

Integrated Rural Development in Poverty Regions of Laos (NU-IRDP)

Food Facility Action: Rodent Control

1. Content and Goal

Villages which are classified as “poor” also suffer from losses of food and damages to crops caused by a large rodent population. In times of extreme infestations with rodents the situation can be massively aggravated. In order to find and test an approach to avoid infestation, damage and health hazards methods and tools of improved rodent control were to be applied.

2. Approach, method, scale

Villagers can lose up to 30% of the young plants during the planting period because of rodents and about 15% of the stored rice after harvesting. Some rodent control tools – often in bad quality - are known and used by the people, but understanding of preventative measures is still lacking.

Extension staff from the Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices and the Plant Protection Centers were trained in rodent management, i.e. monitoring and early warning systems and biological and technical control measures. They received several follow-up trainings and technical advice during village visits.

After sensitizing the village authorities on the need for and possibilities of controlling rodents, the extension staff trained villagers in 18 selected villages in the application of “Prorodent” and the mechanical means. The bio-agent “Prorodent”, produced and applied successfully in Thailand, was introduced. It is a GIZ developed, tested and certified bio-agent to control rodents in an environmentally friendly and non-hazardous way. In addition, traps and zinc sheets to mechanically protect rice stores were introduced.

Due to an extreme outbreak in one Houaphan district, an additional emergency campaign was applied to the most severely affected area (4500 ha, 29 villages) in an attempt to curb the disastrous effects.

3. Impacts

The damage on plants and harvest caused by rodents decreased by 60% between 2010 and 2011 in the villages where rodent control measures were implemented. Some villagers stated that after the control measures they had more own rice for an average of additional two months, cutting short the usual period of shortage. Others indicated that they could even sell some rice due to higher amounts left over. The success of the rodent control approach was also very visible during the extreme rodent outbreak: While the rest of the affected district in Houaphan was highly infested, the two villages in the district which had applied the rodent control measures beforehand were not affected.

The trained staff could improve their general knowledge about rodents, specific techniques for rodent control, storage protection as well as early warning systems, i.e. indicators and

responses. This knowledge is expected to be applied in future pest control extension, assuming that this approach will continue to be supported by the Government of Laos.

Currently, the spending capacity in the remote programme areas has proved to be too low for the pure commercial supply of the bio-agent. The establishment of a lasting Public-Private Partnership to promote the sale and application of Prorodent, based on some kind of subsidy system, may be an option for systemic rodent management. But the mechanical methods along with specific knowledge to control rodents continue to be successfully used in the villages. It now is on the Government's agricultural extension service and the trained technical staff to spread the news.