REGIONAL WORKSHOP

"AGROECOLOGY for South East Asia

Evolution of DP CANSEA
from "Conservation Agriculture Network for South-East Asia"
towards creating a research platform on Agroecology

Date: 10th January 2017
Location: Vientiane, Lao PDR

Supported and organized by:

Introduction

DP CANSEA originated in the desire to build a sustainable regional partnership to promote the development and dissemination of Conservation Agriculture (CA) in Southeast Asia.

Many projects, funded by AFD, have been implemented by Cirad in partnership with national research institution for many years in the region (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam). They aimed at developing and promoting farming systems based on conservation agriculture (CA) for environmentally sustainable intensification and diversification of agricultural production.

This long partnership through bilateral projects has provided the following main results:

- Building and sharing of large experience and knowledge in CA development in different agroecosystems;
- Important capacity building in the different countries mainly in the field of agronomy (agronomists, technical staff, …) and focused on national institutions;
- Vocational and academic training;
- Establishment of specific research centers and institutes (e.g. DALaM in Lao PDR, CASC in Cambodia, and NOMAFSI in Vietnam);
- Promulgation of the Lao national decree (2009) for CA registration as agricultural development practices;
- Establishment of CANSEA network (2009) between 9 institutions from 8 countries as a result of the positive and encouraging results of these projects, aimed at addressing the various R&D issues related to agricultural development in the region.

Up to now, CANSEA appears to have functioned more as an institutional exchange network (awareness raising, lobbying) than a scientific platform sharing research and training actions. Its level of activity, production of knowledge, and involvement of members was essentially linked to the existence of projects focused mainly on CA.
Time is coming to enlarge the scope of activities to include all agroecology practices (conservation agriculture being one among them), to develop activities in partnership, and to move from being a network to a research and training platform on agroecology for Southeast Asia.

Contexte

With a fast growing population, increased pressure on its natural resources and climate change impacts everyday more present, South East Asia is at a crossroads regarding its agriculture development, calling for an important shift towards an agroecological transition.
After decades of intensification, the agro-business system is now showing its limits; this model is more and more dependent on inputs and fossil energy and presents major negative impacts on environment, economic and social aspects.
Agriculture (and especially family farming) is now undergoing economic and social crisis combined with and ecological dimension (especially in ecosystem fertility):

- Yield and productivity gain (controlled environment and good agro climatic conditions / soil fertility) reached its limits, especially in terms of cost-benefits with poor performance in fragile environments and where the climate is unstable;
- Deterioration of soil fertility, loss of farmland, decrease in biodiversity, exhaustion of non-renewable resources, deterioration of landscapes, contribution to climate change;
- Family farmer dependency on commercial firms upstream and downstream, indebtedness, pressure from large-scale farms (land and resource grabbing).

- Disappearance of former systems of fertility management (slash-and-burn followed by a long fallow period) and over uses of mineral fertilizers and pesticides;
- Migrations of impoverished farming populations in fragile ecosystems, with finally lack of labor force in countryside;
- High sensibility to extreme climatic hazards (drought and flood) which are more and more frequent including intra and inter annual rainfalls variability and pest and disease outbreaks.

The Agricultural production faces particular soil and climatic constraints (soils, slopes, altitude areas) and very economically constrained farmers. Constraints on production factors put heavy pressure on natural resources, on the environment, and on farmers' ability to adopt agroecology-based systems. Moreover the production systems are integrated in commercial agriculture inducing rapid agrarian transition. By the way, village communities are regularly confronted with productivity-related challenges, with rapid transitions from agrarian subsistence farming to commercial farming leading to irrelevant agricultural practices. In addition, rising demands for agricultural products, increase pressure on agricultural landscapes, lead to simplified crop production patterns, decrease resilience potential and increase the vulnerability to climate change and commodities global market.

Agroecology (AE) approaches are seen as convincing and evidence-based alternatives towards sustainable agriculture. They cover technical, economic, societal and policy dimensions of agricultural production respectful of environment, able to face the different challenges identified. They also contribute to poverty alleviation, food security, climate change mitigation and adaptation with involving all stakeholders of the value chain and decision makers. They clearly aim at strengthening innovation capacity of family farms, as well as the recognition of their contribution to food sovereignty in the region

We know that agroecological cropping practices can and should play a central role because i) A lot of know-how has been generated on the production side, and many methods for alternative, sustainable forms of agricultural production have been documented, ii) the flourishing organic sector, the growing interest in agroforestry, alternative pest management approaches, permaculture and conservation agriculture, are just a few examples.

Workshop objectives

CANSEA is entering a new phase and its future orientations aim at enlarging the scope of activities to include agroecology practices (conservation agriculture being one among them), to develop activities in partnership, and to move from being a network to a research and training platform on agroecology for Southeast Asia. The development of scientific activities through a research platform will involve CANSEA members already working on conservation agriculture and new scientific members working on complementary

For CIRAD, it is important to:

- Develop, in partnership, a research platform on Agroecology focusing on the design and assessment of Agroecology-based cropping systems,
- Refocus CIRAD's contribution toward research approaches aimed at addressing common identified challenges,
- Bring together CIRAD's and partners' skills on scientific themes and approaches for designing and evaluating production systems in an agroecological transition,
- Encourage the support to « all » sustainable agriculture approaches towards agroecology principles, by implementing new research and development activities involving all main stakeholders,
- Initiate exchanges on CANSEA evolution and next formal internal assessment.

So, this workshop could be an opportunity to:

- Contribute to build and envision a broad coalition of stakeholders involved in research (& development) on agroecology and its dissemination;
- Initiate exchanges between research structures to present regional issues in terms of research and development;
- Explain Cirad proposals for a new research platform aimed at promoting and developing sustainable agriculture in Southeast Asia; Starting from an existing network on such a practice (CA) and establishing a research platform on agroeocology-based cropping systems design are relevant objectives to answer current challenges;
- Aggregate research teams in partnership on Co-design and co-evaluation of sustainable management methods for smallholders' agricultural systems based on the principles of agroecology;
- Initiate agreement between Cirad and partners to work on common objectives, common principles, common challenges and common strategies.

Workshop expected outcomes

- A good understanding of CANSEA network evolution supported by CANSEA members and ACTAE regional project; The current CANSEA network can provide a strategic platform to foster Cirad and partners (national and regional) networking as well as research capacities;
- A clear vision of what next research platform on Agroecology could be, including Cirad proposals and partners willing;
- A collective statement identifying and ranking the critical issues that should be addressed by this research platform in partnership;
- A first draft of needs for research & development projects
- A first listing of current and potential members' involvement for the establishment of this new research platform in terms of investments, funds, human resources, etc.
- An action plan for 2017 at national and common level

Participants

CANSEA current members ; Cirad partners in South East Asia ; Key stakeholders involved in the field of agroecology ; research institute ; NGOs ; private sector ; government officials, research center, universities, scholars and development partners.

Expected participants are actively requested in promoting agroecology to decision makers / leaders.

Tentative agenda 10th January 2017

Time	Activities	Speaker/Facilitator
08:00-8:30	Registration of the participants	
08:30-09:15	**Introduction session** ▪ Welcoming words (MAF representative) ▪ Workshop information ▪ Overall review of context and Cirad proposal (research platform project, CANSEA evaluation, …) ▪ ACTAE: general presentation of the regional project	Dr Xaypladeth Choulamany Dr P.Girard (Cirad) Dr Frank Enjalric (CANSEA coord) Philippe Cao Van (ACTAE coordinator)
09:15-10h00	▪ **Research platform proposal on Agroecology** in SEA (including discussion)	Dr Frank Enjalric
10:00-10:20	**Coffee break**	
10:20-12h20	**Presentations on some scientific thematic able to accompany agroecological transition** (10' + 10' discussion x 6): ▪ Agroecology ▪ Soil biology, ▪ Agroforestry, ▪ Agroecological crop protection, ▪ Landscape approach, ▪ Innovative participatory approaches ▪ …	Speakers to be confirmed: F. Tivet D. Lesueur P. Vaast J-P Deguine J-C Castella P. D'Aquino …
12:20-13:30	**Lunch break provided at the hotel**	
13:30-15:30	**Proposals from CANSEA partners** (10' + 10' discussion x 6): ➢ Lao PDR ➢ Australia ➢ Cambodia ➢ China ➢ Thailand ➢ Vietnam	To be confirmed
15:30-16:00	**Proposals from floor / round discussion**	All participants
16:00-16:30	**2017 planning:** Including partners official feedbacks, CANSEA evaluation, floor proposals, …	
16:30-17:00	Conclusions and "take home messages"	Chairman and institutions representatives