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**Annual Workshop at the National University of Laos for a Project “Advancing enhanced wood manufacturing industries in Laos and Australia”**

An Annual Workshop will be held on 11 October 2018 at the Faculty of Forestry, National University of Laos (NUoL), to provide an update on the project “Advancing enhanced wood manufacturing industries in Laos and Australia”. The project is funded by the Australian Centre for Agricultural International Research (ACIAR).

The aim of the project is to support the development of innovative wood processing industries to enhance markets for planted timber resources within Lao PDR and Australia.

Supporting Objectives are to:

1. Identify the key elements of the policy, governance and administrative environment that constrain the development of plantation forests and value chains in Lao PDR, and other constraints to improving plantation value chains, and develop strategies for engaging with this environment and improving plantation value chains.

2. Develop and adapt innovative technologies for the production of high performance EWPs, based on veneer and laminated wood from small diameter logs, and also composite products based on wood and other materials.

3. Improve capacity, in both Lao PDR and Australia, with respect to value chain analysis and the development and production of EWPs based on veneer, laminated wood and other composite materials.

The project is led by the University of Melbourne, in collaboration with Australian partners, DAF Queensland, the Australian National University and Griffith University. The principal partners in Lao PDR are the National University of Laos (Faculty of Forestry), Luang Prabang Teak Program, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Science and Technology, Laos National Wood Products Association, Lao Furniture Association and private enterprises.

The Annual Workshop will involve the project participants and stakeholders. The Australian Ambassador in Laos, HE, Mr Jean Bernard Carrasco, will officially open the Wood Science and Production Research Centre at the Faculty of Forestry, which has been fully funded by ACIAR. The Centre, equipped in the state of art veneer peeling and plywood production machinery, allows the university to undertake research on Engineered Wood Products development for Lao PDR companies interested in investing in this technology. The plant can be used to characterise the quality and potential of different plantation wood species for veneer production and veneer-based product development. The enhancement of the NUoL research facility provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary research in wood processing and manufacturing of appearance and structural wood products thereby enabling Laos to develop the technical knowledge and skills necessary to underpin the development of an Engineered Wood Products industry in Laos. The facility will provide linkages between government, researchers, private sector enterprises and other actors along the timber value-chain to facilitate the interchange of knowledge, expertise and information between the key stakeholders that need to be involved in the development of this industry in Laos. Veneer processing has already been added to the university curriculum involving hands-on practice and training.

The opening of the Research Centre will be followed by presentations and discussions on the project to-date achievements, such as the analysis of relevant policy, governance and administrative environment, analysis of value chains of the Lao PDR smallholder plantation resource, the inventory of the current plantation resource in Lao PDR and mapping of plantations of different species. The studies on the characterisation of Lao eucalypt and plantation teak resource potential to produce Engineered Wood Products will be also discussed.

Although the project has completed only 1.5 years of its 5 year term, the project team can already demonstrate significant achievements which will be presented and discussed at the Annual Workshop.