



**LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
PEACE INDEPENDENCE DEMOCRACY UNITY PROSPERITY**

**SOUTHEAST ASIA REGIONAL ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND CONNECTIVITY (SEARECC) PROJECT
(PROJECT ID No. P176088; IDA CREDIT No. 7102-LA)**

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

**National Project Implementation and Operational Support Consultant
for Component 3.1: Support Agricultural Trade, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Management
Reference No. ICS-009**

1. Background

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT); Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF); Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC); Ministry of Public Security (MOPS); Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Finance (MOF) of Lao PDR have received financing support from the World Bank's (WB) International Development Association (IDA) to implement the Southeast Asia Regional Economic Corridor and Connectivity (SEARECC) with a project duration of six (6) years starting from 4th quarter of year 2022 to May 2028.

The Southeast Asia Regional Economic Corridor and Connectivity (SEARECC) seeks to improve the domestic and regional transport connectivity and logistics facilities, with associated policy reforms for increased economic activities along selected transport corridors in Northern Lao PDR. The project scope includes improvement of transport connectivity and logistics services in Lao PDR, trade facilitation, border crossing control management, and agriculture trade along the NR2 corridor and five provinces in the corridor catchment area: Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Xayabouli, and Luangprabang. NR2, 295 km long and a part of ASEAN highway no 13, consists of NR2-West (145 km) connecting with the Thai border at Huai Kone via NR4A and NR2-East (150 km) connecting with the Vietnamese border at Tay Trang, Dien Bien Phu province. As a major road corridor, it crosses the new Lao-China rail corridor in Muang Xai, creating the potential for multimodal transport connectivity for both north-south and east-west routes connecting Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, and China. The development of NR2 provides linkages to Thailand, Vietnam, and China, which can help achieve Lao PDR's aspiration to become a land-linked country. The proposed project will help to attract more investment, boost more cross-border trade, and generate more employment in the surrounding areas.

Trade in agricultural products is among the top 5 in terms of both value and volume across ASEAN. Improved regional connectivity and integration thus offer significant opportunities for Lao PDR to increase exports of agriculture products. Lao PDR's agriculture system is mainly subsistence farming and transitioning from subsistence, agricultural commercialization has gradually brought about structural changes in several value chains (i.e., increased production volume, processing, packaging, and exports), albeit on a small scale so far. Growth rate of agriculture was only by about 3 percent during the last decade due to the prevailing levels of low agricultural productivity, mainly constrained by inadequate access to farm inputs, lack of value chain development and market linkages and low adoption of agricultural technologies, poor compliance with product standards, and high transportation and logistics costs to access markets.

With growing consumer demand for high-quality rice, maize, and 'clean and safe' vegetables, there are both niches and expanding markets for high-quality, consumer-safe, and environmentally sustainable foods and agricultural products – which Lao PDR is producing. But the key challenges in regional agricultural trade are the limited capacity of domestic

producers to apply sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards, practice Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP), limited transport access to markets, and high logistics cost to ensure that agricultural products are produced, packed, handled, and stored to minimize the risk of a microbial and residue of substances which may be harmful for the human health to reduce food safety hazard.

The capacity of local authorities in 5 northern target provinces to provide regulatory and scientific laboratory testing services for traders' compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards is weak while there are some main existing laboratory facilities in the Northern Agri-Tech Center ATC in Xay district, Oudomxay province designated as a regional laboratory to serve the international agricultural trade of northern provinces, but this laboratory system and its infrastructures were poorly maintained, lack of necessary equipment and ineffectively used. These laboratory facilities are also not yet accredited and recognized by trading partners, especially by China, Thailand, and Vietnam. Most of the SPS-related tasks are centralized and the lack of capacity of local authorities to operationalize established procedures for scientific verification of SPS remains challenging.

Promoting agricultural trade through investment in improving sanitary and phytosanitary standard (SPS) management capacity and export business processes will help not only leverage local producers and traders to integrate into regional and global value chains but also help reduce documentary transaction time, costs, and transportation distance, and improve their capacity to upgrade product quality, standard and scientific certification system to meet the market requirements of neighboring countries such as China, Thailand and Vietnam, and other trading partners.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) are to improve regional and domestic trade and climate resilient transport connectivity along an East-West corridor in Southeast Asia, and to provide immediate and effective response in case of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency. The proposed PDO-level results indicators are:

- A. Improved regional and domestic transport connectivity
 - 1. Travel time along the selected sections of the NR2 corridor (hours)
 - 2. Number of people provided with improved, climate resilient road access
 - 3. Beneficiaries expressing satisfaction with transport connectivity (percentage)
- B. Improved cross-border trade efficiency
 - 4. Average cross-border processing time at selected Laos-Vietnam and Laos-Thailand border checkpoints (hours)
 - 5. Time taken for SPS certification in agricultural trade (day)

The project has five components, and nine sub-components:

Component 1: Lao PDR and Regional Connectivity Enhancement

- Sub-component 1.1: NR2 climate resilient improvement and maintenance.
- Sub-component 1.2: Local Road climate resilient improvement and maintenance.
- Sub-component 1.3: Improvement of border crossing facilities.
- Sub-component 1.4: Implementation and supervision support.

Component 2: Logistics services development and border crossing management

- Sub-component 2.1 : Logistics facilities development.
- Sub-component 2.2 : Regional integration and cross-board transport agreements.
- Sub-component 2.3 : Strengthening capacity of Customs, Immigration and Quarantine and boarder management.

Component 3: Strengthening institutional capacity and regulatory framework in agriculture, transport, and investment planning

Sub-component 3.1 : Support on agricultural trade and SPS management.

Sub-component 3.2 : Institutional capacity development for transport sector.

Component 4 : Project Management

Component 5 : Contingent Emergency Response

The scope of the sub-component 3.1 is to support on enhancing agricultural trade and improving the SPS Management system. Capacity development to support agricultural trade will focus on improving the enabling environment for agricultural trade activities. The key activities include: (i) financing technical assistance to review and improve business process for cross border trade for agriculture products through streamlining of export and import permits, raising awareness of traders' compliance with SPS requirements, and simplifying the registration and scientific certification system of farm inputs; (ii) providing trainings to strengthen operational capacity for the MAF, Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFOs), and DAFOs in agricultural trade promotion; and (iii) capacity development to address key gender gaps in agricultural value chain to enhance trade including unequal access to information for women, barriers registering businesses, accessing financial credit, technology and market.

Capacity Building for SPS Management will focus on capacity building of MAF, Ministry of Health (MOH), PAFOs, District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (DAFOs), and border checkpoints for compliance of SPS requirements and reduce trade barriers in the targeted provinces and districts. Mainly, the activities cover (i) financing technical assistance to review and improve legislations relevant for SPS; (ii) providing training to strengthen institutional and operational capacity in SPS management; and (iii) financing technical assistance to carry out a scientific laboratory assessment for upgrade accredit/recognize and testing services.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The National Implementation Support and Operational Consultant will support sub-Component 3.1 of the SEARECC project with the Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry lead agency for sub-Component 3.1

The Consultant will provide support to DOA, DLF, DAEC, FDD and Agritech center in consultation with the World Bank team in planning and implementing the Project activities, assist the line agencies in preparing annual and quarterly plans, preparation of technical specifications of procurement packages, monitoring and reporting and managing the tasks of the other consultants, management of the input of TA, insure compliance of the SPS measures to increase safe trade of agricultural and food products.

3. Scope of Work

The scope and specific tasks of the National Implementation Support and Operational Consultant will include, but not limited to the following tasks:

- 1) Assist and provide support to the coordination of component 3.1 in planning and implementing the Project with a view to achieving the objectives of the Project.
- 2) Assist the DOA, DLF, DAEC, FDD and Agritech center in preparing annual work plan and budget (AWPB) and procurement plan and implement project activities.
- 3) Develop the system for the preparation of the activity proposal based on the AWPB, approving system for the activities and monitoring of the activity implementation.
- 4) Liaise with other SPS projects in Lao PDR and other GMS countries, and enhance harmonization of Lao PDR SPS measures with other countries in GMS and ASEAN
- 5) Enhance the effectiveness of the technical consultants by pursuing adequate preparation and follow-up of their field work.
- 6) Assist PMU and CIUs in recruitment of consultants under various packages.
- 7) Assist the DOA with the supervision of the Technical Consultants to be hired under various packages.
- 8) Review tender documents of the packages under the component 3.1 with particular reference to the commercial aspects to ensure the World Bank comments are incorporated in the final version.

- 9) Assist to develop the M&E system for the monitoring of the implementation of project activities including contracts management.
- 10) Assist for the development of the progress reports (semi-annual and annual) on status and issues that may arise during the course of implementation and facilitate information sharing as well as coordinate activities amongst project stakeholders for the component 3.1.
- 11) Facilitate the organizations of national and international meetings, workshops, conferences, communication related brainstorming meetings, documentations, preparation of monthly, quarterly and annual reports, other project related documents of sub-Component 3.1.
- 12) Assist to produce documents for the review missions and implementation support missions and mid-term review mission.
- 13) Assist in drafting, editing, preparation of sub-Component 3.1 implementation report and finalizing all relevant documents (in Lao version to English and vice versa) for submission to the PMU review.
- 14) Maintain office records in hard copy and electronic copy in an efficient filing system, including back-up storage in case of computer viruses.
- 15) Establish and maintain the project's filing Name and Coding system in Lao and English languages.
- 16) Conduct other tasks related to this assignment.

4. Output Reporting Requirements:

The Consultant will be required to deliver the following tasks:

- Monthly reports, Quarterly reports, and Assignment Completion report.
- Field Mission reports, where applicable.
- Support to quality review of all technical reports and documents in Lao and English languages.
- Smooth coordination of key technical agencies for sub-component 3.1
- Project management implementation, annual workplan and budget, procurement plan, monitoring and evaluation system of the project
- Smooth implementation of project activities and deliver outputs on timely manner.

5. Duty Station and Duration of the Assignment

Supervision Arrangements: The consultant will work under the overall supervision of Director General of Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with day-to-day supervision from the designated representative of Department of Agriculture and respective technical department under this sub-component 3.1.

The consultant will also closely work with the Department of Planning and Finance, MPWT, which is PCC and PSC 's secretariate.

Term of Engagement: The total estimated input for this assignment will be a full-time basis for 24 months with possibility of renewal based on satisfactory performance review and Project requirements. This first initial contract expected to be start between November 2022 to October 2024.

6. Consultant Selection Criteria

Consultant Selection Criteria: To qualify for the assignment, the consultant shall meet the following requirements:

- The candidate should have a minimum qualification of a Bachelor degree in one of the following field of studies: agricultural science, veterinary science, economic, trade, and general administration management and other related field of studies.
- Minimum 5 years of experience in managing agricultural trade and development projects, including but not limit to animal health, plant health and food safety in Laos;
- Minimum 5 years of experience of government institution, particularly in agriculture and trade sectors
- Experience of working in plant health, animal health and food safety particularly in sanitary and phytosanitary measures would be an added advantage;
- Experience in project management including monitoring and evaluation.
- Proved good coordination, reporting and communication skills in Lao and English and Computer literate, complete knowledge of the MS Office and MS Project;
- Proved English and in working knowledge of Lao language.
- Willingness to travel to project provinces as needed