

## FAO Myanmar Newsletter

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of FAO Myanmar newsletter in 2019 featuring the highlights of FAO's recent achievements towards national priorities and global commitments to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Food Safety is the key to achieving several of Sustainable Development Goals. Having in mind that Myanmar is vulnerable to serious disasters and sporadic conflicts that negatively affect food security, FAO in collaboration with the Government of Myanmar and WHO, organized the first ever World Food Safety Day in Myanmar on June 7 – reinforcing the call for strengthening commitment to scale up food safety and to highlight that everyone involved in the food chain has a role to play.

In this edition, you can be informed about the significant economic benefits provided by the forest sector including employment and increased household income, which helps local people to get out of poverty and attain food security. In contribution to achievements of

SDG1 (no poverty) and SDG2 (no hunger), FAO, besides the country-focused activities, provides technical support to policy makers from the countries within the region – aiming to better understand the nexus between forests and these SDGs as well as to better collaborate in enhancing the benefits of Forest Restoration and Reforestation (FRR).

Furthermore, FAO Myanmar remains committed to enhance resilience of vulnerable communities from thematic and emerging issues such as: Fall Armyworm and African Swine Fever through its projects in the fields. Likewise, recognizing the huge contribution of the livestock sector to food security and the overall wellbeing of smallholder farmers, we have been supporting the development of policies and guidelines as well as the capacity building for the Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW) in the country.

Enjoy reading our Newsletter!

Xiaojie Fan  
FAO Representative in Myanmar

### FAO assists Myanmar to tackle fire and transboundary haze issues

Wildfire refers to unwanted fires that have gone out of control, consuming vegetation in rural landscapes. Wildfires are a serious problem in Myanmar with local and wide reaching regional impacts. According to FAO analysis on NASA's Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) data, Myanmar has the highest burn rate in Southeast Asia and ranks 11th globally in terms of forest fires. Between 2003 and 2012, more than 17million hectares burned in Myanmar (including 5 million hectares of forests).

In addition to wildfires, urban and rural man-made fires including traditional slash-and-burn cultivation system (Taungya) and burning of agricultural land with debris after harvesting, are also critical causes of air pollution, biodiversity losses and environmental deterioration. In Myanmar's hilly regions the majority of people practice shifting cultivation with Taungya system that includes burning of trees and natural vegetation. In the other hand, burning of the fields after harvesting is a common practice of farmers in the lowlands.

To address these issues, FAO has responded the Government's request to tackle and analyze the impact of various types of fire by supporting through the **"Integrated National Strategic Action Plan on Fire Management" Project** (TCP/MYA/3608) under the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme. Launching of this project was organized in Nay Pyi Taw in May 2019.

The Union Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC) delivered the opening speech at the inception workshop which also benefited from the active participation of senior officials from MoNREC, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Ministry of Transport and



*U Ohn Win, Union Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environmental Conservation, delivered the opening remark at the launching of TCP project on Fire Management.*

Communication (Department of Meteorology and Hydrology). During the workshop, the roles of fire management in different sectors were presented and the Action Plan for Transboundary Haze Pollution – a major issue in ASEAN region – as well as the establishment of multi-stakeholder platform for the development and implementation of the National Fire Management Strategy and Action Plan were discussed.

Through this project, FAO will support the Government to analyze the relevant policy, legal and institutional framework, as well as existing fire management practices. Moreover, it will help develop and implement a multi-stakeholder platform and provide the core concept of the Integrated National Strategy and Action Plan on Fire Management.

## Celebrating the first World Food Safety Day in Myanmar



Food is the starting point of our energy, our health and our wellbeing. Food safety has a critical role in assuring that food stays safe and healthy at every stage of the food chain – from production to consumption. Widespread collaboration and contributions of all actors in the food supply chain, as well as good governance and regulations are essential to food safety. Through the longstanding partnership, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) support global food safety and protect consumer health.

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a World Food Safety Day on every 7 June starting from 2019. With this regard, FAO and WHO in Myanmar jointly celebrated **the first ever World Food Safety Day** on 7 June 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw – with the theme for 2019 “Food Safety, everyone’s business.” Director General of Department of Planning under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) and Director General of Department of Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) under the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS), opened the event. Senior Government officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI), the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) and the respective stakeholders joined the celebration and reflected on the importance of food safety in different sectors.

Food Safety is the key to achieving several of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and World Food Safety Day brings it into the spotlight – to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development. This international World Food Safety Day is an opportunity to strengthen efforts to ensure that the food we eat is safe. Whether you produce, process, sell or prepare food, then you have a role in keeping it safe. World Food Safety reinforces the call for stronger commitment to scale up food safety and to highlight that everyone involved in the food chain has a role to play.



Participants enjoyed taking photos with World Food Safety Day gadgets at the event.

## Beyond planting trees: Forest pathways to No Poverty (SDG1) and Zero Hunger (SDG2)



Senior Government officials from 10 countries within the region participated in the Regional Training Workshop.

Over 2.4 billion people worldwide depend on forest goods and services for the provision of nutritious food, wood fuel, building materials, medicines, employment and cash income. The forest sector provides a host of economic benefits, including employment and increased household income helping local people to get out of poverty and achieve food security.

According to FAO, from 2000 to 2015, the forest area in Southeast Asia has decreased of about 32 million ha, reflecting an annual

decline of 0.35 percent in their total forest cover of 924 million ha. At the same time, an estimated 36 million people in the region still live below the poverty line. With people centered forestry and an integrated landscape approach, Forest Restoration and Reforestation (FRR) could unlock the potential of forest landscapes for ending poverty and achieving food security.

In this context, FAO and the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) organized the **Regional Training Workshop for Policy Makers** on “Beyond Planting Trees: Forest Pathways to No Poverty (SDG1) and Zero Hunger (SDG2)” on 21-23 May in Myanmar in collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC). A total number of 20 senior government officials across 10 countries namely Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Myanmar, The Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam participated in the training.

In view of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, this 3-day training provided an opportunity to address and discuss ways to enhance the role and benefits of FRR in achieving SDG1 and SDG2 at both country and regional levels. The training enabled a better understanding of the nexus between forests and the SDGs, particularly SDG1 and SDG2. The participants also gained a broad view on the concept of the four dimensions of food security (food availability, access to food, utilization and stability) and their links to a wider range of forest goods and services. The list of actions to be implemented and followed-up in the respective countries in the near future was also jointly established.

## Enhancing capacity to fight the global threat: Fall Armyworm (FAW)



*Fall Armyworm has become the global threat for farmers including Myanmar.*

Originating from the tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, the Fall Armyworm (FAW) was first detected in Africa in early 2016. Since then it has rapidly spread to a total of 44 countries in Africa by 2018, infesting tens of millions of hectares of crop fields. The caterpillar or larva, feeds on more than 80 crop species, several of which are major crops in Myanmar including maize, rice, sorghum, millet, sugarcane, vegetable crops and cotton. With its speedy spreading rate, the FAW was confirmed in Myanmar for the first time in late 2018 in maize fields in the Ayeyarwady region and spread to 9 States/Regions within a short period of the same year.

Realizing the urgency of the situation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) requested FAO Myanmar to provide emergency technical assistance to determine the level of infestation, map the extent of infestation in Myanmar and recommend management actions. Following MoALI's request, **FAO launched an emergency FAW project through its Technical Cooperation Programme** in June 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw. Senior officials of MoALI

across the country and representatives from stakeholder organizations participated in the inception workshop where the ministry presented the current situation of FAW in Myanmar followed by discussions on early warning system, monitoring activities and integrated pest management of the country. International experience on FAW management and the use of FAW training materials including mobile applications (FAMEWS) were shared by FAO experts.

The FAW infestation has short and long-term impacts on agricultural production, food security and poultry industry; hence it affects livelihoods in the country. FAO's FAW project will contribute to the protection of livelihoods and food security of smallholder farmers – living in FAW affected areas. Through the project, current infestation and spread of FAW will be reduced as well as the sustainable management strategies will be developed by strengthening the FAW monitoring system and the integrated management capacities of the stakeholders at all levels.

## Capacity building of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW) for healthier livestock and better income

Aiming at supporting the livestock development, **FAO through the LIFT-funded "Improving farmer livelihoods in the dry zone through improved livestock health, productivity and marketing" project** (UNJP/MYA/022/OPS) has worked with the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD) on developing a national policy to train and accredit Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs). The project is now piloting the accreditation of a first group of 59 CAHWs and is being conducted in six townships in the Central Dry Zone, in Mandalay and Magway. The findings of the pilot will be utilized to roll out the accreditation program on a national basis.

While the University of Veterinary Science educates veterinarians, very few if any of these will establish practices in rural areas to provide services such as vaccinations and treatments to the cattle, buffalo, pigs, sheep and goats and chickens owned by smallholders. Some veterinarians will join the LBVD, but with only a few LBVD vets per township, there are not enough to meet the demand for veterinary services.

CAHW are locally based villagers who provide such services to village households, on a user-pays basis. But they need good training and strong technical support from LBVD veterinarians to be fully effective. In the pilot accreditation program, FAO has collaborated with LBVD to train a group of township-level LBVD trainers who in turn trained CAHWs. The training program consists of a ten-day classroom-based training course to CAHWs, followed up by monthly meetings and individual field visits to check CAHW work in the field. The trainee CAHWs learn about technical and business management skills, and how to keep daily records.



*Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department monitoring the CAHW field activities.*

The monthly meetings are an opportunity for CAHWs to share experiences and learn from each other as well as from LBVD staff.

In parallel with the accreditation pilot, FAO is working with LBVD on planning a five-year national program to train and accredit CAHWs nationwide: it is expected that up to 5,000 CAHWs will be accredited. While the current pilot is in the Dry Zone, the training program will need to be adapted to different agro-ecological zones with different ethnic groups.

The CAHW program is **an example of successful policy development and implementation** with a practical application in the field. The millions of smallholder households with livestock are the ultimate beneficiaries as they make more income from healthy livestock.

## Strengthening resilience of Myanmar's aquaculture sector

Fisheries and aquaculture sector in Myanmar is critically important to the country's food and nutrition security and economy. At the same time, the country is vulnerable to extreme climate events, which have caused significant loss of lives, damage to infrastructure and also had important impact in the livelihoods of fishing communities.

Right now, Myanmar faces significant challenges in addressing these issues and achieving sustainable management and utilization of its aquatic resources. The issues include weak governance, organizational capacities, institutional arrangements, limited technical capacity and knowledge; and limited resources for the development and implementation of adaptation plans.

The **GEF-funded FAO project** namely **"Strengthening the adaptive capacity and resilience of fisheries and aquaculture-dependent livelihoods in Myanmar"** which was launched in 2017 is assisting the Government in enabling inland and coastal fishery as well as aquaculture stakeholders to adapt to climate change by understanding and reducing vulnerabilities, piloting new practices and technologies, and sharing information. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI), the project organized the 6th Myanmar Fisheries Partnership (MFP) meeting in March and the 1st Project Partnership Meeting in June – with the participation of senior MoALI officials and representatives from stakeholder and partner organizations.



Conducting the Vulnerability Assessment in Toungup Township, Rakhine State.

At the 6th MFP meeting, consultations on the National Aquaculture Development Plan took place as well as a brainstorming on the effective future coordination methods in order to achieve synergy between MFP partners. Likewise, the 1st Project Partnership Meeting resulted in developing the project's "scaling-up" strategy to increase the support to 120 communities with 90,000 direct beneficiaries. Both events brought together the Government and development partners to collaborate for the sustainable development of Myanmar fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Through the project, FAO remains committed to strengthen the national, regional, and local regulatory frameworks and adaptive capacities of the fisheries and aquaculture sector as well as to reinforce the resilience of Myanmar's aquaculture sector to the impacts of climate change.

## Reflection from FAO Myanmar Team



I joined FAO Myanmar in June 2016 and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue working in this wonderful country, along with a highly dedicated team of professionals. From thought-provoking workshops in Naypyitaw, to paddling over monsoon floods during disaster impact assessments, and to helping sun-kissed fishing villages better manage their risks—the work is diverse and dynamic, conventional yet modern. Whether you are facilitating time-tested focus group discussions or flying drones, there will always be something to give you a sense of fulfillment and remind yourself that 'this is why we do it.'

- **Mr. Roberto Sandoval**  
Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Specialist (FishAdapt Project and Emergency Program)

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## Upcoming Events (July-September)

- Inception Workshop on Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) in Myanmar
- Field testing of timber chain of custody field trip
- Workshop on training curriculum development for Community Forest establishment
- National/Regional/State level Validation Workshops on Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment
- Training of Open Foris Calc (FAO in-house tool for data analysis and result calculation)
- Testing eggs for antibiotic residues at Yangon Veterinary Assay Laboratory of LBVD