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Austrian govt loan supports irrigation project

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The Austrian government has approved a low interest loan of 2.8 million euros to the Lao government for the purchase of equipment for Phase II of a rain irrigation project.

The technical agreement for the project was signed yesterday in Vientiane between the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Irrigation Department Director General, Mr Maykong Phonphommavong, and the Sales and Marketing Director of the Bauer Company, Austria, Mr Heimo Wiesinger.

The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Mr Vilayvanh Phomkhe, and other officials.

The rain irrigation project is a new system for Laos. It collects and delivers water that can be used for crops such as sweetcorn, beans and fruit trees, and grass for animal feed.

In 2009, the Lao government accepted a low interest loan of 1.9 million euros from the Austrian government for Phase



Mr Maykong Phonphommavong (right) exchanges documents with Mr Heimo Wiesinger after signing the project agreement in Vientiane.

I of the project.

The project was implemented by the Department of Irrigation.

The equipment consists of two systems, sprayers and revolving heads, which can supply water to 770 hectares of both government and private farmland.

The first phase took place

in Vientiane, Borikhamxay and Savannakhet provinces as well as in the capital.

After the project at Saendin in Naxaithong district, Vientiane, officially opened in February, a demonstration of the new equipment was given, causing much excitement, Mr Maykong reported at the signing ceremony.

Of those who have used the new rain irrigation system, most said it saved about 50 percent more water compared to traditional irrigation channels, and was also easy to manage.

Phase II is necessary to expand the system to new areas where electricity,

CONTINUED PAGE 3

Austrian govt loan...

FROM PAGE 1

communications and water resources are available, he said.

The second phase will cover a total of 900 hectares of farmland in the provinces of Vientiane, Borikhamxay, Saravan, Attapeu, Khammuan and Savannakhet, and the capital.

Installation of the equipment

will begin next year and will take nine months to complete.

"This system will be useful in saving water to ensure a sufficient supply for agriculture in the future," said Mr Wiesinger.

"Our company began producing this equipment for

agricultural use more than 80 years ago. This is one of the projects that can benefit Laos."

He believes the project will be a model in the use of new technology in the agriculture sector, especially in the cultivation of cash crops.

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