

# Benzoin Promotion

in Luang Prabang Province

*Lao Benzoin is the resin extracted from the *Styrax tonkinensis* tree. Lao benzoin, also known as "Siam benzoin", is considered the highest grade of benzoin and is used in fragrances for perfumes and other such products. Benzoin is also used in incense and for oriental herbal medicines, but the Lao benzoin quality is rare and highly sought after. It grows in the highlands of Laos as a late emerging species in rotational agriculture systems.*

## Ecology and Management

- Benzoin trees live up to 15 years and grow in fallow land in rotational agriculture systems.
- Flowering occurs from March to May and fruiting from June to July and natural seed germination occurs under parent trees from March to June at the start of the rainy season.
- Seeds have a germination viability up to one year.
- Seedlings are removed from under parent trees after one year and transplanted to fallow fields.
- Harvesting of benzoin gum takes place from October to March.

## Production

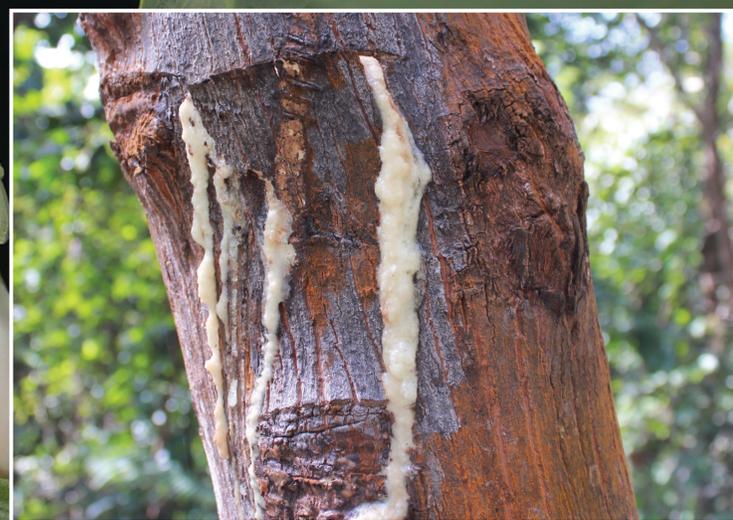
- Benzoin is found in 7 villages in Phonthong District.
- 232 households manage benzoin trees in 762 hectares of land.
- Benzoin is managed as communal or private trees, depending on the community.
- Annual production of benzoin is approximately 17,000 tons per year.

## Marketing

- Marketing of benzoin is controlled by only a few buyers: Anouphab and AgroForest.
- Due to the high price of benzoin and competition for harvesting, it is often harvested early reducing quality and prices.
- PAFO has been supporting the benzoin sector for many years.

## Opportunities

- Land use plans that identify specific areas for benzoin production and their management need to be continued.
- Tenure of benzoin trees is needed to ensure better management and timely harvesting.
- Improved collaboration and equitable marketing between the two main buyers and the sellers of benzoin.
- Establishment of recognized benzoin producer groups.
- Reduce alteration (improve quality) of benzoin via establishing Participatory Guarantee Systems linking farmers to end users.
- Explore the potential for establishing a Geographical indication for Lao Benzoin.



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