

GREEN EXTENSION



What is Green Extension?

- Green extension is the name we are giving to learning processes that support the scaling up of sustainable agriculture.
- Green Extension is a rural advisory service provided by both state and non-state actors that supports the development of smallholder farming in a way that secures the future wellbeing of rural communities.
- Green Extension is not a single approach or blueprint for achieving sustainability. It includes many different methods that are used to promote various types of content.
- Green Extension is not an idea that belongs to one organisation or project. Everybody can contribute!

Why do we need Green Extension?

There are four reasons why government departments, NGOs and development projects in Laos should consider adopting Green Extension:

1. Government Policy for Agriculture Sector: eg. a stated goal of the Ministry is “Developing clean, safe and sustainable agriculture”
2. Negative impacts of some farming practices, eg. misuse of pesticides, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, unfair contracting, increase in farmer debt
3. Evidence from success cases, eg. there is growing demand among Lao consumers for organic food and a organic markets have been established
4. International trends in extension, eg. the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) is promoting the New Extensionist

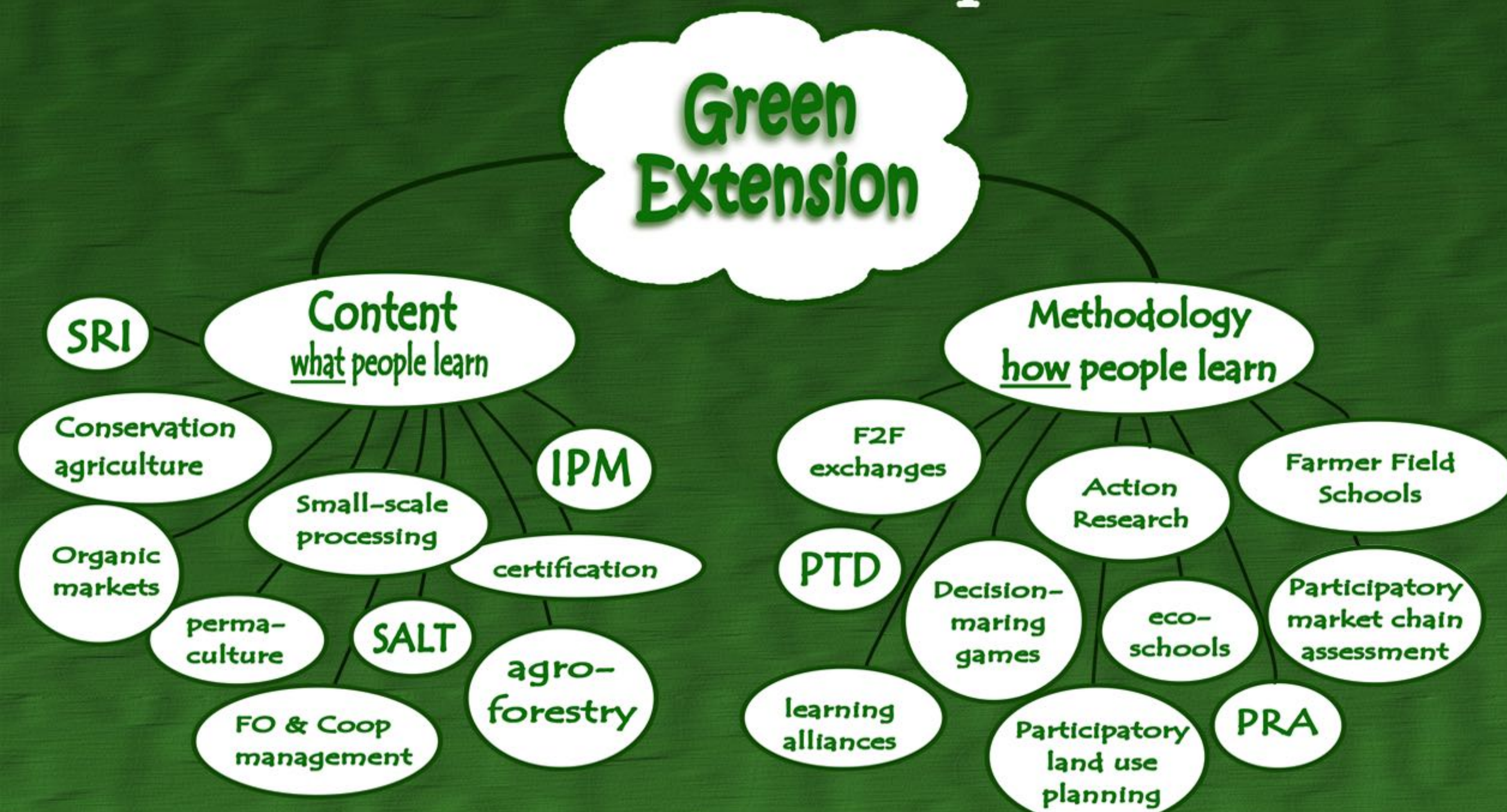
The past ten years has seen a rapid increase in the use of pesticides in Laos. Studies show widespread contamination of fruits and vegetables, and unacceptable levels of toxic chemicals in the blood of farmers, consumers and school children.



Healthy food production is feasible in Laos; the technology and skills are available. But these methods must produce greater financial returns for farmers if they are to be scaled up and sustained. The bargaining power of small farmers is often weak.



What does GE look like in practice?



- What all these Green Extension methods have in common is the creation, sharing and application of local knowledge.
- Sustainable agricultural practices must be adapted to local conditions. These conditions are both diverse and dynamic in the uplands of Laos.
- Therefore Green Extension has to support farmers in analysing local problems and opportunities, and testing alternative practices under local conditions.

Steps for GE Implementation	What this involves?
Participatory agro-ecosystem analysis	Rural families take stock of available resources; inventories and maps prepared
Community Planning	Analysis of opportunities and constraints; agreement reached on priorities for innovation
Action research	Innovations are piloted; options are compared; communities collect data and analyse results
Farmer-to-farmer learning	Experience is shared among households and communities; knowledge and skills transferred
Organisational development	Informal networks and/or formal groups are created to sustain and scale up innovations

We learnt a lot about organizational development and marketing, not just technical aspects of production



It is important that women are involved in exchange visits, not only the village leaders



Learning from Experience

- Sustainable agriculture has been promoted in Laos for more than 30 years eg: organic farming, agro-forestry, integrated pest management, system of rice intensification, conservation agriculture
- This wealth of experience provides a strong foundation for achieving the government policy goal of building a green economy. In February and March 2018, a workshop was held in Xieng Khouang Province to discuss the lessons that were learned about Green Extension.
- Attended by 65 people, the workshop was jointly chaired by the Director General of the Department for Policy and Legal Affairs and the Director of the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO). Support was provided by the Lao Upland Rural Advisory Service (LURAS) and the Food and Agriculture organisation of the United nations (FAO)

Conclusions from the Workshop

Capacity to implement Green Extension already exists. Govt Staff and farmers have been trained. Techniques have been piloted. Results have been documents. Manuals, posters and videos have been produced. Equipment has been handed over.

The project approach has helped create this capacity, but is also a hindrance to mainstreaming. Activities are fragmented. Often small scale, with no critical mass.

Funding starts and stops. Weak local ownership. Staff regularly reassigned.

Provinces need to take the lead. PAFO should be more proactive in planning and coordinating Green Extension. If resources are needed, they should lobby for staff, funds and facilities, but to do this they need a clear strategy and a mechanism for M&E.

In summary: We know how to do it, but we could do it better if we worked together!

