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### MI Signs MOU with Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on New LMC Project

On March 18, Mekong Institute signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Thailand for a new project under the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Special Fund. Titled "Capacity Building for National Coordinators for Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC)", the new five-year project aims to strengthen the capacities of key actors in delivering the objectives of the MLC particularly in its five priority areas. Mrs. Vilawan Mangklatanakul, Director-General of the Department of International Economic Affairs and Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, MI Executive Director, signed the cooperation agreement between MFA and MI, which serves as the implementing agency of the project. On the same day, the MFA also signed an MOU with the Embassy of P.R. China in Thailand. [Read more.](#)



### Forum Highlights Lancang-Mekong Cooperation's Role in Regional Sustainable Development

The Embassy of P.R. China in Thailand and Mekong Institute hosted a half-day forum on the contributions and role of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation in promoting sustainable development in the Lancang-Mekong region last March 20, 2019 in Bangkok. Some 60 government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, development experts and academics attended the Forum, which was also organized in celebration of the Second Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Week. [Read more.](#)



### NIA Joins MI's Roster of New Development Partners

MI and the National Innovation Agency (NIA) of Thailand signed an MOU on March 19 that formalizes the two organization's commitment to promote social innovation in the Mekong region through collaborations in trainings and workshops, research on social innovation, sharing of knowledge resources and exchange of personnel. The cooperation agreement was signed between MI's Executive Director Dr. Watcharas Leelawath and NIA's Executive Director Dr. Pun-arj-Chairatana. [Read more.](#)



## MI Trains CLMV Food Safety Trainers

Some 20 food safety trainers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) participated in the regional training of trainers on *Food Safety Promotion* on March 11-15 at MI's Residential Training Center in Khon Kaen. Part of the PROSAFE Project supported by the New Zealand Aid Programme, the training was designed to improve skills of CLMV food safety trainers in designing and conducting innovative and effective safe food training programs in their respective countries. [Read more.](#)



## Customs and Border Officers Join Training at MI

MI hosted 24 officers from the customs departments and ministries of agriculture of Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam in the regional training program on *Coordinated Border Management* at MI on March 25-27. Supported by the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund, the training oriented the participants on international practices in trade facilitation and coordinated border management and the concept of single window as part of customs modernization for trade facilitation.



## E-Commerce Training Engages Rural and Urban Social Enterprises

Twenty-four entrepreneurs from Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam joined the 2nd regional modular training on *Rural E-Commerce Development in Lancang-Mekong Countries*. Held at MI on March 25-29, the training aimed to improve the capacities of the SMEs for onboarding their businesses on e-commerce platforms. [Read more.](#)



## Scoping Visit A Step Forward in Building Transboundary Cooperation on Water Resource Management

The MI team comprised of Ms. Maria Theresa Medialdia, Director of MI's Agricultural Development and Commercialization (ADC) Department, and Ms. Ratna Devi Nadarajan, ADC Program Specialist, visited key national agencies in P.R. China on March 6-7, 2019 as part of the LMC Special Fund-supported project on *Transboundary Cooperation Mechanism on Adaptation to Climate Change and Hydropower Development Project*. They met with experts from the Changjiang Institute of Survey, Planning, Design and Research Co., Ltd., in Wuhan, and the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Centre in Beijing to discuss and share initiatives and information on transboundary cooperation in water resource management. [Read more.](#)



# EWEC (SDC) PROJECT ACTIVITIES

## RLED-EWEC Farmers in Lao Receive GAP Certifications

Four rice farmer groups from Savannakhet province and eight from Khammouane province, Lao PDR received their Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification on March 14, 2019 from the Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR. The certification is the result of efforts of the Lao Field Office to promote GAP standardization in the provinces and in the country as a whole. With the certificates, farmer can command a higher market price for their produce, contributing to improved livelihoods. [Read more.](#)



## Lao SMEs Join Training on Brand Development

Small and medium enterprises part of the EWEC Project in Khammouane and Savannakhet provinces joined government officers and other SMEs in a training on brand development and marketing last March 2-5, 2019 at the Department of Industry and Commerce. The training was designed to build the capacities of the private and public sector on brand development of cooperatives.





## Project Partner Meeting Reflects on GAP Implementation in Khammouane and Savannakhet

Senior officers from the provincial and department agriculture offices in Khammouane and Savannakhet provinces joined a partners' meeting last March 14, 2019. Organized by the RLED-EWEC Lao Field Office, the meeting aimed to bring together public sector partners to discuss lessons learned and challenges in GAP standardization in the two provinces, as well as possibilities and measures for decentralizing GAP certification processes and tasks. One of the key outputs of the meeting was the permission granted to the EWEC Project team and relevant partners to revise and shorten the forms used in GAP standard recording.



## EWEC Lao Team Supports Rice SMEs in Lao International Food Expo 2019

With the support of the RLED-EWEC Lao Project Office, three rice millers (Sysamai, Bounmy and Saibou rice mills) who are also members of the cooperative in Khammouane province were able to join the 1st Lao International Food Expo 2019 last March 15-19 at the ITEC Mall in Vientiane. A first experience for the rice millers and the Project team, they set up an exhibit booth at the expo and were able to connect with three potential high volume buyers.



## Training on Good Manufacturing Practices Aims to Improve Rice Milling Practices

A training on *Good Manufacturing Practices in Food Safety and Pest Control Management for Rice Mills* was held on March 18-19 in Savannakhet province with 25 government officers and enterprises in attendance. The event was organized by the Department of Industry and Commerce and supported by the RLED-EWEC Project. The two-day training delivered lessons on GMP, HCCP, and ISO concepts; pest control management in rice mills and experiences in GMP implementation in Khammouane, with resource persons coming from the Department of Rice, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative of Thailand.



## Meeting with Local Microfinance Enterprises Irons out Loan Application of Maize Farmers

The series of meetings with local microfinance enterprises to facilitate increased access to loan of maize farmers continue this month. On March 19, the EWEC Myanmar Office met with representatives of KEB Hana, World Vision Fund Myanmar, Lotus Bridge and Mya Htay Kywai Lin Company in Hpa-An to discuss access to low interest agri loans. KEB Hana agreed to do a survey in Myawaddy township to scan the business environment, while Lotus Bridge Co., Ltd., has already initially agreed to launch a short-term agri loan to the farmers in May.



## Meeting with Farmers Reviews Loan Application Requirements

Following the meeting with microfinance enterprises, another meeting with the maize farmers was organized on March 26 to further discuss procedures for loan application with Lotus Bridge Co., Ltd. Around 50 farmers attended the meeting. As most of the farmers do not have land ownership proof and business license, the Project team will be organizing another meeting with the farmers and the company to negotiate an acceptable loan agreement for both parties.



## Monitoring of Maize Production Underway

The Myanmar Field Office has organized visits to the villages of Sone See Myaing Sanpya, Min Latt Pan and Ingyin Myaing in Myawaddy to collect information on maize production for the reporting of project activities and for use in meetings with local microfinance companies and banks. The team also monitored the status of the storage houses set up last year in Thin Gan Nyi Naung and Ingyin Myaing villages.



## EWEC Project Supports Establishment of Khe Sanh Agricultural Product Cooperative

On March 14, the Khe Sanh Agri-product Cooperative (KAC) held its establishment meeting in Huong Tan commune, Huong Hoa district, Quang Tri, Vietnam. Established with the support of the RLED-EWEC Project, one of the KAC's primary objectives is to facilitate the creation of legal status for farmer members in order for them to market coffee and other products like pepper and turmeric to potential buyers within and outside the country.



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### MI, MRC Explore Collaboration on Climate Change Adaptation, Hydropower Management

The MI team led by Executive Director Dr. Watcharas Leelawath met with Mekong River Commission CEO An Pich Hatda on March 1, 2019 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. They discussed collaboration in the areas of climate change adaptation, hydropower projects and information sharing.



### MI Joins UNESCAP Trade and Investment Week

Mr. Madhurija Kumar Dutta, Director of MI's Trade and Investment Facilitation Department, served as one of the panelists during the launch of the OECD-NIDO report on *Integrating Southeast Asian SMEs in Global Value Chains: Enabling Linkages with Foreign Investor*. The session was organized as part of the UNESCAP Trade and Investment Week on March 15 in Bangkok.



### MI Weighs In on LMC Economic Development Belt in Vientiane Forum

MI Executive Director Dr. Watcharas Leelawath joined development experts and practitioners from around the region in the 2nd Global Center for Mekong Studies Think Tank Forum last March 21-22 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Forum explored insights on building a community of shared future for the Lancang-Mekong region particularly building an LMC Economic Development Belt.



### MI Exec Director Speaks About Regional Cooperation

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath served as one of the panelists in the session "Coordinated Development among Regional Cooperation Organizations" on March 28 as part of the Boao Forum for Asia in Boao, Hainan, P.R. China. He also joined the Conference on Hainan Free Trade Zone in Regional Cooperation on March 27, and the Boao Asian Think Tank Forum on March 29. The events were organized by the China Institute of International Studies.

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

**APR 1-5** 3rd Modular Training on Green Freight and Logistics Management

**29-30 MAY** Training on Basic Facilitation Skills and Regional Cooperation Concepts