

Engaging with Academia and Research Institutions (ARIs) to support Family Farmers and Food System Transformation During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia



With technical assistance from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Assessing Training Needs and Higher Education Program on Agroecology and Safe Food System at Universities in Mekong Subregion

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Introduction

- Agroecological principles is related to the recycling, input reduction, soil health, animal health, biodiversity, synergy, economic diversification, co-creation of knowledge, social values and diets, fairness, connectivity, land and natural resource governance, and participation of various stakeholders
- Agroecology needs to be a part of training program
- Teaching agroecology requires regular upgrading of training program to complete knowledge availability to sustain the capacity building of all relevant stakeholders



Objectives

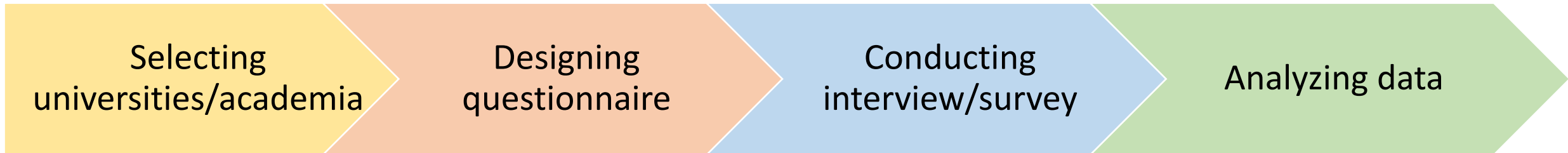
- Assess training needs at higher education program on agroecology and safe food system at university and academia in Mekong subregion, to leverage the linkage between universities/academia and various stakeholders

Mekong subregion: Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam



Methodology

- Existing, Challenge, Needs, Perspective on Curriculum, Vocational, Soft Skill, and E-learning

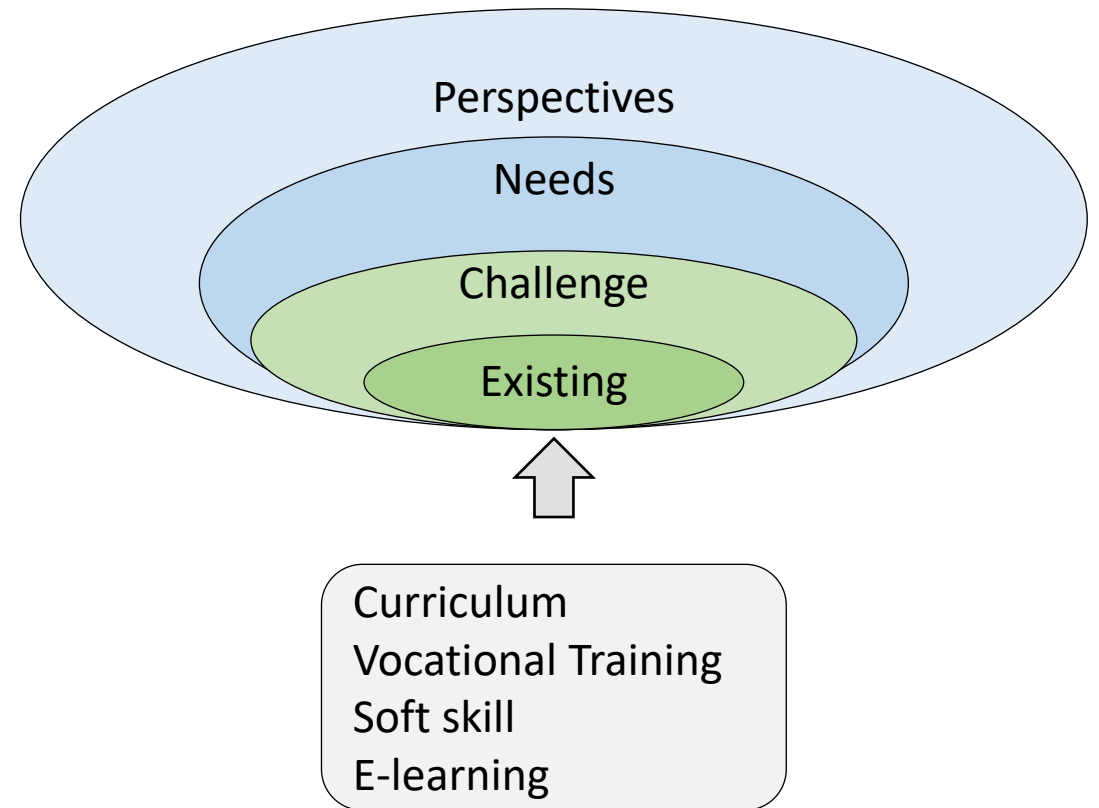


- Known universities/academia having training program related to agroecology and safe food system are selected
- Data was analyzed based on categories of training program (curriculum, soft skill, vocational, E-learning) and question (existing, challenge, needs, perspective)

Methodology

Expected sample size for university/ academia/vocational center:

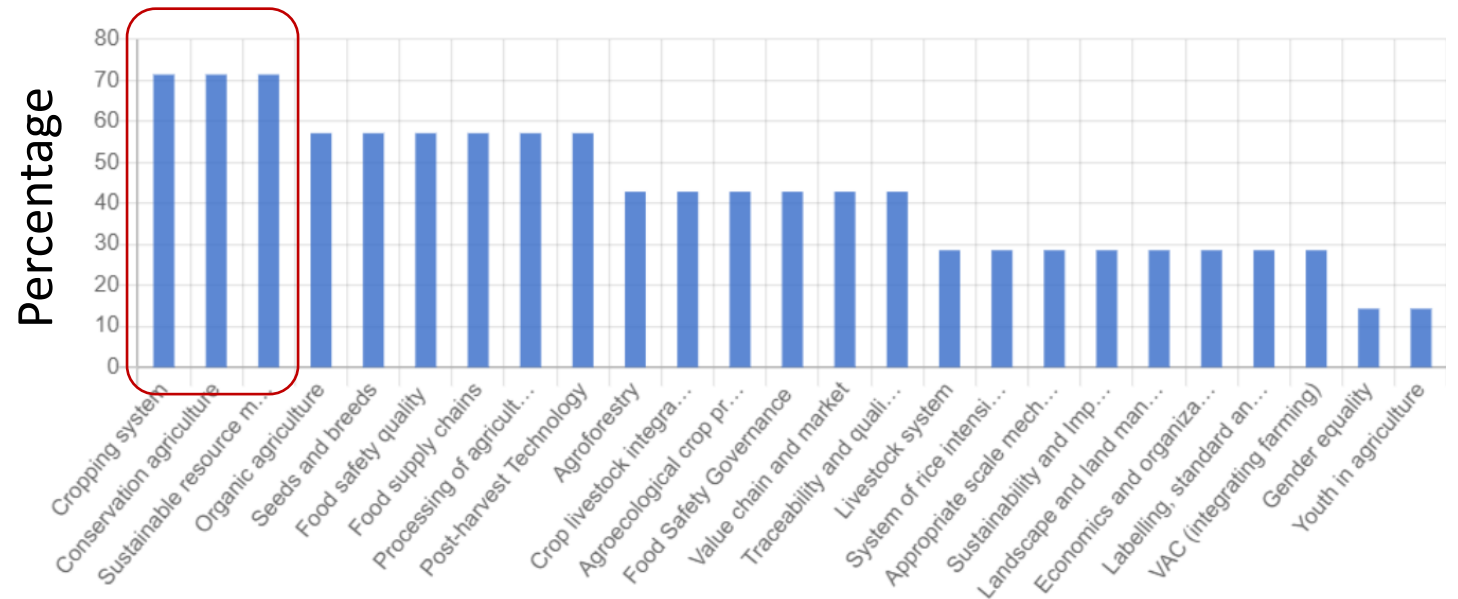
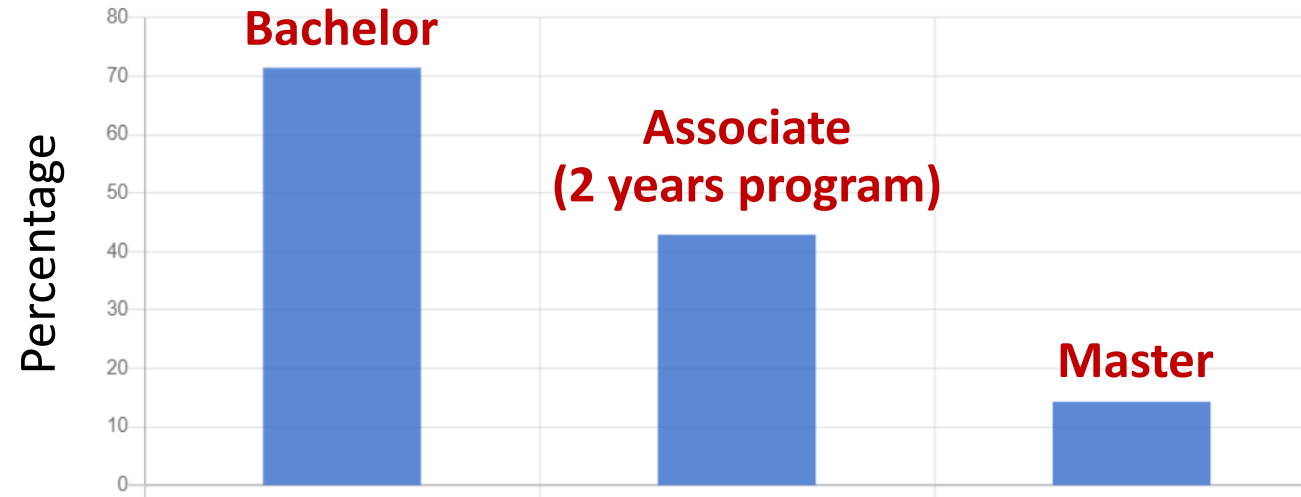
- Cambodia: 8
 - Laos: 3
 - Thailand: 3
 - Vietnam: 7
- So far, only 10 university/academia from Cambodia and Laos have been completed the survey and interview



Results

Curriculum program

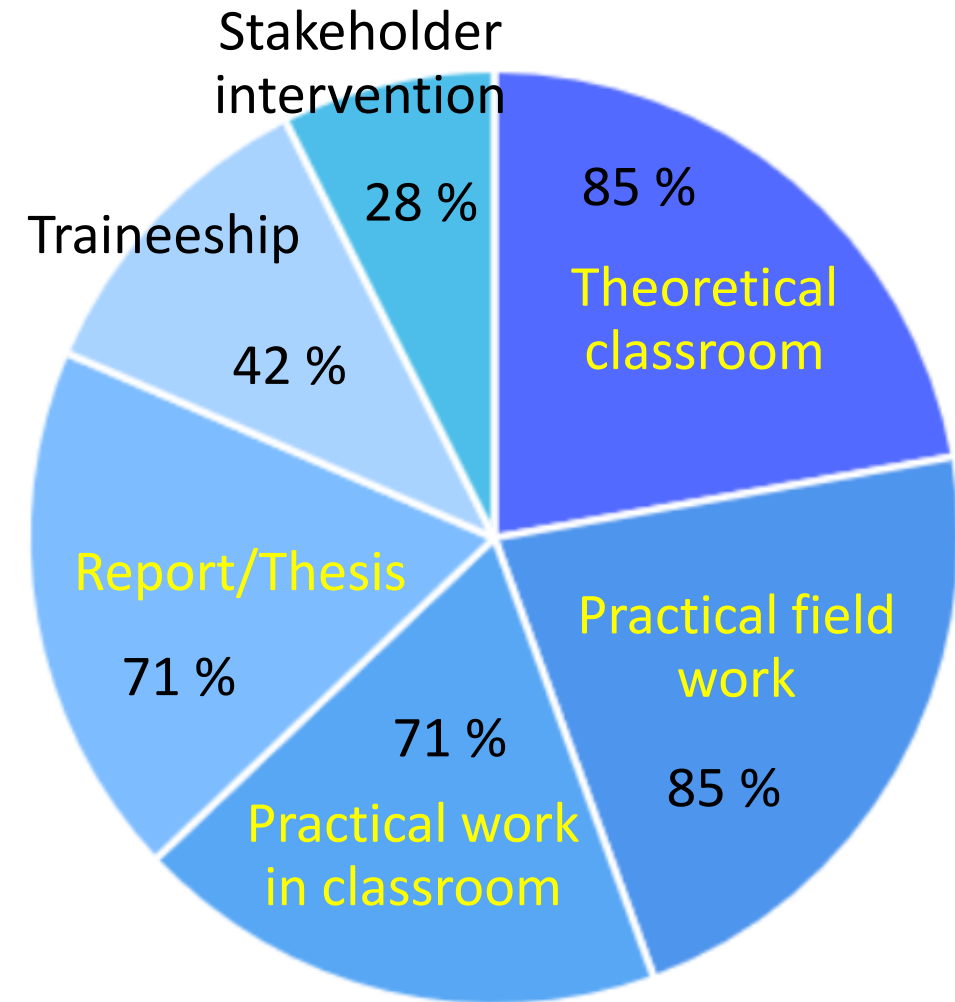
- Agroecology has been integrated in bachelor program for most universities
- Integration of soft skills (e.g Gender equality and Youth in agriculture) is still less
- Most curriculum programs are associated to:
 - Cropping system
 - Conservation agriculture
 - Sustainable resource management



Results

Curriculum program

- Modalities of most curriculum programs are:
 - Theoretical classroom
 - Practical field work
 - Practical work in classroom
 - Report and thesis
- Most universities required students to have practical field work at least 1 time a year



Results

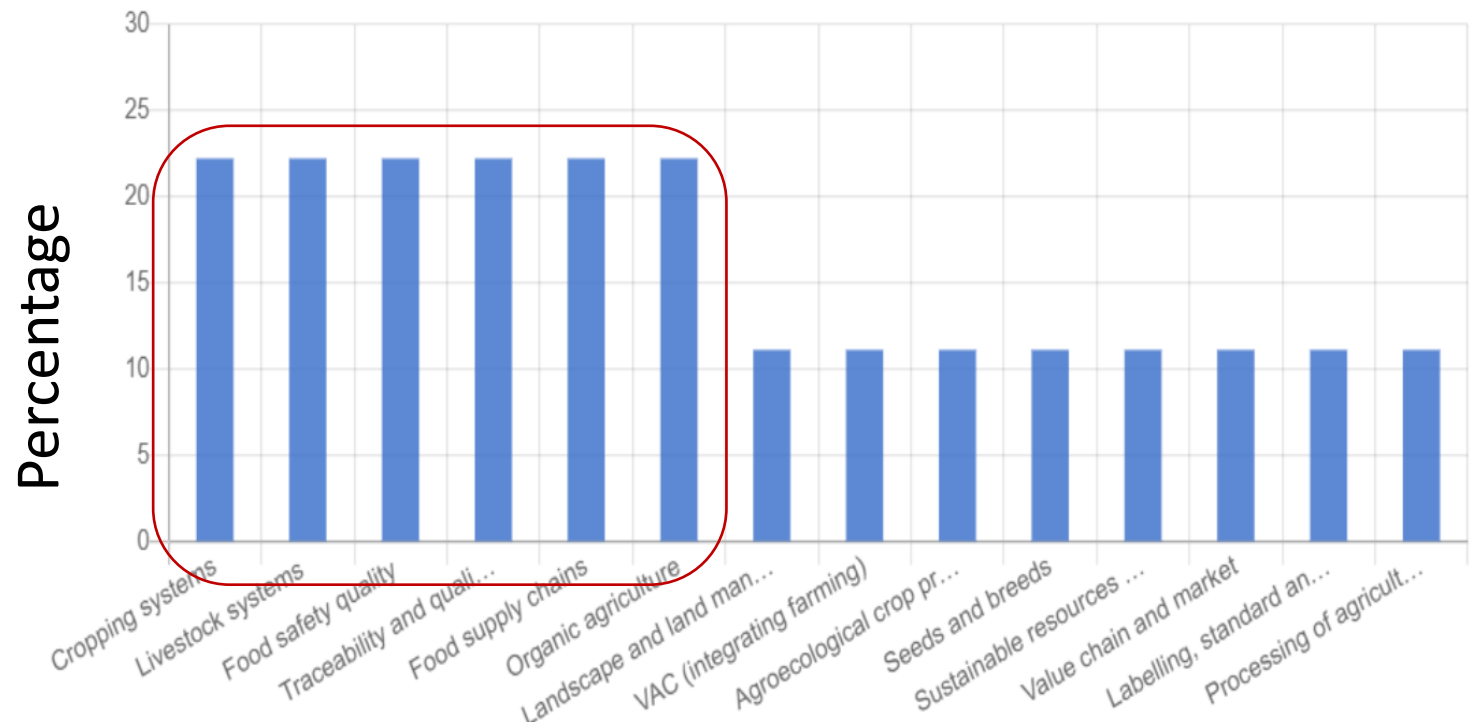
Vocational training

- No any vocational training has been integrated as the university regular program so far
- Not many university has vocational training. The current vocational training are organized periodically based on project needs, depending on collaboration with NGOs, farmer, organization and private sectors.
- Modality of vocational training was mainly practical field work. Existing training topics are related to organic vegetable plantation, animal health management

Results

E-learning

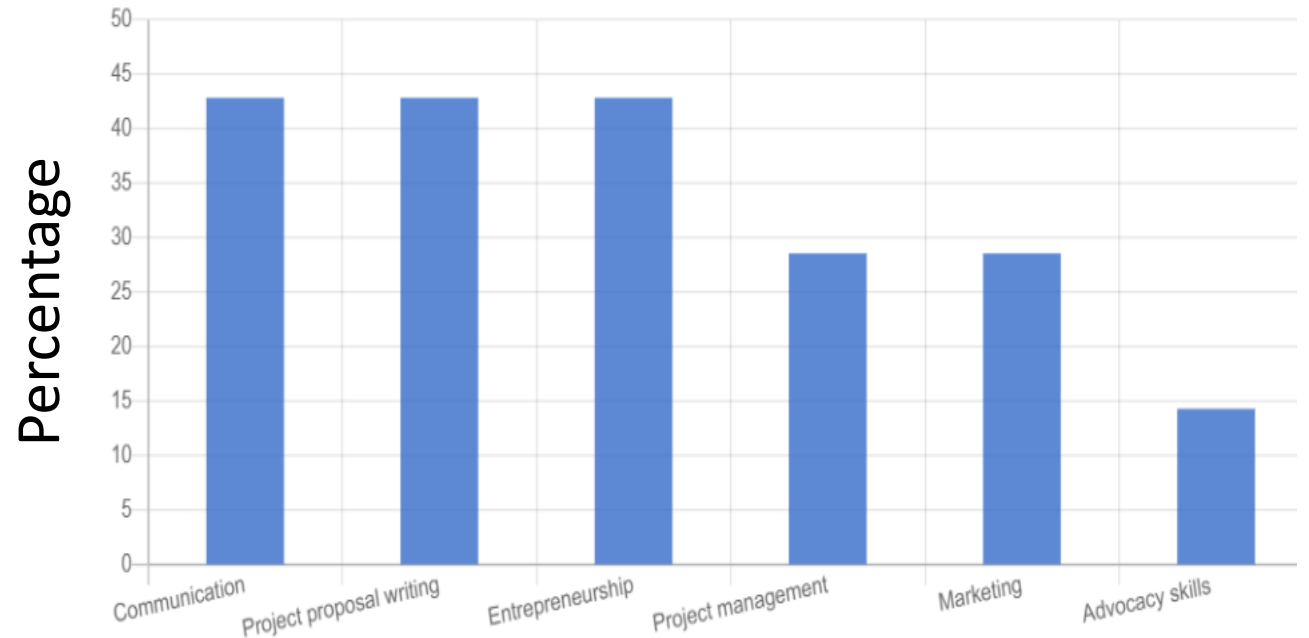
- Cambodia has good E-learning program. The E-learning courses mostly are from Cambodia university
- E-learning courses existed in curriculum of most universities (for bachelor and master)
- Majority of e-learning courses linked to only the theoretical organic agriculture, cropping system, food safety quality, etc.



Results

Soft skill

- Soft skill courses existed in education program of most universities (for bachelor and master)
- Majority of soft skill courses linked to project management, communication, and entrepreneurship
- Modality of the soft skill courses is theoretical classroom



Results

Summary of Challenges and Needs for Improvement of Education Program

Education program	Challenges	Needs
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Course syllabus is not completed yet➤ Lack of human resources in specific fields relating to agroecology and safe food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need more update to advance level course syllabus• Need human resources/experts of agroecology and safe food system• Need funding and teaching materials and partners
Vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Lack of budget for upgrading training program and producing training materials as well as enlarging field space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need budget and partner to create more vocational training program• Need training materials (e.g feild space, laboratory equipment)
E-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Lack of partnerships especially NGOs and private sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need more courses related to food safety, food suply chain, processing of agricultural products, communication, project proposal writing• Need technical support e-learning platform, budget, and partners
Soft skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Less scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to develop course contents for project proposal writing, entrepreneurship, marketing, project management, communication• Need specific trainers/instructors

Results

Perspective for Improving Agroecology and Safe Food System

To improve agroecology and sustainability of safe food system in Mekong subregion, it requires commitments from all relevant stakeholders, regular job market assessment to fill the gaps between job market needs and curriculum and training program

Conclusion

Online assessment of curriculum of higher education program on agroecology and safe food system transition at university in Mekong Subregion was conducted in this study, but the assessment is still on going process

- ✓ Agroecology and safe food system courses have been integrated in education program
- ✓ Capacity building of human resources in terms of technical and soft skill is the main needs for improving education in agroecology
- ✓ Engagement between various stakeholders such as university, academia, research institution, NGOs, and private sector are considered as important initiation to improve education in agroecology and safe food system

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