



WWF

FACTSHEET

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WWF-Laos

# Sustainable Participatory Water Use in the Coffee Industry on the Bolaven Plateau in Laos: The Way Forward



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## Background

The Bolaven Plateau is an elevated region of southern Laos that encompasses the provinces of Champassak, Attapeu and Sekong. It has an altitudinal range of between 1,000 and 1,350 metres and is located between the Annamite Mountains to the east, and Mekong River to the west.

The abundant rainfall and fertile soil of the plateau makes it perfectly suited to coffee production. Over 90% of the national crop (30,000 tonnes of green coffee beans) is produced in two districts: Paksong and Thatheng. Production is carried out largely through smallholder, family-owned plantations, and in a country which remains heavily dependent of foreign aid, coffee makes an important contribution to the market economy. Coffee is Laos' largest agricultural export and there is a growing international demand for premium coffee products. Coffee is also an important source of household income, especially for women in rural areas.

## Environmental Management

Untreated waste from varying scales of coffee processing entrepreneurs is affecting the quality of surface waters on the plateau. The Arabica coffee wet-processing method requires a huge amount of water to produce clean green beans.

The waste water produced via the wet-process has high sugar content and depletes the value of biological oxygen demand and dissolved oxygen. Without wastewater management, it can pollute water resources, damage aquatic ecosystems and pose a threat to the health of nearby communities. This represents a drawback in the coffee production industry and undermines the economic benefits this production can bring to communities.

**23 MILLION  
LITRES**

**OF UNTREATED EFFLUENT  
FLOWS INTO BOLAVEN  
RIVERS EACH YEAR**

# BOLAVEN PLATEAU

## Description of the Initiative

The overall objective of the initiative is to enhance the sustainability of water use in the coffee industry on the Bolaven Plateau. It will run for a period of 4 months between September and December 2015.

## Awareness Raising

The initiative will raise awareness among all coffee industry stakeholders about the environmental impact of coffee production. Coffee stakeholders (including provincial and district authorities, the private sector, smallholders, etc.) will have improved their understanding of the impact of coffee production on water quality. Selected smallholders, representatives of the private sector and relevant local authorities will also be exposed to good environmental practices from the coffee industry in Vietnam.

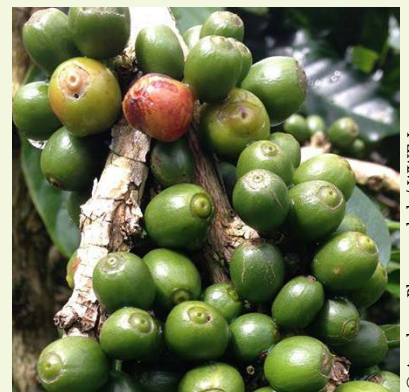
## Research

Environmental research on the impact of coffee production will be conducted and the capacity of the Paksong Department of Natural Resources and the Environment to continue water quality monitoring will be improved. Alongside this, the extent of coffee-related encroachment in the Dong Houa Sao National Biodiversity Conservation Area (NBCA) will be assessed.

## Stakeholder Engagement

A multi-stakeholder engagement strategy for WWF-Laos and Oxfam on issues of water and coffee in Paksong will be developed. Both organisations can then contribute to the Paksong river system protection strategy of the Champassak Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment. Both WWF-Laos and Oxfam aim to be recognised by the latter as a key partner to promoting better water protection law enforcement. By project end a multi-stakeholder engagement strategy on issues of water, coffee and gender should be available as to pursue further funding opportunities.

*Project activities will support all coffee stakeholders to gain a scientific understanding of the connections between coffee cultivation and water on the Bolaven Plateau, offering a way to take concrete measures towards a more sustainable and participatory water use in the industry.*



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