Terms of reference

Field research surveyor (consultancy) for a study on pesticide use in Oudomxay province

1 - Background to the assignment

A – CCL and the project ADAEBIO2

The CCL (Comité de Coopération avec le Laos) has been involved in implementing rural development programs in Laos for about 45 years. Currently, CCL works in different provinces in Laos, including Phongsaly, Oudomxai and Bolikhamsai.

The project ADAEBio phase 2 "Project on Integrated rural development in Beng, La and Xay districts, Oudomxay province", funded by Bread for the World, the French Development Agency and the EDF Group Foundation, is implemented from 1st of January 2025 to 31st of December 2027. It targets 50 villages from ethnic minorities (Khmu 80%, Hmong 10%, Akha 9%, Lao/PouNoy 1%). The project follows an integrated and participatory approach and has 3 specific objectives:

1. The villagers and communities activate levers to reduce the economic and environmental vulnerability of their agroecosystems.
2. The local governance on environment and economic development issues is strengthened.
3. The local knowledge on development and environmental issues are acknowledged, strengthened and shared at the scale of the Oudomxay province and beyond.

B - Context

In recent decades, the Lao PDR has witnessed a significant shift from traditional subsistence towards market-oriented commercial agriculture, i.e. cash crop cultivation – a trend widely observed in northern Laos. Driven by the expansion of agricultural land concessions, contract-farming arrangements, and other investment mechanisms, the shift towards a cash-crop oriented system has implied greater access to and use of chemical pesticides, an indication of broader agricultural intensification efforts. According to Lao government data, pesticide imports surged by 10,364 percent by volume from 2001 to 2021 as commercial agriculture expanded – a figure that only includes what entered the country legally (FAOSTAT 2024)[1].

In Oudomxay Province, the increased use of pesticides coincided with an upland corn rush in the early 2000s. Between 2002 and 2010, the cultivated corn area in Oudomxay expanded sixfold, from 4,000 hectares to 25,400 hectares (LSUAFRP 2006; MAF 2012; UNCTAD 2020)[2][3][4]. This rapid expansion, resulted in many upland villages and ethnic minorities – communities who have, until recent decades, been outside the scope of mainstream development – to increasingly rely on pesticides, particularly herbicides (mainly glyphosate, paraquat and atrazine). Besides corn, rubber and sugarcane cultivation have expanded on the slopes and hills. Contract-farming arrangements between field-crop investors and local farmers further reached lowland rice fields, where bananas and dry-season crops, including pumpkin, watermelon, long beans, are cultivated, in most cases using investment by Chinese companies. The greater availability of pesticides further led farm households to include more pesticides in their horticultural and rice crops outside contract farming arrangements.

In this context, the CCL has been working for more than 10 years in Oudomxay province to promote agricultural practices that require fewer pesticides and to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of rural communities to address key health and environmental challenges. **Thus, the purpose of this consultancy is to conduct a survey on current and historical farming practices, as well as on farmers' adaptation and mitigation strategies in response to the issues raised by the extensive use of agrochemicals.** This study will be carried out as part of a consulting arrangement between the CCL and a **field surveyor/researcher**, who will be mainly responsible for conducting the various group and individual interviews in the villages surveyed.

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[1] FAO. 2024. FAOSTAT: Pesticide Use. Available at https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/RP

[2] Lao-Swedish Upland Agriculture and Forestry Research Program (LSUAFRP). 2006. Workshop Proceedings on Corn Production and Market Chains: Building Framework for Border Trade and Cooperation 9-11 August 2006, Oudomxay Province. LSUAFRP Workshop Report No. 12.

[3] Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). 2012. Lao census of Agriculture 2010/11 Highlights. Vientiane, Lao PDR: Steering Committee for the Agricultural Census: Agricultural Census Office.

[4] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). 2020. Analysing the Maize Value Chain for Export in Lao People's Democratic Republic. Geneva: UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities. 57p.

C – The study in the frame of ADAEBio2

The project ADAEBio2 is currently implementing several activities related to the use of pesticides in Oudomxay Province. CCL has been working for several years on the aforementioned issues, raising awareness and accompanying communities to find practical solutions. In the frame of ADAEBio2, CCL promotes a transition to agroecological practices and supports farmers in implementing farming systems that are less dependent on chemicals. Villages Committees for Pesticide Control (VCPC) are supported in improving the local governance on pesticides use and developing practical solutions. These include, between others: the use of personal protection equipment through a community sharing system, the use of waste pits for a centralized and safer disposal of empty cans, the development of agroecological farming techniques, awareness about the harmful impacts of pesticides for human health and environment among the communities. Besides these, CCL works on raising awareness on the use of pesticides among communities, especially children. Finally, the organisation of provincial think tanks on biodiversity aims at providing technical advice and new knowledge to decision-makers.

The pesticide study referred to in these ToRs contributes to Result 2.2 "*The local stakeholders are involved in systemic strategies to protect the environment (including on pesticide management)*" under Specific Objective 2 "*The local governance on environment and economic development issues is strengthened*". The following activity is planned in accordance with the project's logical framework:

> **Pesticide survey to monitor the use of pesticides in the Oudomxay province.** During Phase 1, a monitoring study of pesticide use in Oudomxay province was conducted[5]. This study calculated an indicator of the quantity of pesticides used (based on the treatment frequency index) and explored the pesticide market in the province (among product sellers). The study to be conducted during the Phase 2 will go through a more qualitative approach, focusing more on farmers' behaviors. The results of the Phase 1 study, coupled with the results from Phase 2, could be the subject of a scientific publication and will be disseminated within the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP).

2 – Objectives and methodology of the study

A – Expected information and results of the study

As explained above, the study discussed in this document is a key part of ADAEBio2 activities and follows up on the study conducted during Phase 1 of the project. That publication had revealed the use of numerous pesticides in the area, some of which are banned from sale in Laos. Almost all cropping systems are affected, but the application rates can vary significantly from one crop to another depending on the types of products (herbicides, fungicides, insecticides), the active ingredients, the grown species and the context it which it is grown (contract farming vs personal crops).

Therefore, this study aims to get a better understanding of the practices of the farmers in the area targeted by the project. It has been decided to explore the relation between farmers and pesticide use, with a focus on historical practices and decisions made by the farmers. A detailed study of these dynamics could help identify circumstances or practices through which farmers are adapting to reduce pesticide use. This could facilitate the development of adaptation activities for "traditional" cash crops (model farmers, extension activities based on the main findings, etc.), in addition to the existing agroecology initiatives. At the very least, such a study could help assess the relative importance of various factors in farmers' decisions regarding whether or not to use chemicals.

B – Methodology for data collection and sampling of the survey

The survey methodology and the main tools required for its implementation have been developed by the CCL team prior to the survey and will be tested before the field researcher is recruited. However, the selected candidate will be expected to familiarize himself/herself with this methodology, which will be presented at the beginning of the assignment by the CCL staff. The selected field surveyor will also be expected to adapt the methods and tools as the study progresses, incorporating improvements based on the challenges and/or opportunities encountered during the interviews.

1) Methodology

The individuals and communities' behaviors, strategies and practices related to pesticide use that we hope to identify through focus group discussions and interviews shall be considered at the village (or inter-village/"*tasseng*" if relevant), at the intra-community level (if various households concerned), and at the farm/household level.

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5 Accessible through this link : https://ccl-laos.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CCL-Pesticide-Document-text-VIEW.pdf

Data is to be collected through two complementary processes designed to identify the most suitable people to interview in order to obtain data relevant to the survey, while ensuring, as much as possible, that the diversity of cropping systems is represented.

Firstly, a **preliminary meeting with the village leaders** will allow to collect basic information about the village and the general dynamics regarding pesticides' use.

Then, **focus group discussions** will be conducted in the identified villages with the most motivated and interested people, while the survey team will encourage minorities and groups that may be underrepresented to participate. The focus groups must consist of 6 to 20 people maximum. In order to prepare such discussions, a preliminary meeting with the village chief and his two deputies shall be organized by the survey team to gather general information about the community and explain the aim of the survey

Following the focus group discussions, **in-depth household interviews** (3 to 8 households interviewed per village) will be conducted with farmers motivated and engaged in a process of reduction of pesticides and/or who implement some practices related to agroecology principles (mixed crops, agroforestry, soil protection, conservation of forest plots or hedges, protection of water sources, etc.).

The data is to be collected through **semi-structured** interviews which are supposed to help establish a climate of trust between the interviewee and the interviewer. The aim is therefore to give respondents the impression of an open and free-flowing discussion that allows them to more easily share their personal stories and current situations related to pesticide use and associated practices. Semi-structured interviews also allow us to deviate from the strict framework of a questionnaire if the discussion allows or requires it. This may be the case, for example, if the discussion reveals an innovative practice, in which case we will seek to explore it as thoroughly as possible, even if it means sacrificing information on other, less critical aspects. However, a **questionnaire** outlining the key information needed, along with examples of open-ended questions, will be developed and discussed with the field investigator at the beginning of the survey period. It should not be viewed as a rigid set of questions for the survey, but rather as a guide to help steer discussions with farmers.

2) Sampling strategy

The study will not rely on a representative sample of the communities nor use random sampling, but the survey team is expected to proceed methodically to ensure that we survey a diverse range of agricultural systems within the study area. Identifying the most relevant villages and households to conduct the survey will be made possible by cross-referencing:

- the data already available from the baseline survey conducted at the start of the project, as well as by the activities already implemented in the villages, and;
- the findings from the focus group discussions in the villages.

In terms of sample size and given the planned timeframe, this methodology proposes conducting a survey in 6 to 10 villages with relevant situation towards project area. The survey will consist of 1 focus group discussion and 3 to 8 household interviews per village. A minimum of 30 households should be interviewed with a maximum target of 60 interviews.

3 – Outputs of the consultancy and main deliverables

This consultancy will participate in achieving the following output: "*1 monitoring study on pesticide use is achieved and disseminated*".

The three months allocated for this consulting assignment should be primarily used for field surveys in the villages. The field surveyor's time will therefore be divided between field work in Oudomxai province (La, Xai, Beng districts) and office work at CCL office, in Muang Xay. This office work will be dedicated to reporting on the interviews conducted, discussion on the results and progress with the rest of the CCL team, refining the methodology as needed, and adjustment of the list of target villages. The field surveyor will **not be responsible for drafting the final study repor**t. The final study will be **prepared by CCL based on the data and documentation produced during the consultancy**. The different deliverables of the consultancy are listed below:

1) **Clear report on the discussions held during the meetings and interviews conducted in each village**. Therefore, for one village, the following deliverables are expected:
    - Reports on the introduction meeting with village leaders (1 per village): narrative report, no specific template (with a set of general questions to report on quantitative data);
    - Reports on the focus group discussion (1 per village): narrative report, no specific template (with some set questions to report on historical use of pesticides);

- Reports on the household interviews (around 3 to 8 per village): specific template to ensure the consistency of the data collected and to facilitate reporting but including a narrative section for mentioning important points that might otherwise be overlooked due to the questionnaire's format.

The draft template for reporting on focus group discussions and household interviews will be shared with the field surveyor at the beginning of the consultancy period.
It is expected for the field surveyor to provide a report in Lao, based on his/her field notes, as well as a complete English translation that faithfully reflects the original meaning of the interviewees' responses.

2) **A mid-term progress note** (in English), about the conduction of the survey in 3 villages, listing the key lessons learned, the data collected, the challenges encountered, and proposing improvements for the rest of the study's implementation.
3) **A final note following the completion of the final surveys** (in English, 3 months after the start of the consulting period) listing the key lessons learned, the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology and sampling approach, any persistent challenges encountered during the second survey period, and initial conclusions based on the fieldwork.

The following table summarizes the main expected deliverables:

N°	Deliverable	Timeline
1	Report on 1) introduction meetings with village leaders 2) focus group discussions with selected members of the communities 3) household interviews with selected farmers *Note: These reports should include the main findings, include quotes from interviewees and provide examples.*	After completion of the interviews in one village, before starting interviews in another village
2	Mid-term progress note	1 month after the start of the consultancy
3	Final progress note	3 months after the start of the consultancy

The consultant conducts the survey hand in hand with the CCL. The CCL is responsible for the following aspects:

- Providing interview tools, which are reviewed together with the consultant
- Facilitating contact with the villages
- Providing a list of selected villages
- Providing technical staff as well as government staff for the conduction of the survey.
- Providing feedback on reports
- Coordinating the overall survey
- Writing the final version of the survey, with the consultants' notes and reports as inputs.

4 – Indicative workplan

A **tentative share of the workload** according to expected planning (for 3 months, i.e. around 65 working days) is detailed in the table below:

Activity	Estimated number of days
Meetings, focus groups and interviews in the villages + Field trips *Note: here, we assume a total of 8 selected villages and an average of 5 days per village. Note that the total number of villages and the number of interviewed households per village is subject to change during the survey.*	40
Reporting of the interviews conducted (Lao and English) *Note: here, we assume a total of 8 selected villages and an average of 2.5 days of reporting per village.*	20

Writing of the mid-term progress note	2
Writing of the final consultancy note	3
TOTAL	65 (tentative)

Note: It is expected for the surveyor to still be available after the consultancy, during the redaction of the final study report by CCL, for answering potential questions that may arise at this step.

5 - Conditions

A total of 65 days is expected for this consultancy. Payment will be based on the actual number of working days validated by CCL.This number of working days (65) is indicative. The CCL plans to conduct this survey over a total period of 3 calendar months expected to start from mid-October. The final planning will be discussed with the selected consultant and based on the project budget forecast.

This consultancy is expected to take place in Oudomxai province, in Xai, Beng and La districts. Trips between Vientiane and Oudomxai, as well as transportation within Oudomxai province, will be covered by CCL. Accommodation and DSA will be covered by CCL, in line with the current policy. Accommodation and DSA will only be covered for the days spent in the field, not for the days spent at CCL office in Muang Xai.

The maximum amount of the financial proposal shall not exceed USD 6300. Travel, accommodation and DSA covered by CCL are excluded from this amount.

6 – Expected profile of the consultant and selection process

The CCL is looking for one consultant (individual or legal entity).

The application file should include:

- A detailed Curriculum Vitae of the consultant involved with a focus on the consultant's relevant experience in social surveys in rural areas of Northern Laos, knowledge of agricultural development issues and pesticide use.
- List of relevant experiences similar to this consultancy.
- A financial proposal which details the consultancy fees.
- Any other documents developed by the applicant and that could be relevant to the topic of the consultancy.

The following skills, **experience** and **criteria** will be assessed, based on the detailed CV:

- Background and experience in conducting social surveys in rural areas in Lao PDR – 25%
- Excellent command of spoken and written English – 20%
- Experience in the context of working with ethnic groups in Northern Laos – 15%
- Degree or relevant experience in the field of agriculture or rural development – 10%
- Knowledge of Khmu language – 5%
- Experience or training related to the use of pesticides in the Southeast Asian context – 5%
- Financial proposal – 20%

Following an initial review of their CVs, shortlisted candidates will be invited to an **online interview. The following criteria will be assessed during the interview:**

- Knowledge of the subject – 25%
- Level of English proficiency – 25%
- Understanding of the ToR – 25%
- Experience in qualitative field research – 25%

The interviews are planned to be conducted between September 30 and October 7, 2026.

Proposals will first be screened for eligibility. Financial proposals exceeding the maximum budget limit of USD 6,300 will be automatically disqualified.

For any question about this call for proposal, please contact, before September 25, 2026: Mr Dorian DEJACE, dorian.dejace@ccl-laos.org.

Candidates should send their application file per email by September 28, 2026, to:

- CCL Director, Ms. Manivone VORACHAK: manivone@ccl-laos.org
- CCL Project advisor for ADAEBIO2, Mr Rémi SEPTOURS: Remi.septours@ccl-laos.org
- CCL Project advisor, Mr Dorian DEJACE: dorian.dejace@ccl-laos.org

The consultant selected will be offered a consultancy contract signed with CCL.

Note: The consultant and any personnel involved in the assignment must comply with all applicable CCL policies.