

The workshop on Harmonization and Equivalence for Greater Mekong Countries

From February 4-5, 2010 CEDAC staff member Mr. Khorn Sdok attended the Harmonization and Equivalence for Greater Mekong Countries Workshop in Nonthaburi province, Thailand. The workshop was conducted and supported by the Global Organic Market Access Project (GOMA) of FAO, IFOAM and UNCTAD. GOMA staff and 26 representatives from 8 countries attended: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, Australia, China and attended the workshop. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Share among the Greater Mekong Countries the challenges of standards and certifications for trade; and
- Discuss ways for countries in the region to address harmonization and equivalence in organic agriculture.

During the workshop, several important topics were presented and discussed. Topics included a summary of the Global Organic Market Access Project, understanding the situation in the Greater Mekong Countries and Australia (each country presented their situation and challenges regarding organic standards and certification bodies), Regional Harmonization and Equivalence in Asia, ways forward and recommendations. The participants discussed in-depth how were the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) or Asian or Asian plus 1, 2 and 3 countries harmonized and equivalent in organic agriculture standard. At the end of the workshop, the majority of participants agreed to establish a regional minimum standard for organic products, which will be based on the IFOAM or Codex standards and accreditation of certifying bodies, which will be based on ISO 65 for the long-term vision of the GOMA project.