistance and capacity building in the area of policy definition, regulations and procedures, product and environmental standard adoption and conformity assessment capacities. In particular it assists to develop, harmonize and promote national standards, including the review of selected standards and support to develop a reinforced standardization programme as part of ASEAN standardization activities. Support is being provided to reinforce standardization, national inspection, testing and certification bodies to help enterprises demonstrate compliance and prepare for international accreditation.

In 2020 ITC conducted the assessment of the quality and SPS-related institutions with a number of recommendations and an action plan for the ARISE Plus project was designed to address priority recommendations with validation by stakeholders.

This activity implements the following priority recommendations.

⇒ **Recommendation # 1 - Strengthening Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) National Enquiry Point (NEP) (extended to TBT SPS and National Notification Authorities - NNA)**

Main activities and results:

- Definition of the scope and planning of the activity done in consultation with DOSM through a series of online meetings. The SPS NEP and the NNA included as beneficiary of this activity in addition to the TBT NEP.
- Ongoing gap assessment of the TBT/SPS NEPs and NNA related to knowledge, skills, tools, training, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to carry out their related functions related to implementation of the WTO TBT and SPS Agreements. Consultation meeting with officials involved in the operations of the SPS / TBT NEP and NNA; 3 questionnaire circulated; 3 questionnaires compiled by Department of Policy and Legal Affairs, MAF; Department of Standardization and Metrology (DoSM), MoIC; Food and Drug Department, MoH)

Next steps:

- Finalise the gap assessment; conduct practical training sessions for the NEPs, NNAs and relevant stakeholders with development of SOPs. Conduct training on ePing with example of ePing Vietnam. Conduct a stakeholder sensitization workshop on the transparency provisions with the NEPs, NNA, relevant institutions, and the private sector.
- Provide support to identify and submit notifications to the WTO in particular related to coffee and wood, fruits and vegetables and rice. These latter sectors help to build synergies with ITC Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (SYMST) Project funded by the EU.

⇒ **Recommendations # 2 & 3 on Standardization and # 10 on Standardization for coffee and # 10A on standardization for crop products**

This activity includes actions to prepare DoSM for participation to ISO General Assembly (GA) and DEVCO (Development Countries Committee) Meetings; to assist DoSM to set up the Technical Committees (TC) on Management Systems (MSS) and Conformity Assessment (CA); to strengthen national capacity to develop and promote standards; to review the current procedure on development of standards – including those related to coffee and agricultural crops.

Main activities and results:

- Established collaboration with ISO Secretariat for enhancing participation of Lao PDR in standardization work for priority sectors (i.e. TCs 34 on food and subcommittees (3 on F&V, 15 on coffee), and on wood (TC 218)
- Organised a joint meeting with ISO for 13 local stakeholders to review the status of DOSM's participation in TC, explain the work of TC 218, TC 34, SC 3 and 15 and discuss next steps to enable LAO PDR participation
- Established linkages with ongoing project in Singapore for DOSM to benefit of activities on standards development process, how to create TC and develop standardization guides
- High engagement of DOSM senior management in planning standardization activities
- Increased understanding of national standardization work related to agricultural crops by DOA and DOSM. Inclusion of F&V as target products of the standardization work – target sector of the Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (SYMST) project implemented by ITC and funded by the EU.

Next steps:

- Continue - in partnership with ISO - the support to strengthen LAO 's standardization capacity. Prepare and encourage DOSM to register and participate in the DEVCO and in the ISO GA virtual meetings. Follow up with DOSM on setting up the TC on MSS and on CA. Follow up on finalisation of the

national standardization strategy and link to the target sectors. Organise consultations with stakeholders with ISO and Chairs / members of selected TC. Organise ISO/ITC tailored made and joint workshops on development and promotion for the specific standards (Coffee/Wood/F&V) by also building on the project with Singapore

- Support DOSM in the preparation of the World Standards DAY (Theme SDGs) – 14 October
- Facilitate the networking and mentoring approach with other neighbouring countries (i.e. Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore)
- Support to formulate a DOSM/DOA policy /SOP for development of standards for agricultural crops and develop a SOP for this and provide support for implementing the policy and SOP

⇒ **Recommendation # 6 – Training on Standards**

The Information and Training Centre of DOSM has plans to provide awareness and implementation training on ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems (QMS) to the industry in Lao PDR on regular basis

Main activities and results:

- Agreed with DOSM the approach to build a pool of trainers on ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 among DOSM and other institutions through Training programmes on Management System on ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems (QMS) and ISO14001:2017 Environmental Management System (EMS). Preparation of the training on going (4-day TOT and 2 one-day awareness workshops for the industry by trained trainers for each standard)

Next steps:

- Training of trainers on effective implementation of ISO9001:2015 (5-8 July); Selected Trainers deliver 1st and 2nd training to industry (13 & 15 July); Sharing of Lessons learned (16 July)
- Training of trainers on effective implementation of ISO14001 :2017 (2-5 August); Selected Trainers deliver 1st and 2nd training to industry (10 & 12 August); Sharing of Lessons learned (13 August)

⇒ **Recommendations n # 4 – Product Certification and #7 System certification**

DOSM has a plan to be a future certification body (CB) for providing ISO 9001: 2015 QMS certification services to Lao industry and eventually for other management systems and requested assistance on strengthening product certification capacity (ISO/IEC 17021 and ISO/IEC 17065).

It was agreed with DOSM to conduct audit of the system by a Regional Accreditation Body (i.e. Vietnam) (September / October 2021).

ITC will conduct a call for proposals by various bodies upon suggestions by DOSM on the bodies to contact. Based on the audit, follow up assistance will be provided.

⇒ **Recommendations # 12 – Accreditation of food lab**

The National Centre for Food and Drug Analysis (NCFDA) of the Ministry of Health has obtained accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025 for a limited scope within its food microbiology lab, it requires support for extending the scope of accreditation covering all chemical and microbiological parameters for various food matrices including training on development of SOPs, method validation and measurement uncertainty for which TA may be provided.

Main activities and results:

- Established partnership collaboration between the Department of Medical Science (DMS), Ministry of Public Health in Thailand, NCFDA and ARISE Plus Project to strengthen NCFDA's laboratory

management system towards attainment of ISO 17025:2017 accreditation. This cooperation falls under the MoU on Health Cooperation between the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand and Ministry of Public Health, Lao PDR and the Terms of Reference of ASEAN Food Testing Laboratory Committee.

- Gap assessment ongoing: action plan of the gap assessment agreed; DMS expert team established (3 experts); review of the quality documentation initiated.

Next steps:

Determine the exact scope of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 extension (analytes, matrices), complete the gap assessment, and validate the gap assessment report proposed action plan. The DMS will initiate the implementation of technical assistance

⇒ **Recommendations n # 14 A - Training of FDD inspectors**

During the validation process of the recommendations, it was suggested by FDD that ARISE Plus Project should also provide training on Food Safety (GMP, GHP, HACCP etc) to Food Inspectors (8 persons) of FDD and to coffee collectors and processing plants.

A series of meetings with FDD have taken place to define the scope of the training. A concept note on the training has been prepared and will be discussed with FDD In July while and training is planned in September.

⇒ **Recommendations n # 14 B - Development of COVID related guidelines and posters for food industry**

Main activities and results:

- Reviewed communication materials available online and obtained clearance for reproduction (Codex, WHO, FAO, ITC etc); directory compiled and presented to FDD
- 6 posters identified by FDD for reproduction . Distribution plan submitted by FDD to ITC for target audience (approx. 13000 posters to 19 provinces)

Next steps:

- Reproduce and distribute identified materials. Develop and implement with FDD a plan for additional sensitisation events (i.e. awareness webinars to present posters and sensitise on food safety).

Challenges:

Activities have been impacted by the COVID-19 limitation to field experts and the recent lockdown that further delayed some activities, such as the support to the FDD lab since the senior management requested to partner with institutions such as the Department of Medical Science in Thailand instead of local consultants.

IV. Achievements January to June 2021: Expected Result 2

ER2: Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Everything But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA).

Activity 2.1 - Review of export potential and existing trade with the EU and the regional market

This activity was completed in 2019. The findings have been distributed via the ARISE Plus Lao PDR website, social media, and targeted emails to key Lao stakeholders and have informed other activities of the project including, activity 2.2.2, 3.1 and 3.6

The study is available at <https://www.intracen.org/arise-plus-laos/publications/>

Activity 2.2 – Awareness raising about EBA Preferences

The purpose of the following activities is to raise awareness of the preferential trading schemes available in the EU, and to build up knowledge and understanding of the potential for Lao traders to export to the EU, particularly under the Everything-But-Arms (EBA) preference scheme .

Lao PDR currently qualifies for access to the EU market, under the EBA scheme due to its LDC status, thereby enabling traders to export to the EU duty free for all products except for arms and armaments. In the case of graduation from LDC status, the country will lose access to the EBA scheme, but only after three years from graduation. Lao PDR has been recommended for graduation in 2026, which indicates that exporters in the country will be able to benefit from EBA access to the EU at least until 2029.

Thereafter, Lao PDR will be able to access the EU market under the Standard GSP scheme, which is applicable to all low and lower-middle income countries or may wish to negotiate for access under the GSP+ scheme, which is a special incentive arrangement available upon implementation of certain conventions relating to labour, human rights, environmental protection and good governance.

In this context, the following activities are underway:

Sub-activity 2.2.1 – EU EBA Business Guide

The EU EBA Business Guide is a consolidated business guide on Lao PDR's preferential market access to the EU under the Everything But Arms initiative (EBA). The objective of the Guide is to provide a tool from which businesses in Lao PDR are able to understand the conditions for accessing the EU market under the EBA scheme and related opportunities for businesses in Lao PDR, with a view to improving export performance to the EU.

Methodology and Results:

The Guide will comprise of two sections:

- Part I: General Section – The first section details the relevant procedures and steps to export under the scheme, including procedures to follow in Lao PDR to engage in exports, requirements to enter the EU market under the EBA scheme, as well as details of important information sources and platforms such as the EU Trade Helpdesk, and the Lao Quality for Trade Platform developed under the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project.
- Part II: Product Specific Section – The second section prioritizes five product sectors, with important export potential to the EU, namely agricultural products, processed food products, textiles and garments, footwear, and processed wood products. For each of these product sectors, the Guide will provide specific information on regulations, requirements and export processes to be complied with (Tariffs/coverage, rules of origin, labelling, maximum residue levels, etc.) in order to place such products on the EU market.

The five product sectors mentioned above were determined in consultation with relevant departments in the MoIC, namely the Department of Trade Promotion (DTP), Department of Import and Export (DIMEX),

and Department of Industry and Handicraft (DoIH). A proposal was submitted to the departments in 2020, followed by consultations to clarify issues and validate the sectors selected. The proposal was also shared with the Department of SME Promotion (DoSMEP).

Next Steps:

The draft Guide has been shared with the Department of Trade Promotion (DTP) for review and feedback. The Guide will be finalized based on the feedback and inputs received from DTP, as well as other government agencies as deemed relevant by DTP.

Upon finalisation of the draft Guide, the Guide will be translated into Lao language, and both versions will be formatted into a user-friendly template and made available for dissemination.

Thereafter, a series of awareness raising workshops will be delivered, based on the Guide targeting the private sector. (Refer to update in sub-activity 2.2.4).

Sub-activity 2.2.2: Assessment of the impact of tariff changes on Lao PDR's trade opportunities

This activity was completed in August 2020 and was then once again updated with latest GDP data and presented at the Trade and Private Sector Working in January 2021.

The publication 'Trade implications of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status' is available at <https://www.intracen.org/arise-plus-laos/publications/>

Sub-activity 2.2.3: Training on export potential analysis and introduction to trade policy modelling

This activity contains two workshops, one entry level and an advanced training course.

Workshop 1: Training on ITC's Market Analysis Tools and Introduction to Export Potential Analysis was jointly organised with DFTP and held from February 8th to 12th. 29 people took part in the training (out of which 16 were women). It was a hybrid training, with ITC experts joining via online platform and participants meeting in person, with hands-on exercises, customized to Lao PDR.

As a result of the training, participants have become familiar with ITC's Market Analysis Tools and in particular the Export Potential Map.

Challenges:

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the team had to adapt and find innovative solutions. However, virtual delivery made it more difficult to effectively communicate and interact with participants. Solutions to improve interaction included establishing alternative ways of communication (email, WhatsApp group), encouraging more involvement by the facilitator present in the room, and adapting the training content

Next steps:

Second training (Training on Advanced Export Potential Analysis and Trade Policy Modelling), to be delivered in July and August, is being designed; it builds on the knowledge from the first training and accounts for lessons learned

Workshop 2: Training on Advanced Export Potential Analysis and Trade Policy Modelling is being planned in close collaboration with DFTP and will be rolled out over several weeks during July to August 2021. Between 10 and 15 participants will be selected to join this advanced training course. The training will be delivered in a hybrid format, with ITC trainers joining via online platform and a facilitator supporting participants in room. There will be hands-on exercises for the participants, customized to Lao PDR .

The expected results are that participants will be able to produce quantitative estimates of the expected effect of trade policy changes, and make corresponding suggestions for adaptation strategies based on export potential.

Preparatory work undertaken so far:

- Design of the training programme and preparation of training materials
- Consultation with local counterparts on participant selection
- Identification and hiring of a facilitator
- Identification of interpreters and translators

Challenges:

Due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, innovative solutions had to be found: virtual delivery of a technical training poses communication challenges with participants, which compound existing language barriers.

Based on the experiences from workshop 1, actions have been taken to respond to the challenges:

- engagement of a facilitator that will be present in the trainings, is a native speaker and has a technical background in trade; translation of most course materials; interpretation into Lao during classes.
- design of the structure of the workshop with spaced-out activities at the beginning. This allows additional time for participants to become familiar with the training platform, for trainers to follow-up with them one on one, and for trainers to adapt contents or approaches if necessary.

Next steps:

- Finalization and translation of materials
- Follow-up with local counterparts on participant selection
- Role out of advanced training course

Sub-activity 2.2.4: Awareness raising campaign on the EBA Scheme

Activities are being implemented to increase reach of the EU EBA Business Guide and strengthen knowledge and understanding in Lao PDR on EU preferential trading schemes, its applicability to Lao PDR and opportunities available, and to be better prepared for future developments in this regard.

Methodology and Results:

i. Launch event and Awareness Raising Workshops on the EU EBA Business Guide –

The finalized Guide will be presented at a launch event to be organized in Vientiane, followed by a series of workshops for stakeholders in Vientiane and provinces around the country. The objective of these workshops will be to present the Guide to the private sector, explain the relevance and benefit of the EBA scheme, and undertake a detailed training on how the Guide can be used as a tool to comply with the steps required to export to the EU under the EBA scheme. The Guide will be made available to the participants in English and Lao languages, and training will also be provided on the relevant tools available online to assist traders with the export process.

In the interests of ensuring sustainability and effectiveness of the workshops, ITC is seeking to build in Training of Trainer workshops at the outset based on the EBA Guide (potentially through agencies such as ERIIT, and private sector associations – such as ECCIL), in order to empower officials based in these agencies to them conduct trainings at the provincial level. This can ensure that there is capacity within the country to deliver these trainings in the future, and possibly may be more effective if delivered in Lao language and in-person in the provincial areas.

ii. Other awareness raising activities on the EU preferential trading schemes

Following up from initial dialogues held with ECCIL in 2020, a concept note was developed outlining the awareness-raising activities that can be undertaken in Lao PDR. Activities included a dialogue series, publication of articles/insights in newspapers and newsletters, and social media engagements including development of video clips and infographics to present relevant information. Tentative topics were also proposed for the dialogue series – which included topics on the importance of the EBA

scheme to build up Lao PDR's presence in the EU market, access to the EU market after LDC graduation, and on ongoing developments to the preferential market access schemes.

The objective is to increase awareness of stakeholders on the access available to the EU market, and thereby (i) encourage Lao traders to export to the EU market; and (ii) empower stakeholders to actively engage in dialogue on such issues by making available up-to-date information and insights.

To support the awareness-raising efforts, ITC has engaged a media consultancy firm located in Vientiane. The media firm is currently preparing a work-plan to ensure that all the awareness-raising efforts are implemented in a concerted and complementary manner.

During this period, ITC has also been undertaking meetings with officials to identify potential speakers/participants in the awareness raising activities, and to better formulate the dialogues and material that can be developed. More specifically, ITC met with:

- Officers from the DG Trade at the European Commission to brief them on the activities being undertaken in relation to the EU EBA scheme in Lao PDR;
- Two exporters from Lao PDR – exporting coffee and garments to the EU – introduced by ECCIL. (One of the exporters was indeed using the EBA to export, while the other exporter was exporting to the EU but unaware of the EBA scheme).

Challenges and adaptations due to Covid-19:

With respect to the trainings based on the EU EBA Business Guide – Delivering technical trainings in provincial areas may be a challenge if ITC's expert has to conduct the training online (given travel restrictions). Accordingly, as noted above, ITC is working on building in Training of Trainer components to the trainings, so that there are agencies within Lao PDR capacitated to undertake these trainings in person.

With respect to the dialogues under the scope of the awareness-raising activities – An initial dialogue was tentatively planned to be held towards end of May, although this had to be delayed due to the lockdowns imposed in Vientiane in May. As a result, ITC has been re-assessing the structure and plan for these activities. More specifically, wherever some of the dialogues can be organized online or presented in the form of videos which can be circulated online, these will be organized accordingly, and in-person dialogues will be organized as follow-up and on targeted topics (such as on challenges faced in utilising the EBA, lessons learned, and preparing for after EBA). The videos and insights can precede in-person dialogues on specific topics, so that participants at the in-person dialogues would also have some informational materials available before the in-person dialogues.

Next Steps:

Upon finalization of the EU EBA Business Guide in English and Lao language – Training workshops are to be organized to sensitize stakeholders to the scope for trade with the EU, and utilization of the EU EBA scheme.

Roll-out of other awareness-raising activities – The workplan will be developed by ITC and the media consultancy firm, and the above-mentioned activities are to be rolled out over the next months.

Sub-activity 2.2.5 – Organisation of awareness-raising activities for preparation of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status

In the last progress report, ITC noted that activities with respect to preparation for Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status will be based on the (i) recommendation at the 2nd triennial review in February 2021; and (ii) the new formulation of the EU GSP regime (the current framework is set to expire in 2023), as any amendments to the Standard GSP and GSP+ schemes and applicability will be relevant for Lao PDR.

Lao PDR has been recommended for graduation from LDC status in 2026, and therefore will benefit from the EBA at least until 2029. As a result, the focus thus far has been on the EBA activities mentioned above.

The awareness-raising activities mentioned above, will include elements in terms of preparations for Lao PDR after the EBA scheme, given its upcoming graduation.

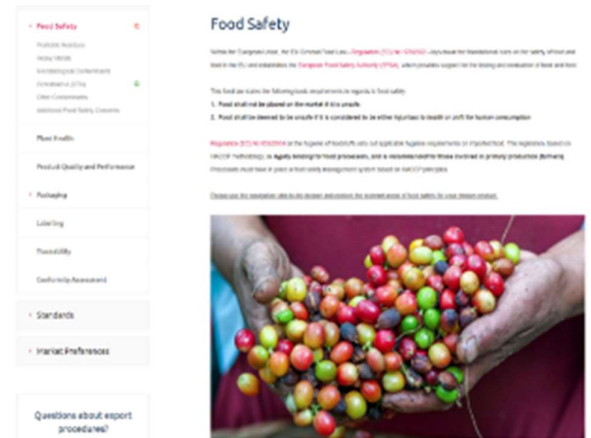
Furthermore, after the new formulation of the EU GSP regime has been finalised, further targeted capacity building initiatives/needs can be discussed with relevant stakeholders in Lao PDR, as any preparations for after EBA will need to take into account the revisions/updates to the EU GSP regime.

Activity 2.3: Development of awareness raising materials and online tools on EU quality related mandatory market requirements, standards and other market driven requirements for the coffee and wood processing sector and related dissemination.

This activity involves the development of an online tool (Lao Quality Compass) displaying requirements in an easy-to-understand manner for priority product-market combinations.

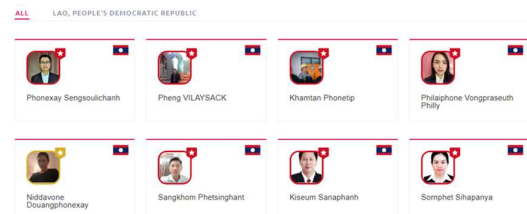
Main activities and results:

- Further development of selected features of the Lao Quality for Trade Platform
- Completion of research of quality requirements (mandatory requirements, standards and quality related market preferences for the third product-market combinations (Lao coffee to Korea)
- Uploading of full completed research for Lao Coffee to Vietnam and Korea
- Under Connect - 9 Quality Champions are registered
- Quality Success launched and is ready for use
- Uploading Quality Champions Profiles on Quality Connect



QUALITY CHAMPIONS

The Lao PDR Quality Champions offer their services through the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI). The International Trade Centre is developing and qualifying experts in quality management together with leading institutions in the field of quality. These experts are called Quality Champions. Quality Champions are trained using the latest tools and techniques for ensuring quality and food safety in a business and implement quality improvement projects in enterprises.



Next steps:

The next steps include:

- complete IT developments
- complete research for additional product-market combinations (selected processed wood to the EU and priority ASEAN markets)
- prepare and implement awareness raising initiatives.

Activity 2.4: Development and qualification of pool of national Quality Champions and sensitization events organized in co-operation with local institutions

This activity involved the identification through an open application process and selection of a pool of Quality Champions to function as trainers and advisers on a long-term basis through national institutions. The main role of Quality Champions is to guide and coach SMEs improve the quality of products and build excellence into processes. LNCCI is the agreed host for this initiative.



Main activities and results:

- Initially 25 Quality Champions (11 women and 14 men) from private and public sectors and with relevant quality related backgrounds had confirmed and signed commitment statements. 21 of the above (9 women and 12 men) remained active during the period. Four formally left the programme.
- Planning, preparation with LNCCI (Quality Champions Programme focal point), design and development of the continued QC programme for Lao PDR (initiated in 2020)
- Six Quality Champions workshops of 5-days each (half days in each case) were completed during the period as follows:
 - QC3 - 25-29 Jan 2021 The Quality Journey Continues Understanding quality requirements & how to respond part II. NB *This workshop was postponed from December 2020 in order not to overlap with another event.* Attendance: Total of 23 participants out of which 9 women)
 - QC4 - 22-26 Feb 2021: The Quality Journey Continues – Initiating an Improvement Project. Attendance: Total of 22 participants, out of which 9 women.
 - QC5 - 22-16 Marc 2021: The Quality Journey Continues –Initiating an Improvement Project part 2 & Specialty Coffee Quality. Attendance: Total of 22 participants out of which 6 were women
 - QC6 - 26-30 April 2021: The Quality Journey continues – Conducting Structured Improvement Projects. Attendance: Total of 21 participants out of which 6 were women
 - QC7 – Soft skills (communication skills, training, coaching and leadership skills). Attendance: Total of 16 participants out of which 6 were women

- QC8 – 28 June – 2 July (ongoing at the drafting of this report): ISO9001 implementation course.



- The above workshops featured a mix of international experts and national resources person and covered areas such international quality requirements, Lean Six Sigma Greenbelt training, training, coaching and communication skills and ISO9001.
- All courses included group activities and experience sharing by QCs
- National resource persons included the President of the Lao Wood Processing Association and representatives of the Lao Coffee association.
- A field visit was organized to the Lao Furniture Industry Group Co.,Ltd
- A senior specialty coffee expert and Quality Champion from Kenya spoke delivered a session on specialty coffee.
- Efforts to connect QC with other project areas including briefings and invitations to attend courses and events under other components (and in one case under another project – SYMST) were much appreciated and have led to significant cross benefits and synergies.
- The details of each workshop is indicated in the corresponding event report.

Challenges

The shift to full online format represented a partial re-design of some of the courses and allowed for less participant interaction. Despite this situation, the fill online courses were as highly rated as the others by participants. Due to the lock down, some field visits had to be postponed and this may also influence when the enterprise improvement projects (activity 3.5, which is part of the qualification) can start.

Next steps

The next steps include:

- Complete the remaining four courses by December 2021
- In parallel, start the pilot enterprise quality improvement projects (part of the QC qualification) as soon as the situation allows in terms of COVID; also to align with enterprise support under the wood and coffee activities, so that the same enterprises may potentially receive support in multiple complementary areas.

Activity 2.5 – Development of a practical online export curriculum to support private sector exports

In partnership with LNCCI, ITC is developing an online interactive electronic learning (e-learning) course on cross border procedures to benefit Lao PDR traders. The e-learning course is to support Lao PDR's enterprises to comply with cross-border procedural and regulatory requirements for export transactions, including to the EU and ASEAN markets.

Methodology and Results:

ITC conducted initial discussions with LNCCI, and relevant MoIC departments, namely, DTP, DIMEX and DoIH to introduce the concept of the e-learning course, and broadly discuss the topic/subject matter to be covered in the e-learning course.

The course is primarily intended to benefit Lao traders engaging in exports, and those seeking to engage in export trade. Employees in related businesses can also follow the course in order to increase their knowledge and understanding of engaging in export trade. Additionally, the course may also be beneficial to government officials engaged in export related activities, and for students and academia interested in international trade. Participants seeking to follow the e-learning course can do so, according to their own schedule, on their laptop/mobile device. The course will can comprise of pre-recorded lecture content, videos, quizzes, and other interactive elements.

During the period covered by this report, the following steps were/are being taken:

- (a) Training session for LNCCI focal team on management and administering the e-learning course – ITC’s SME Trade Academy delivered an online training session for officials at LNCCI to be engaged in administration of the e-learning course. The training focused on the operation of an e-learning platform, examples of other e-learning platforms, and challenges and lessons learned from administration/management of such courses.
- (b) Stakeholder consultations and development of a needs assessment – ITC’s expert undertook a series of consultations with public and private sector officials to identify needs and priorities for the e-learning course. Over this period, ITC’s expert consultations with over 25 agencies from the public and private sector (including private sector associations and individual companies). The consultations were undertaken online, due to travel restrictions. To support these consultations, ITC’s expert developed semi-structured interview guides for each of the stakeholder categories; and analysed the responses received to outline the key issues that were identified as priorities for the course. Surveys were also disseminated over emails with the support of LNCCI to obtain information from exporters, but there were limited responses through this medium, possibly due to such ‘survey’ emails not reaching the main inbox or reluctance/disinterest in responding to survey. As a result, efforts were redirected towards the consultations as noted above, in order to obtain as broad views and inputs as possible. The needs assessment developed summarised these discussions and presented recommendations for the development of the course.
- (c) Drafting of course outline and presentation to focus group – Based on the stakeholder consultations and needs assessment, ITC’s expert developed a draft course outline. The course outline sets out details on certain technicalities for the course, the course objectives and the proposed course curriculum. The course outline was presented at a focus group discussion organized by LNCCI in April 2021, with participation from LNCCI, DFTP, DTP, DoIH and DIMEX. ITC’s expert presented the findings from the needs assessment, and the course outline. The focus group discussion was an opportunity to obtain feedback and validate the training needs/concerns, and further refine the key issues/priorities to be reflected in the course.
- (d) Revision to the course outline and development of the detailed course mapping – Based on the feedback received at the focus group discussion, the course outline was further refined, and shared with LNCCI for approval. Based on this confirmation, ITC is currently developing the detailed course mapping, which sets out the specifics to be covered under each module and lecture, the case studies/exercise that will be built into each module, and the specific outcomes expected from each of the modules. The detailed course mapping will be shared with LNCCI for their inputs and validation and for LNCCI to coordinate validation from the other relevant government departments as deemed necessary.

Challenges and adaptations due to Covid-19

As noted in the previous reports, the international travel restrictions made it more challenging to consult with stakeholders, and also consult on the technical aspects with LNCCI. These activities are still

progressing online, with support from a National Consultant based in Vientiane who is coordinating with LNCCI.

Next Steps

The consultations and focus group discussion were completed in April 2021. It took more time than anticipated due to scheduling conflicts, and time taken to organize the focus group discussion and receive feedback/validation on course details developed. As a result, the timelines planned out for delivery of the e-learning course had to be adjusted accordingly and may take longer than anticipated.

In terms of next steps – the detailed course mapping is to be finalised in June 2021, and after validation from LNCCI and relevant government departments, the course chapters will be drawn out, and the online modules will be built. These activities will take some time as the timelines had to be adjusted from the original plans, and accordingly, the schedules of the personnel working on developing the modules also need to be adjusted.

Upon finalisation of the course chapters, this material will also be translated into Lao language, so that the e-learning course will be available in English and Lao language. The focus over the next period will be to deliver the online modules. The course chapters, once developed, will also be converted into a guide for LNCCI, to have supporting material to fulfil its role as administrators of the e-learning course.

Support will also be provided to LNCCI to develop promotional material based for the e-learning course; and training session(s) will be undertaken for LNCCI based on the content covered in the e-learning course and other technical aspects of the course.

V. Achievements January to June 2021: Expected Result 3

ER3: Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), reduction of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products)

Activity 3.1 - Development of sectoral export strategies to identify supply-side constraints and remedial actions

This activity aimed to develop (in a participative approach) sector export roadmaps that identify supply-side (production and processing capacity) constraints and remedial actions, to be implemented with support under the project and from other development stakeholders.

Since January 2021, both export roadmaps for the wood processing and the coffee sector have been endorsed by H.E. Khemmani Pholsena, Minister, Ministry of Industry and Commerce (until February 2021).

Workshop at the Lao Coffee Festival 2021

In February 2021, the team organised a workshop at the Lao Coffee Festival 2021 in Pakse titled '*Lao Coffee Export Roadmap & Findings from the rapid assessment on COVID-19 impact & proposed action plan for LCA Improvement*'. This workshop was organised in close collaboration with DTP, DoA, and AFD.

Approximately 30 participants (in person and virtual), of which 15 women took place in the workshop. Among other participants were H.E. Khemmani Pholsena, then Minister, Ministry of Industry and Commerce and H.E. Dr. Phet Phomphithack, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, in addition to the Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Lao PDR and the Ambassador of France to Lao PDR.

Through a workshop format, presentations were made on the Roadmap and COVID-19 impact assessment by ITC and on the study and proposed action plan for LCA improvement by AFD. Open discussion from participants representing the public and private sectors followed.

Participants discussed firm experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and the adjustments needed to support programmes, as well as the importance of following through in implementing the activities and recommendations in the Roadmap and sector strategy.

Challenges

Given the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the event included both in-person and virtual participation with the ITC experts joining via online platform. Having tested the audio and video connection ahead of time, this went mostly smoothly, though some technical issues complicated presentations and interventions.

Finalization and endorsement of the Coffee and Wood Processing Export Roadmap

Over the past six months, the team took care of the professional editing and layout of the sector roadmaps; their translations in Lao language, and regular follow-up and communication with MoIC focal points at DTO and DoIH.

As a result, the Coffee sector export roadmap were professionally edited and designed. The Wood processing sector export roadmap was professionally edited and is currently undergoing layout and design.

Challenges

The launch of both roadmaps had to be postponed several times due to the detection of COVID-19 positive cases and the implementation of a strict lockdown throughout April/May/June. The launch of the

coffee export roadmap is following strict COVID-19 preventive measures as required by the government for in person meetings.

Next steps

The official launch of the Lao PDR coffee export roadmap is scheduled to take place from 1st to 2nd July 2021 in Pakse, in the presence of H.E. Dr. Khampheng Xaysompheng, Minister of Industry and Commerce and other high-ranking Lao government officials (including from Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) and key coffee sector representatives.

The launch of the wood processing roadmap will follow a similar format and is planned within the next weeks but also depending on the evolving COVID-19 situation in country.

Collaboration with AFD and other development partners in support of the implementation of the Roadmap, for which it is to be a major partner, will build on the results of the Workshop discussions.

The team will provide implementation management support for both roadmaps over the next months.

Activity 3.2 - Review of quality and availability of statistical data (trade and investment statistics, including gender indicators) and work with the relevant authorities (e.g. MOIC ICT) to strengthen data collection and statistical production capacities.

This activity aims to train government officials from the customs, Lao Statistics Bureau and other departments to strengthen data collection and statistical production capacities. It contains two workshops. The first one was conducted in November 2019, with a focus on the basics of R programming applied to raw customs data; trade data characteristics and quality checks; various indices that can be computed in the field of international trade. (See also previous progress reports). The second workshop, will be rolled out in the second half of 2021 as agreed with DPC.

The following outline is currently being proposed:

A five day workshop delivered via hybrid format, with ITC experts joining online, supported by a facilitator (see also activity 2.2.3) is being proposed. Advanced features of LibreOffice Calc with many hands-on exercises will be presented. The workshop is tailored to increase participants' knowledge about large data set manipulation using spreadsheet software like LibreOffice, OpenOffice or Excel.

Qualified ITC trainers will introduce the different concepts during half day sessions. At the end of each afternoon session, an exercise will be sent to participants. Participants will work on these exercises during the morning sessions the day after, assisted by the facilitator.

At the end of the workshop, participants will be expected to:

- Have gained awareness of innovative solution to handle large datasets
- Know data manipulation techniques to synthesize and summarize information
- Identify easily problems or errors in order to bring correction
- Be able to create reusable reports to increase productivity

Challenges

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the second training had to be adapted to be delivered in a hybrid format, taking into account lessons learned from other technical trainings delivered fully online (See also activity 2.2.3). A facilitator is being hired, and the material will be translated as much as possible into Lao language before the training.

Next steps:

The next steps include:

- prepare training and roll out training
- finalize training material for Lao stakeholders
- collect latest data on Lao trade,
- translation of training material
- preparations and one on one sessions with facilitator
- agree on venue and participants with DPC
- engage with participants before training so everyone is set up and registered to all needed online platforms once training starts.

Activity 3.3: Promotion of predictable legal timber supply to incentivize sustainable land management and establish a clear rule set

Sub activity 3.3.1: Workshop (1) on Wood Products - Building Sustainable Sourcing and New Markets

This activity aims to support SMEs to increase their competitiveness in the wood processing sector. It focuses on providing technical training in the marketing of wood products regionally and internationally. Specific focus will be provided on EU market requirements.

During this period two one day trainings were organizing entitled **Wood Products – Building Sustainable Sourcing and New Markets**. These were held on 31st of March and 1st of April and organized in partnership with the Department of Trade Promotion (DTP), Department of Forestry (DoF) and the National University of Laos (NUOL).

The training were kindly hosted by the Faculty of Forest Science of NUOL, DongDok campus, Vientiane Capital. The workshop was delivered in Lao language. The target audience included wood processing companies and government officials and numbered 24 individuals (including 11 women).

The event was opened by a range of stakeholders including:

- Mr. Xaysomphet Norasingh, Director General, Department of Trade Promotion, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
- Mr. Sousath Sayakoummane, Director General, Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (tbc)
- Associate Professor Latsamy Boupha, Dean of the Faculty of Forest Science, National University of Lao PDR
- Mr. Francois Pravongviengkham, Political Officer, European Union Delegation in Lao PDR
- Ms. Vanessa Erogbogbo, Chief, Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chains, International Trade Centre



Source: EU in Laos facebook 1 April

Day 1 training opened with a tour of the University wood processing facilities. The EU Ambassador attended this.

The Day 1 training was titled “Identifying Products for EU Market Development Potential” and “Meeting Market Requirements”. During the day presentations were made by international and national experts on the following subjects:

Products with potential for the EU Markets

Participants gained an overview of wood product market segments in the EU. Products covered include sawn softwoods and hardwoods; plywood; bamboo products; and household products.

EU Market Requirements

Participants learnt the requirements that Lao PDR exporters face in exporting to the European Union. Subjects covered include Product Safety, CE Marking, Chemicals, Packaging, CITES and Legality – EUTR.

On Day 2, the session was titled “**Marketing Strategies for Wood Products**” in which participants learnt about strategies for accessing EU timber market. The content included market approaches, channels, how to find partners, pricing, cooperation, export – import procedures. This session linked to MOIC initiatives to support B2B export development in the wood sector

Next steps:

ITC consulted participants during the two days about their needs on training topics in the future to strengthen their competency.

Subactivity 3.3.2: Workshop (2)

On this basis ITC is currently preparing **two new modules**:

A) Official (import-) documentation required by the EU authorities for a selected product:

Objective: Participants are informed about detailed requirements for exporting into the EU. Relevant procedures and documentation applicable in the EU as well as in Lao PDR, will be presented and its applicability analyzed.

Content: EU Custom requirements and regulations, safety and quality features of selected product. Lao procedures and documents mandatory for export of wooden products as well as applicable regulations.

B) FSC certification (Chain of Custody) for facilitating Export into EU and Due Diligence:

Objective: Participants understand the FSC CoC System and are able to qualify the benefits and applicability for their own company in their efforts to succeed in export!

Content: FSC System (FM and CoC), Legality / FLEGT, Market demand and advantages, figures and diagrams, EUTR and due diligence, market rewards.

These two modules will be delivered through an online delivery in cooperation with local partners in August or September. The project expects a high level of participation given that it will be online and will be discussed with DTP, NUOL and DOF the timings, content and format of delivery.

Furthermore, ITC will offer a **Processed Wood Product SME Clinic** for one to one advice to companies selected in cooperation with MOIC.

The **main challenges** to this work has been to maintain relations with stakeholders during a time when there were lockdowns and inability of the international consultant to travel to Lao PDR. This was mitigated through intensive interaction online and the further development of our capacity to deliver trainings online.

Activity 3.4 Technical assistance to SMEs in targeted sectors to enhance production and develop market linkages with regional and European markets, including trade fair participation, market missions and B2B activities

This activity supports SMEs to improve market linkages for SMEs in specialty agri-food products with a special focus on coffee. It provides technical training on the marketing of agri-food products regionally and internationally. During this period, the concept note for 3.4 and 3.7 was revised so that the two activities are effectively merged. The rationale for this is that compliance with “environmental and social standards” is an integral part of “enhancing production and develop market linkages” and thus it would be effective and efficient to plan these activities as part on one whole.

Sub activity 3.4.1: Consultation with Lao Coffee sector

During the Lao Coffee Festival held in Pakse, the project held a consultation with the leadership of the Lao Coffee Association. ITC presented a menu of three activities including:

- Starting Organic Farms
- Marketing Specialty Coffee
- Compliance with Voluntary Sustainability Standard (VSS)

Application forms were sent to members of LCA and on the basis of the response from LCA, a new round of training focused on the first two subject areas was planned. The third area (VSS) may be rolled out in Q4 depending on demand from stakeholders.

Sub activity 3.4.2: Training on “Starting Organic Farms”.

On 22 to 24th June, ITC in partnership with LCA, DoA/MAF and DTP held on online training on organic coffee production and marketing. The [training](#) was opened by the following:

- Mr. Xaysomphet Norasingh, Director General, Department of Trade Promotion, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
- Mr. Chantha Thippavongphan, Director General, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
- Mr. Vincent Vire, Head of Cooperation, European Union Delegation to Lao PDR
- Ms. Boonhueuang Carol Litdang, President, Lao Coffee Association
- Mr. Alexander Kasterine, Senior Advisor, ITC

The training was attended by 73 participants made up of coffee farmers, processors, retailers and coffee shop owners on organic coffee production and marketing.

The training was delivered specifically in support of the strategic objectives set up in the Coffee Roadmap in particular strategic objective 1: Enhance productivity and sustainability in production and processing.

The structure of the training over three days included the following three modules and included a highly interactive Q and A session with the lead consultant Mr. Vitoon Panyakul, a world expert on organic agriculture from Thailand.

Module
<i>Beginner: how to set up / convert to organic (what is and what is not, key requirements, quick gap assessments)</i> This is suitable for those who have not started organic production but want to learn about it first. Content include how to set up / convert to organic (what is and what is not, key requirements, quick gap assessments)
<i>Intermediate: common problems in organic coffee & possible solutions (low yields, buffer zone, record keeping, pest & diseases)</i> This is suitable for those who have already practice organic production for a few year and still face basic problems related to organic farming practices and certifications.

Content include common problems in organic coffee & possible solutions (low yields, buffer zone, record keeping, pest & diseases)

<i>Advanced: specific advice (e.g. fair trade certification, quality improvement)</i>

This is suitable for company/group with have more than 5 year experiences in organic production and need very specific technical supports on certain issues. It is a direct one-to-one consultancy.

Next steps

The next round of training on organic coffee will be delivered in Q3 and Q4 and provide intermediate and advanced level training. Farmers and SMEs will be selected following expressions of interest provided during the Beginner level (22-25 June).

In August /September a new round of trainings will focus on cupping skills, marketing and branding for Specialty Coffee. This will be delivered online.

The **main challenges** to this work are similar to those in the wood sector, namely to maintain relations with stakeholders and deliver effective trainings. The development of training material for delivery online was ultimately successful as evidenced by the numbers of participants and quality of interaction during the trainings online. The participants appeared at ease with the format and so it appears that this platform is effective.

Activity 3.5: Implementation and roll out of practical/hands on training and advisory support services in quality management to enterprises aimed at complying with specific quality requirements of destination markets. This support will be largely implemented by the Quality Champions in cooperation with local partner institutions

This activity will start in the second half of 2021. A first round of beneficiary enterprises will be selected and matched with QCs. This activity will then run until the end of the project, and beyond as a long term service model offered by QCs attached to LNCCI.

Activity 3.6 – Investment Promotion in the Targeted Sectors

Sub-Activity 3.6.1 Investment potential analysis

For this activity ITC experts conducted an assessment of investment opportunities at the product level through different trade- and tariff-related indicators (export growth potential, market access). The aim was to identify investment opportunities by product and country of origin for the project's priority sectors, coffee and processed wood.

As a result the study "*Leveraging export potential and tariff advantages to attract foreign direct investment into Lao PDR: Wood processing and coffee*" was published and has been distributed via the ARISE Plus website, social media and targeted emails to key stakeholders.

The findings of the study can be summarised as follows: Foreign direct investment to Lao PDR has declined in recent years, and may continue to do so due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This study supports Lao investment promotion actors and potential investors by identifying opportunities for foreign investment to Lao PDR based on trade data. It focuses on wood processing and coffee, two sectors that present important opportunities to diversify foreign investment in Lao PDR consistent with a sustainable development path. In both sectors, Lao PDR has considerable untapped export potential that investors could leverage. Furthermore, the country's preferential access to regional markets could benefit international companies serving these markets. A short analysis highlights other sectors with potential to attract investment and increase diversification. The most important ones include vegetables and electronic equipment.

The publication is available at <https://www.intracen.org/arise-plus-laos/publications/>

Sub-Activity 3.6.2: Investment Profiles

ITC is developing two investment profiles for the Coffee and Wood Processing sectors in Lao PDR. For each of these sectors, ITC will develop a Profile (25 – 30 pages), and a summary brochure (approximately 4 pages).

The objective of the investment profiles is to enable foreign investors to identify investment opportunities, understand the investment climate, and obtain access to the latest research and market insights; and function as a tool for public and private representatives to promote investment within the target sectors of the Lao PDR economy.

Methodology and Results:

The investment profiles are based on an in-depth review of the relevant legislation, regulations, policy documents and studies, and bilateral consultations. More specifically, consultations were undertaken with public sector stakeholders including DTP, DoIH, Investment Promotion Department, and Department of Forestry; as well as private sector stakeholders including relevant business chambers, the Lao Coffee Association, Wood Processing Association, and the Lao Furniture Association.

The profiles comprise of a:

- Country analysis presenting elements that demonstrate the investment potential in Lao PDR including an assessment of the business environment, investment laws and incentives, logistics and connectivity, and relevant support services: and
- Sector-specific analysis detailing the current operations of the specific sector in Lao PDR and investment opportunities.

The profiles will complement the efforts of the Wood Processing and Coffee Export Sector Roadmaps developed under the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project, and also have drawn upon findings from other studies produced under the project, namely the 'Export Potential in Lao PDR: Processed Wood and Specialty Agriculture', and 'Leveraging export potential and tariff advantages to attract foreign direct investment into Lao PDR: Wood processing and coffee'.

The draft profiles have been shared with the relevant government departments for review. More specifically:

- Coffee profile – The draft profile was shared with DTP and a follow-up consultation was held to discuss feedback. The profile is being revised based on feedback received and will be shared with DTP in June 2021. The profile will be finalized following a validation event to present the investment profile to stakeholders from key public and private sector agencies.
- Wood Processing profile – The draft profile was shared with DTP and DoIH and is currently under review. The profile will be revised based on feedback received, and a validation event will be organized to present the profile to stakeholders and finalize the profile.

Next Steps:

Upon finalization of the review process for the two investment profiles, validation events will be organized to present the Profiles to a broader group of stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

Based on the feedback received from these validation events, the profiles will be finalized, and summary brochures (which will be 4–5-page documents presenting the key findings of the main Profiles). The main Profiles and summary brochures will be formatted so that it can be used by Lao PDR as promotional tools.

Upon completion of these two investment profiles, ITC will also commence discussions with MoC on developing investment profiles for at least another 2 sectors, and engage in consultations to identify sectors to be prioritized for these profiles.

Activity 3.7 Promote increased adoption of environmental and social standards to SMEs in targeted sectors

This activity was merged with 3.4 – see above.

VI. Cross-cutting activities

During the first half of 2021, several activities directly related to the project coordination component of the project were undertaken and successfully accomplished.

- **Presentation at the formal TPSWG meeting**

ITC expert Ms. Julia Spies, Trade and Market Intelligence unit presented via online platform the study on '[Trade implications of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status](#)' at the formal meeting of the Trade and Private Sector Working Group in January 2021. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Khemmani Pholsena, Minister, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ambassador of the EU Delegation to Lao PDR, and the Head of Cooperation, Australian Embassy to Lao PDR and attended by key stakeholders from the public and private sector.

- **Meetings with other project representatives to ensure coherence in Lao PDR**

A series of meetings with representatives from projects also currently implemented in the trade and private sector in Lao PDR were conducted in order to identify synergies, collaboration and to avoid possible overlap of individual activities. Among others meetings were held with representatives from AFD regarding efforts in the coffee sector, the German development cooperation (GIZ) in particular ProFLEGT team regarding efforts in the wood processing sector, the USAID funded LBE project, and the World Bank supported LCT project.

Furthermore a series of meetings and exchanges with representatives from the European Chamber of Commerce (ECCIL) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce (AustCham) related to COVID-19 and beyond continued to take place in the first half of 2021.

- **#OneITC approach**

The ARISE Plus Lao PDR team is in close contact with the other ITC implemented projects in Lao PDR, namely the Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (SYMST) and the Trade for Development (T4SD) Hub at LNCCI. This close collaboration enables to identify synergies and adapt a coherent approach most suitable to the Lao context.

- **ARISE Plus and ITC**

The ARISE Plus Lao PDR project continued to participate in the ARISE Plus regional coordination efforts. Information and experience sharing with the other ARISE Plus projects managed by ITC – ARISE Plus Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines etc. – is also ongoing.

- **Participation and active engagement in the UN Country Team and UN COVID-19 response efforts.**

The ARISE Plus Lao PDR representative participated in almost all UN Country Team meetings in order to closely follow and coordinate the different COVID-19 responses in Lao PDR and to further enhance synergies between efforts led by other UN agencies in country.

In anticipation of the signing of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Agreement (UNSDCF) between the Government of Lao PDR and the UN for the period 2021 to 2026, ITC contributed constructively to the development of several outputs such as the Common Country Assessment and the formulation of several outcomes and joint outputs of the UNSDCF, including on LDC graduation, green growth, private sector, skills development and digitalization. A draft version of the UNSDCF was presented to the Government, feedback was received and the UNSDCF is in its final stages before signature.

VII. Communication and visibility

Communication activities of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project are implemented under the guidance of the project's Communication and Visibility Plan (Annex VI) in the Contribution Agreement ACA/2019/407-542. ITC, as implementing agency, manages the overall project communication and visibility strategy. ITC is the intermediary for all communication between implementing partners and the EU as well as with the media. ITC will also ensure the EU's role is highlighted in all project communications.

Communication consultant

A communication consultant was successfully recruited at the end of 2020. The individual joined the project in February 2021. The Communication Consultant plays a role in implementing communication activities which agreed in the Communication and Visibility Plan and supporting the ongoing project activities with communication inputs to ensure the project's effectiveness and coherence. In addition, the consultant is working under the overall supervision of the Project Manager, Division of Country Programmes/Office for Asia and the Pacific (DCP/OAP), in close collaboration with the Senior Programme Coordinator of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR, the ITC's Communication and Events Team focal point and supports technical officers remotely.

Standard Operating Procedure

To increase the effectiveness and timeliness of communication activities, draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) were developed, to provide detailed guidance outlining the type of activities, timeline, instructions and required support for each activity. They highlight clear step-by-step actions, area of priority, and staff members who are involved in each process of such activity.

Communication Products

- **Presentation template:** The ARISE Plus Lao PDR project kicked off this year with a series of trainings, workshops and meetings. To ensure the key messages and visual materials are aligned, a PowerPoint template was updated with agreed communication message, slogan and partners' logo in Lao and English languages. This PowerPoint template was shared among staff members and used to communicate with the project's stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partners.
- **Press release:** In line with the Communication and Visibility Plan and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), press releases were produced to support major events involving high-level officials from the Government and the European Union delegation. It aims to showcase the project success, keep local, international stakeholders, and the Lao public informed. The press release is often published in the local print and online newspaper immediately after an event was conducted. Please see the published news in section 7: Media Monitoring.
- **Web story:** The production of a web story aims to capture the impacts of the project on the target beneficiaries and the Lao economy. The communication consultant worked with the project team to incorporate essential components of the activities, produce a powerful story, and publish it on ITC's website. Please find a published story on the Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap at <https://www.intracen.org/news/Lao-PDR-steps-up-foreign-trade-negotiations-for-export-success/>; and a published story about the "starting organic coffee farming" training of 22-24 June 2021: <https://www.intracen.org/news/Story-Lao-farmers-reaching-for-global,-organic-coffee-markets/>
- **Poster and other materials:** The design of posters and other communication materials are aligned with ITC's Communication and Design Guide. The Communication Consultant works together with the project team to ensure that communication materials fit its purpose including, promote upcoming and ongoing events, related activities among public audience and increase the project visibility in several platforms. Besides, communication materials also highlight the role of the EU and project partners by incorporating their logos in the design.

Communication Working Group

The Communication Working Group was set up in 2020 to increase the overall effectiveness of the project's communication activities and maintain good collaboration between project partners and the United Nations in Lao PDR. The second Communication Working Group meeting was organised in mid-April 2021. It was actively participated by ARISE Plus Lao PDR Communication team, ITC's Communication and Event team and representatives from the National Implementing Unit (NIU), the European Union and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office. The meeting covered the discussion of several topics, including ways to better promote ARISE Plus Lao PDR on social media. The next meeting is set up for July 2021 after the PRC meeting.

One photo per month

In response to the European Union's request, ARISE Plus Lao PDR team agreed to share one photo per month with the EU in Lao PDR. Selected images aim to capture the impact of trade-related activities implemented by ITC in collaboration with local partners. This initiative also includes a short paragraph highlighting a brief explanation of specific event/activity and the support provided by the European Union; these photos will be used in the progress report and for the EU Communication activities such as social media. The first photo was shared in April 2021 and is set to be done at the end of the month.

Social media

Since the ARISE Plus Lao PDR Facebook Group set up in October 2020, ITC's Communication Consultant and the ARISE Plus team members have consistently monitored and updated the group. In 2021, the number of group member has tripled (at the time of reporting: 278 group members), with regular information updates regarding upcoming events, training and workshop opportunities etc. Moreover, the European Union in Lao PDR and the United Nations in Lao PDR Facebook pages have been sharing some posts featuring the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project. This action indicates impacts and effective communication within the Communication Working Group and among partners. The increasing social media engagement, such as commenting and sharing from the audience, also proves the public interest in the project.

Media monitoring

Published news articles and stories in the Lao media, featuring the role of ITC and the impact of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project are monitored and recorded by the ARISE Plus Lao PDR team. Please find below list of articles related to the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project.

25 Jan 2021, 13th Program Executive Committee (PEC) Meeting

- <http://www.t4dlaos.org/2021/01/26/ministry-of-industry-and-commerce-organised-a-program-executive-committee-meeting-to-discuss-the-trta-implementation-progress-in-2020/>

25 Jan – 2 Feb 2021, Training Programme on Multilateral and Regional Agreements

- https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Business/Business_EU24.php

9 Feb 2021, Coffee Export Roadmap Consultation Workshop – Coffee Festival

- <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10165146378205405&set=pcb.10165146387685405>
- https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Business/Business_Govtpartner_33.php
- <https://laopdr.un.org/en/112144-cooperation-continues-developing-lao-coffee-sector>
- <https://www.intracen.org/news/Cooperation-continues-developing-the-Lao-coffee-sector/>

8 – 12 Feb 2021, Training on Market Analysis, Export potential Analysis and Trade Policy

- https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Business/Business_EU_36.php
- [ITC-Market Analysis on Twitter: "📷 Last week's workshop in Vientiane, Lao LA where we introduced the ITC Tools with a special focus on Export Potential Map It took place under the umbrella of the EU funded ARISE Plus Lao PDR project, which aims to increase trade & participation in global value-chains #ITCdata https://t.co/dr8zLQqcZa" / Twitter](https://twitter.com/ITCdata/status/1368888888888888888)

23 Feb 2021, Lao PDR's Trade Negotiations for export success – Mapping the way forward

- <http://www.dftp.moic.gov.la/en/news/page/2/>
- <http://www.dftp.moic.gov.la/la/%E0%BA%81%E0%BA%AD%E0%BA%87%E0%BA%9B%E0%BA%B0%E0%BA%8A%E0%BA%B8%E0%BA%A1%E0%BA%AA%E0%BA%B3%E0%BA%A1%E0%BA%B0%E0%BA%99%E0%BA%B2-%E0%BA%AB%E0%BA%BB%E0%BA%A7%E0%BA%82%E0%BA%8D%E0%BA%89%E0%BA%81/>
- <https://bit.ly/3vIUjFM>

15-16 June 2021, Coffee Set to Boost Laos-EU Trade

- https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/login/index.php?ref=/sub-new/Business/Business_Coffee_114.php
- https://eccil.org/lao-pdr/coffee-set-to-boost-laos-eu-trade/?fbclid=IwAR3zEiUoDX04jn5XVdKT9DivX_ccHs5-nTctQUm5BkQnJlisHHrcEnqfo1Q

VIII. Conclusion: challenges and next steps - reflecting upon the first half of 2021

During the first semester of 2021, project implementation continued to be affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. While travel was still expected to be possible at some point of the semester, it proved to be very difficult, also due to the second lockdown and the restrictive measures put in place by the Government of Lao PDR to prevent a new wave entering the country. However, the marked augmentation of workshops and events (multiplied by 4 between the previous and the current reporting period) proves that the project has succeeded in adapting to the situation and finding its full speed implementation pace. As of June 2021, 489 individuals have benefitted from a project activity during the first six months of 2021, vs. 400 overall for the whole year 2020. Thus the year 2021 can be considered as a key year in the project implementation. The number of activities and events is not the only positive signal of project efficiency: the budget utilization rate is also a good indicator.

This success can be attributed, inter alia, to the flexible approach adopted by ITC. At the beginning of the COVID crisis, in order not to delay too much activities, but fearing maybe less participation and stakeholders' involvement, the project used to organize hybrid trainings: one room, a group of participants, a facilitator hired by the project, and trainers mostly online. When the second lockdown was announced, meetings were not possible in the beginning, and the activities had to move to full online settings. While this is not the favourite option, this proved to be also efficient, with an important commitment of stakeholders. Thus, the project is now able to choose among a range of options, from full online "synchronous" (= virtual workshopping: a workshop at a certain date and time, online, live) to hybrid asynchronous (e.g. one step with asynchronous exercises and one step with virtual workshops, like the advanced trade policy modelling training to start in July 2021). This expansion of options was possible thanks to a thorough analysis of lessons learned, participants' feedback and consultations with key Government stakeholders and focal points. Some activities are still being postponed due to a preference for their organization in face-to-face; but their number is decreasing, and the few activities still concerned by this face-to-face option are only very technical activities, which substance might be altered if delivered in hybrid or online mode.

In the first half of 2021, H.E. Dr. Khampheng Xaysompheng was appointed Minister of Industry and Commerce. The project was honored to count on the participation of H.E. Dr. Khampheng Xaysompheng during the launch of the coffee export roadmap in early July 2021. The project stands ready to provide any information or material to H.E. Dr. Khampheng Xaysompheng.

The project also participated in the first steps of the Mid-Term Evaluation, as described in the Description of the Action. The final report is not ready at the time of reporting, but the initial findings of the draft inception report stressed the consultative aspect of the project, its flexibility and responsiveness (e.g. when dealing with the effects of the pandemic on project implementation). This confirms the strong stakeholders' support that the project has received and is still receiving so far, which is one of the keys or success. The project looks forward to receiving the final evaluation report, as this Mid-Term Evaluation is a unique learning opportunity at a crucial time for the project.

Looking forward, the key challenges for the second half of 2021 will include the sustainability of the implementation pace and the inclusion of lessons learned into the next activities. As an example, at the time of reporting, an important event has just organized with success – the launch of the coffee export roadmap. This event showed an important sense of ownership of project activities by institutional and private sector stakeholders. Going ahead, the project will strive to maintain and expand this very positive trend.

Other challenges (COVID-19 or non-COVID-19 related) may arise during the discussion of the PRC meeting. The tentative work plan for July to December 2021 is in the ANNEX of this progress report. It will be discussed during the PRC meeting, scheduled for Thursday, 15 July 2021.

IX. ANNEX: Work Plan ARISE Plus Lao PDR – July to December 2021

Expected Result (ER) 1: Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025

MoIC focal point for ER1: DIMEX

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 1. Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025						
Activity 1.1 Gap analysis of ATIGA implementation in Lao PDR						
Task 5: Workshop to discuss the ATIGA gap analysis (and executable roadmap - refer 1.2) - To be delivered online						
Task 6: Finalization of the ATIGA Gap analysis (including the executable roadmap - refer 1.2), incorporating feedback from workshop and any follow-up consultations						
1.2. Review of the gap analysis results with GoL and the private sector and agree specific trade measures to be addressed (with a focus on targeted sectors).						
Task3: Presentation of the executable roadmap, and monitoring mechanism - at the ATIGA workshop Refer 1.1 (To be delivered online)						
Task 4: Finalization and adoption of the executable roadmap, and monitoring mechanism set in place.						
Task 5: Organization of first bi-annual monitoring meeting to monitor progress (TBC)						
Activity 1.3. Technical assistance and capacity building in the area of policy definition, regulations and procedures, product and environmental standard adoption and conformity assessment capacities						
Sub-activity: Lao PDR's Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap						
Completed						
Sub-activity: Targeted training programme for trade policy makers - Principles and Utilization of Multi-lateral and Regional Trading Arrangements						
Completed						
Sub-activity: Regulatory Assessment for Selected Services - Transport and Tourism Sectors						
Phase 1: Regulatory assessment for transport services sectors						
Task 2: Produce and submit first draft of the regulatory assessment for the transport services sector for review						
Task 3: Revise and submit second draft of the regulatory assessment, based on feedback received from ITC and MoIC						

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 1. Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025						
Task 4: PPD to present and discuss findings of the regulatory assessment for the transport services sector						
Task 5: Finalization of the regulatory assessment, incorporating feedback from the PPD and any follow-up consultations						
Task 6: Advisory sessions with TIS division of DFTP (based on demand) - to discuss way forward for reforms						
Phase 2: Regulatory assessment for tourism services sectors						
Task 1: Undertake desk research (to identify relevant legislation, regulations, institutional frameworks, policy measures); develop/refine questionnaires based on objectives of the regulatory assessment and undertake stakeholder consultations as necessary.						
Task 2: Produce and submit first draft of the regulatory assessment for the tourism services sector for review						
Sub-activity: E-Commerce Regulatory Support (TBC)						
Task 2: Outlines of 4 e-commerce guides developed and shared with MoIC for validation						
Task 3: First drafts of the 4 e-commerce guides developed and shared with MoIC for review						
Task 4: Drafts finalized based on feedback received; and translated into Lao language.						
Sub-activity: Technical Assistance Projects (possibly 2 projects) - Based on reforms identified in the ATIGA Gap Analysis (To be decided upon finalization of the study)						
Task 1: Develop concept note on potential support/technical assistance under the scope of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project; and engage in discussions with MoIC on implementation of these activities						
Next Steps to be confirmed after completion of Task 1						
Sub-activity: Conformity Assessment Capacities						
Task 1 - Technical assistance to the Enquiry Point on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)/ Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and National Notification Authority						
Task 2 - Support to DOSM/DOA in the area of standardization (i.e. participation to ISO GA/DEVCO and sector TC and SC, support in standardisation work, development and promotion, review of coffee standards, policy and SOP in support of crop national standards, Organic and GAP certification)						
Task 3 - Training on ISO Standards (link to activities 2.4 and 2.5)						
Task 4 - Training and capacity building of DOSM to provide ISO System Certification Services as certification body						
Task 5 - Gap assessment and support to strengthen food testing laboratories towards a path for ISO 17025 accreditation (link with SYMST project)						

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 1. Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025						
Task 6 - Training of FDD inspectors on GHP, GMP, HACCP (hygiene and food safety) (link to activities 2.4 and 2.5)						
Task 7 - Development of awareness material on hygiene - food safety also linked to COVID-19						

Expected Result (ER) 2: Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Every-thing But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA) –

MolC focal point for ER 2: DFTP

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 2. Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Every-thing But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA)						
Activity 2.1 Review of export potential and existing trade with the EU and the regional market						
Completed						
Activity 2.2. Awareness raising about EBA preferences						
Sub-activity 2.2.1 EBA business guide						
Task 3: Revision and submission of second draft of EBA Business Guide, based on feedback/comments received from ITC and MolC						
Task 4: Publication and dissemination of the EBA Business Guide (in English and Lao language), inclusive of a launch event.						
Sub-activity 2.2.2 Background study: analysis of current and future potential exports to the EU and regional markets to enable Lao to take informed trade policy decisions (e.g. graduation from LDC status)						
Completed						
Sub-activity 2.2.3 Capacity-building for officials						
Task 2: organization of a 2nd workshop: Advanced trade policy modelling						
Sub-activity 2.2.4 Organisation of awareness raising campaign for businesses presenting and explaining the EBA scheme and findings of the foregone research						
Awareness Raising of the EBA Business Guide						
Task 1: Launch event organized on the EBA Business Guide						
Task 2: Recycling the Guide into sensitization/training materials						
Task 3: Organize 3 - 5 sensitization/training workshops for businesses, in selected locations around Lao PDR						
Awareness Raising on EU Preferential Trading Schemes - and accessing the EU Market						
Task 1: Develop concept note on potential awareness raising activities in the form of (a) Media Engagements; (b) Targeted Dialogues/Seminars, and discuss with relevant stakeholders (Completed)						
Task 2: Develop workplan for awareness-raising activities - in consultation with media firm						

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 2. Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Every-thing But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA)						
Next steps and timelines to be worked out based on Task 2 - and rolled out across the rest of the year						
2.2.5 Organisation of awareness-raising activities for the preparation of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status						
Task 1: Develop concept note on potential awareness raising activities based on needs/requirements of relevant stakeholders in Lao PDR (Following 2nd triennial review in Feb 2021); and engage in discussions with relevant stakeholders						
Next steps will be planned out based on relevant discussions						
Activity 2.3. Development of awareness raising materials and tools on EU quality-related mandatory and market based requirements including voluntary industrial standards for the priority sectors						
Task 1: Research, mapping, development and preparation of technical materials and online tools						
Task 2: Review, pilot testing, dissemination and outreach activities						
Activity 2.4 Development of a pool of national Quality Champions and sensitization events organised in cooperation with local institutions						
Task 1: Development and qualification of above Quality Champions						
Task 2: Implementaion of sensitization initiatives						
2.5 Development of a practical online export curriculum to support private sector exports						
Task 3: Develop, submit and agree upon the detailed curriculum structure - validation from LNCCI and MoIC departments						
Task 4: Produce course material based on agreed upon detailed curriculum						
Task 5: Convert course material into online interactive sessions (in English language)						
Task 6: Translation of course content into Lao language - and online content developed in Lao language						
Task 7: Training/Capacity building sessions for local partner undertaken						

Expected Result (ER) 3: Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), reduction of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products)

MolC main focal point for ER 3: DTP

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 3. Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), reduction of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products)						
Activity 3.1. Development of sectoral export strategies to identify supply-side constraints and remedial actions						
Sub-activity 3.1.1. Confirm targeted sectors (such as processed-wood and specialty agro-food products) during the inception phase						
Completed						
Sub-activity 3.1.2. Develop in a participative approach sectoral export strategies and set-up an implementation monitoring mechanism						
Organise a Launching event for official endorsement of sector strategies						
Initiate sector-level implementation management: Establish and operationalise Sector-level coordinating structures to lead the implementation of the sectors' strategies and their action plans						
Support relevant stakeholders with capacity-building trainings, direct support and tools on strategy implementation management techniques and resource mobilisation						
Support private sector efforts towards production and export of specialty grade coffee, including ongoing activities aiming at overall improvement of Lao coffee quality						
Activity 3.2. Review of quality and availability of statistical data (trade and investment statistics, including gender indicators) and work with the relevant authorities (e.g. MOIC ICT) to strengthen data collection and statistical production capacities.						
Online advanced training on MS-Excel						
Activity 3.3. Promotion of predictable legal timber supply to incentivise sustainable land management and establish a clear rule set						
SME Clinic for Wood Processing						
Wood processing 2nd round training (FSC certification)						
Activity 3.4. Technical assistance to SMEs in targeted sectors to enhance production and develop market linkages with regional and European markets, including trade fair participation, market missions and B2B activities						
Organic farming intermediate level and advanced level						

Activities	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
ER 3. Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), reduction of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products)						
Cupping skills						
Online auction				tbd	tbd	tbd
Activity 3.5 National training and advisory support capacities in quality management						
Task 1: Implementation of first round of quality improvement projects in enterprises (by the Quality Champions developed under 2.4) aimed at meeting the required quality related market requirements of the target markets						
Task 2: Anchoring of new services in LNCCI, development of sustainable business model & initiate second round of enterprise support						
Activity 3.6. Investment promotion in the targeted sectors						
Sub-activity - Investment Profiles for Selected Sectors						
Investment Profiles - For Wood and Coffee Sectors in Lao PDR (Ongoing)						
Task 3: Revise and submit second drafts of the two Investment Profiles based on feedback/comments from ITC and MoIC						
Task 4: PPDs (2) to present the Investment Profiles and invite feedback/comments from broad range of stakeholders						
Task 5: Finalization of content of Investment Profiles, based on feedback received from PPD and any follow-up consultations						
Task 6: Produce and submit summary brochure (4 page) for each Profile, reviewed and finalized						
Task 7: Finalization of the Investment Profiles and Summary Brochures - Edited and formatted for dissemination						
Investment Profile - For at least another 2 sectors (TBC)						
Task 1: Undertake consultations to identify two other priority sectors for GoL - to develop an Investment Profile						
Task 2: Conduct interviews and detailed research to develop country and sector specific analysis with recommendations for most bankable investment opportunities						
Activity 3.7 Promote increased adoption of environmental and social standards to SMEs in targeted sectors						
Voluntary Sustainability Standards T4SD training				tbd	tbd	tbd