Prospect of mechanized rice production in Laos

ラオスでの機械化米生産の展望

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Recent increases in employment opportunities in regional towns and neighbouring countries have reduced availability of labour resources and increased the labour cost in rural areas in Laos. Agricultural mechanization has gradually been adopted and some rice farmers use simple mechanical devices such as drum seeders for planting and reapers for harvesting. The Lao Mechanization project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research has examined planting devices of seed drill and transplanter, efficiency of combine harvester in relation to paddy size and crop establishment methods, and grain drying methods to improve rice grain quality for marketing. Seed drill is effective in planting crops well before rice paddies are saturated with water. Its main advantage is labour saving compared with hand transplanting and ease of weed control compared with broadcasting. Combine harvester is also advantageous in reducing labour requirement for rice cropping, and its efficiency in terms of time required to harvest a given area increases as paddy field size increases. Main challenges are to ensure that the combine harvested paddies are dried properly to maintain high grain quality for rice marketing. A likely scenario is suggested for uptake of mechanized and commercialized rice production in Laos.