



AgriFoSe2030

Agriculture for Food Security 2030
- Translating science into policy and practice



Improving possibilities for goat production in Savannaket province, Lao PDR

Goats are important for the livelihoods of poor smallholder farmers in Lao PDR, particularly for those who cannot afford to invest in large ruminant production. They require less space, inputs and capital than for example cattle or buffalo. However, efforts must be made to increase productivity among smallholder goat farmers.

A steady increase in goats

Goat production is an important provider of smallholder farmers' livelihoods and is a source of important micronutrients in Lao PDR. Almost 90 % of Lao households have at least one livestock species but most have several; commonly 0-4 cattle or buffaloes, 2-5 goats, 2-4 pigs and around 20-30 poultry. In 2005, the number of goats in Lao PDR were 190 000. However, the number of goats has steadily increased due to a higher demand at local and export markets and reached more than 5 600 000 heads according to FAO statistics. Goat meat is also an important export product and a overall aim of the Lao Government is to increase meat exports to Vietnam from the current USD 40 million to a value of USD 50 million by 2020.

Taken together, there is an increased demand for production of goat meat in Lao PDR.

The current market price of goat meat is relatively high, ranging between 4.4 and 5.6 USD per kg live weight, which is higher than that for cattle and pigs. In addition, the export price in Vietnam, where a fourth of the annual livestock production is currently exported, is higher than in Lao PDR. This provides an opportunity for smallholder farmers that can reach

Key messages

- By improving farmers' knowledge on healthy feed composition and animal care, for example through farmer groups, goat productivity is likely to increase in Lao PDR.
- Policy-makers, academia and NGOs must collaborate better and together support goat farmers by providing platforms for building knowledge, provide training, workshops and information material and increase their access to new techniques as well as bring about a change in goat production practice.
- Building capacity of technicians at district level and of local authorities to advise smallholder goat farmers on best management practices are also important to achieve transformation in the goat production system in Lao PDR.

the Vietnamese export market to increase their income. This is particularly relevant for the provinces bordering Vietnam. However, the main challenge for enabling better market access to smallholder goat farmers in Lao PDR is that goat production suffers from low productivity.

Goat production in Lao PDR is associated with low growth rates, poor production, malnutrition and



Grazing goats in Lao PDR.

high morbidity and mortality rates due to poor feed composition and management practices. Almost all goat production is based on the traditional raising and feeding system; including feeds derived from available native pastures, such as grass, browse and fodder trees, and with no feed supplementation, vaccinations and deworming. Thus, traditionally managed goats are often susceptible to diseases and parasites, and feed shortages are commonly found in the dry season. Knowledge about feeding and management among smallholder goat farmers, as well as how to use available feeds of higher quality is limited. Efforts must be made to improve goat nutrition and health on smallholder farms to increase their productivity.

An AgriFoSe2030 project to improve the management of goats

To address the challenge of poor goat nutrition and management, and investigate opportunities for goat farming in Lao PDR, the AgriFoSe2030 project “Improved goat keeping among farmers for increasing food security and income generation” was conducted in Savannakhet province. The long-term aim is to increase the productivity for smallholder goat farmers, and identify areas where policy- and decision-makers can support such development. Two such key areas have already been identified;

1. goat housing and management as well as
2. availability of high-quality feeds.

Management practices in LAO PDR are generally poor and there is an overall lack of knowledge around means to increase feed quality; such as supplementary feeding and dietary composition of higher nutritional value. This has led to poor feeding regimes with negative effects on the production. For example, nutritious grass and foliage is often available in the village, but these resources are not properly used.

In a project workshop with participants representing farmers and policy-makers, additional key components identified were: breeding, health care and marketing.

The workshop also highlighted that governmental institutions, academia, private sector and NGOs need to collaborate to support farmers improving their goat production. There are some good examples of such successful cooperation, for example the Resilient Livelihoods for the Poor (RLP) project, in Savannakhet province, in which productive assets have been procured and transferred to more than 200 beneficiary households in 12 villages. Most farmers chose goats as their productive assets, with support from the Government, researchers, private actors and NGOs.

Next steps for developing goat production in Lao PDR:

- Farmers groups and market engagements should be considered for future development, to increase knowledge sharing and potentially increase market access.
- A livestock production strategy, including goat production, should be converted to an action plan, aiming to increase both quantity and quality of goat production for smallholder farmers in Lao PDR.
- It is imperative to strengthen collaboration between governmental institutions, academia and private sector in order to support Lao goat farmers to improve their production.

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