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Japan backs use of satellite imagery in Lao rice cultivation

20 February 2026 | News

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Lao and Japanese agricultural experts have discussed the use of satellites in rice farming and the evaluation of rice harvests in Laos using space-based technologies. The application of satellite technology is an efficient way to assess rice planting areas, cut costs, and gather useful data. Japanâ??s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries partnered with Laosâ?? Ministry of Agriculture and Environment to organise a workshop on the topic. The workshop took place in Vientiane on Tuesday and was attended by agriculture officials from across the country.

Director General of the Lao ministry's Planning and Cooperation Department, Dr Boundeth Soutthavilay, thanked the Japanese government agencies and experts for their generous support in organising the workshop and sharing valuable information.

â??The next step will be for the Department to report to higher ministry authorities to ask for guidance in rolling out this system,â?• Dr Boundeth said. He was hopeful that the technology could be used to provide accurate and timely information for use in agriculture and forestry development plans, especially in the gathering of agricultural statistics.

This could be of immense benefit for Laos and other ASEAN member countries, he added. In 2023, the Japanese government advised Laos to use the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) to assess the area of land under cultivation. Japanâ??s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency have provided technical assistance and funding for many agricultural statistics projects together with food security information systems in ASEAN member countries.

In 2023, they organised a meeting on the assessment of rice cultivation areas in the provinces of Vientiane and Champasak using satellite imagery. Thanks to the application of modern science, the system is fast and reliable and can predict rice planting areas in a timely manner. A meeting was later held to assess the rice planting area in 2023 using satellite imagery and the INAHOR programme, involving key technical staff throughout Laos.

The workshop was based on an assessment of the rice planting area in 2025 using satellite images. The gathering enabled participants to share comments face-to-face, in the expectation that satellite imagery could be used to effectively evaluate various aspects of rice cultivation and be incorporated in planning polices in the future.