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PROGRAM UPDATE

USAID LEAF and State Forest Company Lead the Way on Sustainable Forest Management



Accurate and updated forest cover maps led to a sustainable forest management plan that helps the Don Duong state forest company better manage forest resources

Photo credit: Suphasuk Pradubsuk, USAID

State forest companies (SFC) in Vietnam play an important role in actively managing large forest areas in the country. Unfortunately, many SFCs and other forest managers have struggled to make strategic plans about when and where to harvest timber because they have not had the resources to maintain accurate, updated maps showing what forest resources they have and where those resources are. As a result, decisions about where and when to cut were made based more on convenience or habit, and often did not follow sustainable forest management practices. The government of Vietnam recognized the importance of improving the sustainability of these forestry operations, and in 2014 instituted a new national forest management strategy for all SFCs.

In response to this new strategy, the United States Agency for International Development's Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program worked closely with the Don Duong SFC in Lam Dong province, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), the Vietnam Forest Administration (VNFORD), leading local scientists and community members in a highly participatory process to develop one of the first sustainable forest management (SFM) plans in Vietnam.

A key step in the process was to access satellite imagery and use remote sensing to generate an updated forest cover map for the area. USAID LEAF worked with Don Duong technicians to develop a base map, and provided a series of geographic information systems (GIS) trainings to ensure that the technicians could update and analyze the map to help make strategic decisions based on the entire landscape. As part of this mapping process, the team prioritized certain areas as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF) to be protected from logging, including those near critical watersheds, high biodiversity areas or areas that are critical for the livelihoods of rural communities.

Don Duong is looking forward to applying its sustainable forest management plan to its operations, as the plan will allow the state forest company to plan and track where logging happens and ensure effective rotations to maximize production. At the same time, it will result in significant long-term impacts, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions from forest degradation and deforestation. Moreover, critically important conservation areas will be better protected and the livelihoods of those who depend on the forests will be strengthened.

An additional benefit of the new plan is that with USAID LEAF support, Don Duong is moving towards certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This widely known and highly coveted certification ensures certain key environmental and social standards are met in the forest management process, and will allow Don Duong to access higher value markets for their certified products. This type of certification is also identified as a key component of the government of Vietnam's new strategy.

As a testament to USAID LEAF's mission to develop and support models that can be replicated and scaled up, the sustainable forest management planning process for Don Duong is now serving as a model for other state forest companies in Vietnam who are striving to elevate their businesses to reach international standards of sustainable forest management.

The United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests program (USAID LEAF) is a five-year (2011-2016) regional project focused on achieving meaningful and sustainable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from the forest-land use sector across six target countries: Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea.

For more information:

USAID Asia: info-rdma@usaid.gov USAID LEAF: www.leafasia.org