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Headline: Project highlights potential of rice flour



Caption: A student displays buns made from black rice flour.

Sisouphan Amphonephong

The potential uses of rice flour made from locally grown rice and black rice provided exciting new ideas for attendees at a workshop held in Vientiane yesterday.

The One District, One Product (ODOP) project held the workshop for interested people from bakeries, hotels, restaurants, rice mill factories, and noodle factories.

Mr Motomura Koichi, an expert from Japan who led the workshop, said there are many possible uses for rice flour.

He said the main purpose of the pilot sub-project, implemented as a part of the wider ODOP project, is not to produce bread but to make effective use of scrap rice to make value-added products.

Mr Koichi said rice is a local resource available all over Laos and rice flour can be used to develop local specialties, as well as in conjunction with the different ingredients available in various parts of the country. Therefore, the pilot project has high potential to be applied throughout Laos if it proves successful.

As rice flour is widely used in Japan, there are many techniques and much knowledge available from that country to be applied to Laos, he said.

“Using flour made from black rice is also part of the pilot project and we’ve tried to use it to create a new variety and improve the quality of goods made using rice flour.”

Participants at the workshop learnt about the use of compact milling machines, product innovations and marketing of Lao rice flour.

They also sampled baked goods made by students from the Savannakhet Technical and Vocational School, who had attended a bakery workshop run by Japanese specialists in March this year.

The event aimed to provide information on the potential uses of rice flour and the project will involve continuous follow-ups with participants to encourage them to apply the experiences they learn to their own businesses.

Mr Koichi said ODOP is the Lao version of the OVOP (One Village, One Product) scheme which originated in Oita prefecture of Japan and has been expanded to many countries.

“The ultimate purpose of the project is to implement the concept in a manner that is appropriate to the Lao context.”

Laos has significant developmental constraints as well as potentials. Some of these constraints and potentials are unique to Laos. In this regard, Laos must develop its own version of the ODOP concept by taking into consideration these constraints and potentials, according to a statement from the project.

The concept is being promoted across the country and is currently being implemented through various projects in Savannakhet and Saravan provinces.

Most pilot projects are implemented only a few months after baseline surveys are conducted. ODOP officials will soon make mid-term evaluations of each pilot project.

One successful pilot scheme is a honey project in Savannakhet province which has achieved profitable returns in its first year thanks to support provided by the ODOP project in collaboration with experts from Thailand.