

VNAFE identifies strategies and institutionalizes members' commitment to sustain operation

Twenty-four rectors, vice rectors, and deans of VNAFE member institutions, including members of its Board, and representatives from selected government agencies met on 12-13 November 2008 at Dalat University – A new institution member of VNAFE, in Dalat City, Lam Dong Province to institutionalize their commitment and enhance collaborations among them toward sustaining network operation.

During the first day of the meeting, Jess Fernandez, SEANAFE's Technical Adviser, briefed the participants on SEANAFE's mission, goals, mandates and key activities, system of operation, prospects and challenges. On the other hand, Dr. Bao Huy, VNAFE's coordinator, presented his network's achievements for the past 10 years and the current challenges in relation to sustaining its operation.



Governmental representatives, Leaders and VNAFE board, representatives of SEANAFE board

These presentations resulted to the identification of strategies and the commitment signing among those present during the meeting to support network operation in 2009 and beyond.

Among the strategies agreed by the group were as follows:

1. Expand the scope/focus of the network (e.g., to include other disciplines and services) to enhance its relevance and increase its linkages. The focus, however, should be interconnected and should establish the uniqueness of VNAFE from other similar networks
2. Align VNAFE activities with existing government programs to maximize available budget and other resources

3. Come up with a good write up on VNAFE accomplishments, both in Vietnamese and English, to serve as a promotional material to gain interest from funding donors and establish partnership with other relevant government and private organizations
4. Form a VNAFE resource mobilization group and organize a resource mobilization workshop among the member institutions and relevant government agencies particularly to draft collaborative research proposals for funding
5. Collaborate with other existing networks which have similar mandates/mission with VNAFE
6. Strengthen VNAFE's social capital and expand membership especially to include the private sector and other extension centers who are users of AF research results and technologies. However, members to be invited should be those who could ensure long-term commitment
7. Maximize budget being given by SEANAFE as counterpart funds of VNAFE to partner with other collaborators
8. Develop fee-based training courses on agroforestry and related subjects and market them for capacity building of government personnel especially for extension purposes
9. Continue to improve the effectiveness of the VNAFE website as a source of information and as marketing tool for the network; link VNAFE website with other relevant websites to promote the expertise and services available in the network
10. Share best practices in education management among member institutions especially on how to increase student enrolment and interest on agroforestry

At the end of the meeting, leaders of VNAFE member institutions signed an agreement in support of VNAFE/SEANAFE.

The second day of the meeting was devoted for the VNAFE Board to identify the network's activities for 2009. The activities identified focused on realizing some of the the strategies mentioned above. They include (i) holding VNAFE's regular



Leaders of VNAFE member institutions signing the Agreement in support of VNAFE/SEANAFE

board meeting back-to-back with resource mobilization workshop to develop agroforestry research proposals for funding, (ii) organizing a meeting between chair of VNAFE with leaders of Ministries of Agriculture & Rural Development and Education & Training, (iii) contributing articles for APANews, (iv) managing the network sustainability (coordinating activities, up-dating the web site, connecting to international web/networks, collecting and managing the membership fee, etc), (v) continuing implementation of the projects of AFLA and FPA, (vi) organizing a joint training course with ICRAF on carbon stock assessment of AF models in Vietnam, (vii) conducting needs assessment and competency survey of forestry/ agroforestry students in Xuan Mai University, (viii) organizing a participatory curriculum development workshop on forest resources and environment management for Dalat University, ix) developing a good promotional material on the network such as research outline on CO₂ sequestration in natural forests for submitting to national research program, (x) organizing a training on MAFTP and AFLA for the extension center staff of Lam Dong Province.

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