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MEDIA
SEPTEMBER
2010

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ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION SYSTEM OF
RATTAN PRODUCTS IN CAMBODIA, LAOS, AND VIETNAM

REPORT ON MEDIA CLIPPINGS FROM JAN-JUN 2010, CAMBODIA, LAOS, AND VIETNAM

June 2010

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CAMBODIA RATTAN TAXONOMIC GUIDELINES

Prickly progress

10 MAY 2010 CATALINA MESTRE



A rattan factory at Reussey Chrouy district, Phnom Penh

Cambodia's ailing rattan industry is hoping to get a boost from a collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund and a new field guide on one of the Kingdom's most important resources. The European Commission and Swedish furniture maker, Ikea have joined the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in supporting the Rattan Association of Cambodia.

As part of the WWF's Rattan Project, the Field Guide to the Rattans of Cambodia aims to raise rattan's profile, amid an economic downturn that has taken a harsh toll on the Kingdom's palm industry. Over-harvesting, poor resource knowledge and management has also contributed to rattan's decline.

Cambodia's precarious situation with a once robust resource comes down to a couple of factors. Firstly, there has never been a taxonomic study of the country's rattan resources, preventing various stakeholders from properly assessing the plant's value. This has led to unsustainable production.

Secondly, over the last several decades, Cambodia has aggressively exported raw rattan, cashing in on global demand. Existing resources, as a result, have been severely strained. Thirdly, despite the growing scarcity of rattan, illegal cutting and exporting to neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam at premium prices, continues.

While Cambodia is having trouble renewing its rattan resources, the ecosystems that sustain the plant are also being decimated from deforestation. Once a forest disappears, it's very difficult to discover any new species of rattan that could be cultivated and eventually boost the industry.



The field guide, written by botanist Khou Eang Hout (Yos Katank)

The field guide, written by botanist Khou Eang Hout promises to play an essential role in the further development of Cambodia's industry. There are about 600 species of rattan in the world – so far 18 have been found in Cambodia. Experts believe there are more to be discovered.

To help apply the newly acquired knowledge collected by Hout, the Rattan Association of Cambodia, recognised by the government in January, is working closely with WWF and other organisations to reach out to rattan-producing communities.

With his shop based in Phnom Penh, RAC chairman, Lip Cheang is one of the leading rattan producers in the country. He thinks the industry needs to follow a distinct cycle of win-win situations. Since there are no rattan plantations in the capital, most of Phnom Penh's ten factories import the plants from the provinces of Kampot, Preah Sihanouk, Koh Kong, Kampong

Thom and Preah Vihear.

"The relationship between harvesters and producers is vital," says Cheang. Rattan growers in provinces near the Thai border export their raw material to neighbouring countries – a business proving extremely lucrative since rattan resources in Vietnam and Thailand have become so greatly diminished over the last decade. "But without legal measures preventing the raw rattan export, Cambodia could one day find itself depleted of rattan," says Cheang. The RAC will organise workshops on new harvesting, production and trading techniques and is committed to creating more jobs.



Rattan species Phdao Chveung (*Calamus palustris*)

With the worldwide rattan market nearing \$4 billion, Cambodia's industry has plenty of room to grow. The Kingdom averages about \$2m from rattan production annually – a lightweight compared to the likes of Indonesia. However, observers see great potential for Cambodian rattan – if it finds way to make the industry sustainable.

To date, Cambodia only produces enough rattan to meet domestic demand. The available resources and production techniques fail to meet international standards and demand. However, with the WWF's active support of the RAC, as well as the freshly published field guide, the Kingdom's rattan industry could yet thrive.

Cyclos: The men and machines of Phnom Penh's traditional public transport system (by Stefan V Jensen)

WWF Publishes First Guide To Cambodian Rattan Species

BY PAUL VRIEZE

THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The conservation organization WWF unveiled yesterday the first field guide of rattan species in Cambodia as part of ongoing efforts to support the development of sustainable and environmentally friendly rattan production that meets international export requirements.

Michelle Owen, manager of WWF's conservation program, said the guidebook, the first taxonomic study in Cambodia to document the species of vines used for furniture, construction materials and food, was an important reference for improving rattan production—a valuable cottage industry across the country.

“In order to develop a strong and sustainable rattan industry it is necessary to understand the rattan source, how many species there are, how and where it grows and how much can be removed without depleting the resource,” she said.

Men Phymean, chief of wildlife and biodiversity at the Agriculture Ministry, said the guide would help improve management and processing of rattan.

“According to the study, rattan in Cambodia and in other countries is becoming less and less abundant because of rattan collection without the right techniques,” Mr Phymean said, adding, “I believe this book is very important for the trainers to help the local community manage

the natural resource of rattan.”

Khou Eang Hourt, botanist and author of the guide, said he had identified 20 species of rattan across 13 provinces during two years of research, explaining the resulting book included Khmer and scientific names of the rattan, description of their physical characteristics, photos and map of distribution for field identification and production use of the species.

“While we are all familiar with rattan as finished products like chairs and tables, very few people know what these plants look like in the forest or how many species there are in Cambodia,” he said. Mr Eang Hourt added none of the identified species were so far under threat of extinction because of rattan production.

WWF has worked with rattan producers and suppliers in the capital and 20 villages in five provinces since 2006 by setting up a rattan association, supporting local rattan harvesting and improving and cleaning up processing to make rattan products suitable for export markets such as the European Union.

Asnarith Tep, a WWF spokesman, said by telephone that the guide had been distributed among officials, rattan traders and village production groups involved in WWF's rattan production project.

“All of the rattan stakeholders now have a book,” he said.

(Additional reporting by Chhorn Chansy)

ឆ្នាំទី៩ជាអនុផលព្រៃឈើមួយដែលមានសារៈប្រយោជន៍

ភ្នំពេញ: សហគមន៍មូលដ្ឋានបានប្រើប្រាស់ឆ្នាំនេះច្រើនសតវត្សមកហើយសំរាប់ធ្វើជាអាហារ គ្រឿងសំណង់ ឱសថបុរាណ និងគ្រឿងសម្លាញ់។ ដូចជាគុណធាតុធាតុដើម និងធាតុសាមញ្ញប្រភេទ បាន ហើយសហគមន៍ក្នុងតំបន់ព្រៃឈើចូលចិត្តណាស់។ ឆ្នាំនេះប្រើប្រាស់សំរាប់ផលិតផលផ្សេងៗរាប់ពីឧបករណ៍ប្រើប្រាស់នៅតាមផ្ទះនៅតាមសហគមន៍រហូតដល់ធ្វើគ្រឿងសម្លាញ់។ ជាទូទៅដើមឆ្នាំតូចៗត្រូវបានប្រើប្រាស់ជាខ្សែចំណងនិងតម្បាញ និងផលិតជាគុកក្លីច្រើនប្រភេទ។ ឆ្នាំដើមធំមធ្យមនិងដើមធំៗដូចជាឆ្នាំសោម គ្រះឆ្នាំ និងឆ្នាំដំបូងប្រើសំរាប់ធ្វើស៊ីម៉ង់ (ឆ្នាំគ្រាម) និងគ្រឿងសម្លាញ់ដូចជា កៅស៊ូសាឡុង រ៉ែគ្រ ទឹក និងទូសំលៀកបំពាក់ជាដើម។

តាមប្រសាសន៍របស់លោកស្រី Michelle Owen ប្រធានកម្មវិធីអភិរក្សរុក្ខជាតិអង្គការ WWF បានឱ្យដឹងនៅក្នុងគិរីសម្ពោធដាក់ឱ្យប្រើប្រាស់សៀវភៅដឹងសាស្ត្រឆ្នាំ និងមូលដ្ឋានគ្រឹះសំរាប់បណ្តុះបណ្តាលបន្តការគ្រប់គ្រងធនធានឆ្នាំប្រកបដោយនិរន្តរភាពព្រឹកថ្ងៃទី១៧ ខែមីនា នៅសណ្ឋាគារហ៊ីម៉ាវ៉ារី ថា នៅប្រទេសកម្ពុជាឆ្នាំមានចំនួន២១ប្រភេទត្រូវបានរកឃើញដោយលោកយូ អៀងហួត រុក្ខវិទូជាតិខ្ពស់ បំរើការងារឱ្យអង្គការមូលនិធិដើម្បីអភិរក្សធម្មជាតិនៅកម្ពុជា WWF ហើយប្រភេទឆ្នាំភាគច្រើនបានចូលរួមចំណែកដល់ការប្រកបរបរចិញ្ចឹមជីវិតរបស់សហគមន៍ ព្រោះវាជា



ផលិតផលអំពីឆ្នាំដើមមានតម្លៃ

ប្រភេទប្រាក់ចំណូលបន្ថែមមួយក្រៅពីមុខរបរកសិកម្ម។ លោកប្រធានកម្មវិធីអភិរក្សរុក្ខជាតិអង្គការ WWF បានមានចំណាច់នាឆ្នាំថា ឆ្នាំជាទំនិញដ៏សំខាន់មួយសំរាប់ពាណិជ្ជកម្មអន្តរជាតិ ដោយបានផ្តល់នូវរូបិយចំណូលទេសយ៉ាងច្រើន។ ប៉ុន្តែទោះជាយ៉ាងណាក៏ដោយនាពេលបច្ចុប្បន្នឧស្សាហកម្មឆ្នាំកម្ពុជាមិនទាន់អាចប្រកួតប្រជែងជាមួយប្រទេសផលិតឆ្នាំមួយចំនួនទៀតដូចជា ប្រទេសចិន ឥណ្ឌូនេស៊ី និងហ្វីលីពីន។ ការដកហូតឆ្នាំហ្វូសក៏រឹតការកែច្នៃដោយមិនគិតគូរពីការគ្រប់គ្រងបរិស្ថាន និងកង្វះខាតចំណេះដឹងស្តីអំពីគុណភាពខ្ពស់ជាអន្តរជាតិតាមបណ្តោយខ្សែសង្វាត់ផ្តង់ផ្តង់កំពុងធ្វើឱ្យធនធាន

ឆ្នាំក្នុងប្រទេសកម្ពុជាធ្លាក់ចុះ។ លោកយូ អៀងហួត រុក្ខវិទូជាតិខ្ពស់កម្ពុជាបញ្ជាក់ថា សៀវភៅដំបូងបង្អស់ស្តីពីឆ្នាំនៅកម្ពុជាជាការរួមចំណែកមួយសំរាប់ការគ្រប់គ្រងធនធានឆ្នាំប្រកបដោយនិរន្តរភាព ព្រោះវា យើងទាំងអស់គ្នាស្គាល់ឆ្នាំតាមរយៈផលិតផលសំរេចដូចជា កៅស៊ូ គុ និងធ្វើសៀវភៅជាដើម ប៉ុន្តែមានមនុស្សតិចតួចណាស់ដែលស្គាល់ដើមវាគិតប្រាកដនៅក្នុងព្រៃឬជាតិវាមានប៉ុន្មានប្រភេទនៅក្នុងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា។ លោកអៀងហួត បន្តថា ចំណេះដឹងអំពីឆ្នាំមានសារៈសំខាន់ណាស់សំរាប់ការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍វិស័យឧស្សាហកម្មឆ្នាំនៅកម្ពុជាប្រកបដោយនិរន្តរភាព។ អ្នកប្រមូលត្រូវចេះកំណត់អត្តសញ្ញាណប្រ-

ភេទឆ្នាំដែលខ្លួនដកហូត ពាណិជ្ជករឆ្នាំត្រូវចេះកំណត់គុណភាព តំលៃនៃប្រភេទឆ្នាំផ្សេងៗ អ្នកកែច្នៃត្រូវចេះជ្រើសរើសប្រភេទឆ្នាំដែលឆ្លើយតបទៅនឹងតំរូវការផលិតកម្ម គ្រឿងតម្បាញ និងគ្រឿងសម្លាញ់ រីឯអ្នកទិញវិញស្វែងរកផលិតផលឆ្នាំស្អាតដែលការពារបរិស្ថាន។ មូលហេតុទាំងអស់នេះហើយដែលធ្វើឱ្យធនធានឆ្នាំនៅកម្ពុជាកំពុងថយចុះដោយការប្រមូលផលដ៏លឿនលាប់ និងការបាត់បង់ប្រព័ន្ធអេកូឡូស៊ីព្រៃឈើ។ គេត្រូវមានវិធានការបន្ទាន់ដើម្បីបញ្ឈប់និន្នាការនេះ និងដើម្បីការពារធនធានឆ្នាំនិងព្រៃឈើតាមរយៈការប្រើប្រាស់ប្រកបដោយនិរន្តរភាពនូវធនធានឆ្នាំ។

លោកម៉ែន ភីមៀន ប្រធាននាយកដ្ឋានការពារ និងជីវៈចម្រុះ និងសត្វព្រៃគិរីសម្ពោធឱ្យលោកទី សុគន្ធ ប្រតិភូរាជរដ្ឋាភិបាលទទួលបន្ទុកជាប្រធានរដ្ឋបាលព្រៃឈើបានឱ្យដឹងថា នៅដើមឆ្នាំ២០០៩នេះអង្គការ WWF បានគម្រោងការងារបន្ថែមទៀតនៅសហគមន៍ព្រៃឈើចំនួន៦កន្លែងទៀតនៅក្នុងខេត្តកំពង់ធំ កោះកុង និងខេត្តព្រះសីហនុ ដែលជាកន្លែងសំបូរឆ្នាំហើយប្រជាជនភាគច្រើនគឺជាកម្រិតទៅលើការប្រមូលឆ្នាំនិងកែច្នៃឆ្នាំ។ លោកមានការជឿជាក់ថា សៀវភៅនេះមានសារៈសំខាន់ណាស់សំរាប់គ្រូបង្គោលដើម្បីជួយឱ្យសហគមន៍មូលដ្ឋានគ្រប់គ្រងធនធានធម្មជាតិ តិចសេសឆ្នាំប្រកបដោយនិរន្តរភាព និងលើកកម្ពស់ជីវភាពប្រចាំថ្ងៃរបស់ពួកគេ។

សុខុមយោ

THE FIRST FIELD GUIDE OF CAMBODIAN RATTANS PRODUCTS LAUNCHED

BY BUTH REAKSMEY KONGKEA

The World Wide Fund for Nature also known as World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in collaboration with Forestry Administration and General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MoAFF) have launched the first Field Guide of the Rattans of Cambodia on March 17th, aiming to contribute an important step towards sustainable rattan management as it describes the diversity, ecology and characters of rattan in Cambodia.

The first Field Guide of the Rattans of Cambodia was written by Mr. Khou Eang Hourt, a Cambodian Senior Botanist, and supported by WWF which is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with almost five million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries in the world.

Men Phimean, General Director of the Forestry Administration in Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, said that this guide book is very important because it will contribute to the sustainable rattan man-

“Rattan plays an important part in Cambodia's economy. In rural areas, these climbing palms can account for up to 50 percent of village cash income. The large global rattan market – estimated at US\$ 4 billion per year – offers enormous growth potential to the Cambodian rattan sector because of the kingdom's impressive diversity of rattan species”

—Mr. Men Phimean

agement as well as its development in Cambodia in future.

“Rattan plays an important part in Cambodia's economy. In rural areas, these climbing palms can account for up to 50 percent of village cash income. The large global rattan market – estimated at US\$ 4 billion per year – offers enormous growth potential to the Cambodian rattan sector because of the kingdom's impressive diversity of rattan species,” he said.

However, he continued to say that Cambodia's natural rattan resources are severely decreasing due to over harvesting and deforestation.

“This is the first rattan taxonomic study carried out in Cambodia and should serve as a milestone in the Cambodian flora research,” said Seng Teak, WWF Country Director.

Seng Teak said that the research documents more than 20 rattan species across 13 provinces all over Cambodia and identifies five species with the highest market potential. The resulting guidebook provides the common Khmer name (local names) as well as scientific name of each species.

He added that it also supplies detailed information on rattan characteristics including habit, leaf sheath, sheath spines, knee, climbing organ, leaf, cane, inflorescence, and fruits. Detailed distribution maps provide information on where to find each species while descriptions and colour photographs support his field identification. The guide provides a source of key knowledge to anyone involved or interested in sustainable rattan harvest and production.

Michaëlle Owen, WWF Cambodia Country Program Manager, said that rattan, a climber from the palm family with more than 600 species and 13 genera identified worldwide, is a valuable Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) available in forests throughout the Greater Mekong region. Its stems are used for a variety of purposes, including food, shelter and furniture.

She said that in Cambodia, a total of 21 species have been identified so far by Mr. Khou Eang Hourt and most of them make a crucial contribution to local livelihood, providing extra income to agricultural activities. However, forest land encroachment and conversion to other land uses as well as over harvesting has put pressure on rattan resources, which are now mainly restricted to protected areas and protected forests.

She stated that rattan is also an important commodity in international trade, and can generate a significant amount of foreign exchange. At present, however, the Cambodian rattan industry cannot compete with other rattan manufacturing countries such as China, Indonesia and Philippines.

“Within this context, WWF have partnered with the European Commission and IKEA to work towards developing a model for sustainable rattan production and commercialization that will sustain forests ecosystems and improve community welfare in the region, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam,” she said.

She emphasized that WWF intervention has focused at different

stages of the supply chain from village producer group, to traders and processors and finally to the buyers. The project takes an entrepreneurial approach to conservation by looking for economically beneficial solution to sustainability issues and trying to generate better returns for all parties involved.

She also said that WWF has also been working with national and international buyers to influence the demand for clearer and more sustainable rattan at fairer prices. In doing this they coordinate with the middle-man, rattan processors and traders who buy the raw material, add value through secondary processing and link with the regional and international buyers.

She added that to develop a strong and sustainable rattan industry, WWF has also assisted 11 rattan small-medium enterprises to set up the first rattan associations in Cambodia.

“While we are all familiar with rattan as finished products like chairs or tables, very few people know what these plants look like in the forest or how many species there are in Cambodia,” Khou Eang Hourt, Senior Botanist, commented.

Khou Eang Hourt said that the knowledge about rattan is vital for a sustainable development of the Cambodian rattan industry: Collectors need to identify which rattan-species to harvest; traders need to assess the value of the different species; processors need to select the right rattan species for handicrafts or furniture-production; and buyers are interested in the exact sources of green and clean rattan products.

He added that rattan resource is decreasing due to over-harvesting and loss of forest ecosystem. There is an urgent need to stop this trend and protect rattan and forest biodiversity through sustainable use of rattan resources for economic growth. The publication of the first ‘Field Guide of the Rattans of Cambodia’ is part of a larger programme to establish a sustainable production system for rattan products in Cambodia.

According to WWF Cambodia's report, since 2006, WWF has been helping local people of Prek Thnoat community in Kampot province apply a community-based model of sustainable rattan resource management taking into account proper technique of harvest, nursery and plantation in natural forest. Processing techniques provided to the community were a strategy to motivate community-run rattan productions to reduce unsustainable export of raw rattan to neighbouring countries. This rattan management model currently covers 4,900 households in Kampot, Preah Sihanouk, Koh Kong, Kampong Thom and Preah Vihea provinces. (SEAW)

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**VISIT OF VIETNAMESE RATTAN
COMPANIES TO LAO LOCAL
AUTHORITIES AND RATTAN
PROJECT SITE**

Vietnamese companies eye Lao rattan potential

Khonesavanh Latsaphao

Lao and Vietnamese businesses are keenly interested in the potential benefits of sustainable rattan cultivation in Khamkeuth district, Borikhamxay province.

Representatives from Lao businesses and nine Vietnamese rattan processing companies travelled to the central province on May 17. The trip was organised by the Khamkeuth district Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and supported by the European Union.

"I'm so proud that the Lao and Vietnamese businesses visited the sustainable rattan management area to discuss rattan processing and trading with Khamkeuth district authorities and Lao rattan processors," said DAFO head Mr Maychome.

The sustainable rattan model has been such a success that DAFO plans to replicate it in other areas, improving local livelihoods and supporting reduced cutting of the plant. Its success has also caught the interest of Vietnamese rattan companies.

The district's Sopphouan and Phonthong villages are two of several areas targeted by WWF for community-based sustainable rattan management, Mr Maychome said.

WWF plans to have this rattan area certified as such by the end of 2011 and will share its successes and achievements with partners in the rattan industry.

Vietnamese company representatives also met with the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) and the Borikhamxay Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) to discuss rattan import-export procedures.

BCCI president Mr Khamxay Maymany encouraged the Vietnamese companies to invest in the Lao rattan industry.

"We are ready to support trade in rattan between Lao and Vietnamese companies," he said.

Vietnam currently imports more than 40 percent of its rattan from Laos, with significant amounts also sourced from Cambodia. Vietnam has a shortage of commercially valuable rattan species, which are available in Laos, particularly in the rattan project areas.

"Industry players are fully aware that rattan resources in Vietnam are dramatically reduced due to high demand and unsustainable exploitation. The most important species are now rare and often bought from Laos," said WWF's Vietnam Rattan Project Manager Dr Anh Vu Que.

Rattan processors in the south of Vietnam have now started to subcontract to northern processors, or cease operations altogether, according to Dr Vu Que.

Judging from interest among players in the rattan business, it is clear that sustainably managed rattan is becoming a popular choice among processors and consumers.



A villager demonstrates sustainable rattan harvesting methods.

"We would like to supply only finished or semi-finished products from sustainable management areas," said the deputy director of Chaemchanh Rattan Furniture, Ms Thippaphone Insiengmay.





WWF Rattan Programme Manager Mr Thibault Ledecq described the project's goals.

"The aim is, by the end of 2011, to establish a sustainable and clean rattan industry in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, applying Forest Stewardship Council rattan forest certification for forest management as well as engaging rattan companies in

applying cleaner production techniques," he said.

There are 600 rattan species in the world, with 54 species in this region. Rattan is a climber from the palm family and a valuable non-timber forest product available in forests throughout the Greater Mekong region.

Its stems are used for a variety of purposes, including as food and in housing and furniture. Village communities in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam rely heavily on the rattan trade, with sales accounting for up to 50 percent of cash income in some rural areas.

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WWF helps Vietnam to develop rattan industry

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) will help Vietnam develop a sustainable, environmentally friendly rattan industry by 2011.

Laos and Cambodia are also included in the programme, according to the WWF's Rattan Programme.

"The aim is to establish a sustainable and environmentally friendly rattan industry in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam by the end of 2011. It will apply Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) rattan forest certification for forest management as well as encourage rattan companies to apply cleaner production techniques," said the WWF's Rattan Programme Manager Thibault Ledecq.

Nine Vietnamese rattan companies have recently visited the WWF-supported sustainable rattan management area in Khamkeut district in Borikhamxay province in Laos to learn about rattan processing and trading from the local authorities and Laotian rattan processors.

The visit was part of a EU-funded rattan programme.

According to the WWF, there are 600 varieties of rattan in the world, 54 of which are widely available in forests throughout the Greater Mekong region. The stems are used for a variety of purposes, including food, shelter and furniture making. Many village communities in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam rely heavily on the rattan trade.

More than 90 percent of rattan processed in the Greater Mekong originates from natural forest that is being used up at an unsustainable rate.

Vietnam has to import a large volume of unprocessed rattan from Laos and Cambodia every year, said the WWF.

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WWF helps Vietnam to develop rattan industry

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The World Wildlife Fund

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Rattan companies learn about sustainable farming in Laos

HCM CITY — Nine rattan companies from Viet Nam, where rattan availability has fallen dramatically due to high demand and unsustainable exploitation, visited the Sustainable Rattan Management Area in Laos earlier this month.

"I am proud and honoured to welcome the Vietnamese and Lao business sectors that are interested in sustainable rattan activities," Maychome, head of the Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), Khamkeut District, Borikhamxay Province, said.

The area is maintained by DAFO and the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF).

The sustainable rattan model has proved such a success that DAFO plans to replicate it in other areas to improve local livelihoods, support poverty elimination, and achieve sustainable rattan management.

WWF plans to have this area certified by the end of 2011 and will share its successes and achievements with partners in the rattan industry around the world.

During their visit, the Vietnamese rattan executives compared notes with their hosts on the rattan trade and import-export procedures.

Viet Nam imports more than 40 percent of its needs from Laos and also sources significant amounts from Cambodia.

It has a significant shortage of commercially valuable rattan species like the ones available in Laos, particularly those in the rattan project areas.

"Normally we import five to seven thousand tonnes of rattan a year from Laos, but none is from sustainable management areas," Nguyen Truong Thien, director of the Au Co Rattan – Bamboo Export Enterprise, said.

"After learning about WWF's rattan project, we understand more about sustainable harvesting."

WWF's Viet Nam Rattan Project Manager, Vu Que Anh, said: "The important species of rattan are now rare and often bought from Laos. Rattan processors in the south of Viet Nam have now started to subcontract to northern processors, or stop operations altogether."— VNS



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Regional rattan companies eye European markets

Khonesavanh Latsaphao

Rattan companies recently met with European retailers to discuss trade opportunities, conditions and procedures for exporting rattan products to Europe.

Company representatives gathered for talks at a trade fair in Vietnam.

Laos is one of those countries where a community-based sustainable rattan management approach has showed some concrete results, WWF Laos Market Link Officer, Ms Sylvie Ratsombath, said last week.

“This is the first time that major rattan companies from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam have met at a regional trade fair,” she said.

Khamkeuth district in Borikhamxay province is now piloting rattan production activities in a bid for recognition by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) by the end of 2011.

FSC is a certification system that provides internationally recognised standard-setting, trademark assurance and accreditation services to companies, organisations, and communities interested in responsible forestry.

The FSC label provides a credible link between responsible production and consumption of forest products, enabling consumers and businesses to make purchasing decisions that benefit people and the environment as well as providing ongoing business value.

FSC is nationally represented in more than 50 countries around the world.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)’s Rattan Regional Programme has been promoting ways to engage local communities as well as rattan traders and processors to work together in sustaining rattan supply in the three countries.

Cambodian and Lao rattan companies met with Vietnamese rattan companies last month in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to expose more

market opportunities.

WWF’s Rattan Programme brought together 15 rattan companies from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam at the International Home Decor and Gifts Fair in Vietnam, which targets rattan end-users including retailers wholesalers, traders and processors regionally and internationally.

It was a good opportunity for Lao rattan companies to gather new information on European retailers and foreign market needs on new designs, and to share technical skills with their neighbours’ rattan companies, she added.

The European rattan market is more and more interested in sustainable natural products. This growing interest in natural materials, such as well-designed rattan cane products, is an exciting challenge for Lao rattan companies to take up.

“We see our potential in collaboration with companies in Vietnam,” said Ms Thippaphone Insixiengmay, Marketing Director of Chaemchanh Rattan Furniture.

Vietnamese companies need more rattan from sustainable management areas in Laos, she added.

WWF is working to conserve 600,000 km² of the world’s most biologically diverse, economically viable, and seriously threatened forests and rivers within the Greater Mekong region, home and life source to over 300 million people in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and southern China.

There are 600 rattan species in the world and there are 54 species in this region. Village communities in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam rely heavily on the rattan trade, with sales accounting for up to 50 percent of cash income in some rural areas.

More than 90 percent of rattan processed in the Greater Mekong originates from natural forest and is being depleted at an unsustainable rate.



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