

## Graduate Self- Employed

# Using his knowledge gained during the practical term for improving and extending the family business

Mr. Phonekham is an agronomy graduate from the first batch in 2013. He comes from a big family in Ban Phonemane, Nambak District, Luang Prabang with 11 family members and is the second oldest son. His father is a primary school teacher. His mother is a farmer and never visited school.

He performed his practical term at the NAFC's nursery. He selected a research on new seedling techniques and got very interesting results also related to improved pest management. He found the nursery farm very suitable for his practical term and had access to required equipment. Even his teachers were very supportive, some of the questions he had, could not be answered timely.

After his graduation he joined the family farm business. Through his profound knowledge he improved the farming techniques in livestock raising, increased the stock to over 200 chicken and 6 pigs and approached an integrated farming system.

He is presently preparing for new farm activities on his own. He started already to dig two fishponds and cleared the area for the establishment of a dragon fruit nursery. He was firstly exposed to dragon fruit planting during his practical term and sees the high market potential for this fruit.

All the practical techniques he learnt at NAFC, especially during this practical term, are now very useful for his business. Most useful are: grafting and seeding techniques, plant care, pest management, plant protection and nursery management.

He is currently organizing a business deal with the owner of the dragon fruit garden on grafting dragon fruit trees. Once they are grown and matured, they share the siblings half each. He is happy that he can use his technical expertise to initiate his nursery business.



He is very happy that we can work on his own farm and that he was able to considerably expand the farm business after his graduation. He appreciates that he can organize himself, be creative in what he is doing and implement his business ideas. He also likes his time management and related working times, mainly in the early morning and in the later afternoon. This provides him a lot of flexibility.

The present income from the pig and chicken raising only is about 900.000 kip / month per each family person. With his own dragon fruit farm and the fishponds he will gain much more additional income in the next season.

Challenging for him is the funding of his various new ideas. For all new activities he needs to have a start up money. Credits are not accessible for him and thus he needs to save money from his selling or find other innovative ways, like with the dragon nursery. Another challenge is the distance to the nearest market, as transportation costs are high and reduce his profit.

Nevertheless, if he would have the chance, he liked to work for the government. This would give him a long-term employment and a little but secure income – and at the same time he could continue his own farming business.

*Interview by Sisavath Phonthouong*