



FAO Viet Nam Newsletter

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FAO champions SDG2 in Viet Nam

World Food Day 2019 Supporting National Action Plan on Zero Hunger 2018 - 2025

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is supporting Viet Nam in its wide-ranging efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal SDG2.

As part of this work, FAO joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) in holding a workshop on 8 January 2020 to mark the closure of the three-year project TCP/VIE/3604 “Policy-based support to agriculture production in line with new rural development, sustainable poverty reduction and Zero Hunger initiative of Viet Nam” to realize these objectives.



FAO Representative and Director General of the Department of Cooperatives and Rural Development, co-chairing the closing workshop

In particular, the workshop highlighted FAO’s significant contribution towards implementation of the National Action Plan on Zero Hunger until 2025, with

comprehensive technical assistance to review capacity and policy gaps as well as develop guidelines for its roll-out.

This work helped realize integration of nutrition in agricultural production projects and cross-sectoral coordination-key challenges in the action plan implementation. In addition, to interventions at the institutional level, the project also facilitated demonstrations of development and implementation of nutrition-sensitive agriculture value chain projects to serve as best practice for replication.

Despite becoming a lower middle-income country and a key exporter of food and agriculture commodities, Viet Nam’s malnutrition rate remains high and requires collective efforts to address it. To help meet these challenges, FAO’s priority is to support Viet Nam in tackling poverty, hunger and nutrition issues and achieve SDG2 through a holistic approach.

HIGHLIGHTS

Project TCP/VIE/3703, combining organic farming and agro-ecotourism, was approved by the Government in December 2019 and launched at the inception workshop in Ca Mau in February 2020.

In December 2019, FAO Representative met with EuroCHAM Director and delegates to strengthen partnerships with private sector in the area of organic/bio-foods.

New FAO project on sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience launched

On 5 December 2019, FAO launched a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project on sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience, through climate smart agriculture and agroforestry best practices in Viet Nam's north-western mountainous region.

The Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (NOMAFSI), under Viet Nam Academy of Agricultural Sciences, has been assigned by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to implement the project (from 2019 – 2021) with technical support from FAO. The project's interventions will support field demonstration models and policy recommendations through the ministry's Agroforestry Taskforce, formed in 2015 and facilitated by NOMAFSI. An agroforestry product-based approach will be explored to inform the design and implementation of climate smart agriculture and agroforestry models, which will in turn strengthen the productivity and market access of key agriculture and forestry products.



FAO Viet Nam delegation discussing with agro-forestry experts and farmers in a mission to Yen Bai, October 2019.

The project will contribute to the sustainable development of Viet Nam's agriculture sectors (including crop production, livestock, fisheries and forestry), national green growth and other strategies to enhance natural resources management and environmental protection.

A TCP project represents a dynamic initiative that delivers FAO technical expertise through targeted, catalytic and short-term projects. A TCP is harnessed to produce tangible and immediate results by supporting institutions, farmer associations and other entities as target beneficiaries – providing technical inputs such as short-term experts and consultants, practical training, equipment and supplies related to training. To qualify, project proposals are evaluated against 10 key criteria established by FAO's governing bodies.

FAO helps build Viet Nam's Socio-Economic Development Strategy and Plan (2021 – 2030)



FAO Representative Albert T. Lieberg delivered a speech at the SEDS/SEDP consultation meeting in Hanoi

FAO joined the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and members of the Development Partners Group (DPG) in Viet Nam for a symposium in Hanoi on 9 October 2019 to examine policy recommendations to underpin the Socio-Economic Development Strategy and Plan (2021 - 2030). Albert T. Lieberg, FAO Representative, delivered a summary and key strategic recommendations on the PG's Position Paper "Restructuring Viet Nam's Agriculture and Rural Economy during 2021-2030", formulated under the leadership of FAOR. The FAO Representative underscored Viet Nam's great progress in reducing poverty, achieving food security, as well as enhancing economic growth and socio-economic development. However, he said the "rural and agricultural communities continue to be among the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population, especially in remote areas" and "agricultural growth was achieved to a considerable extent also at the expense of the natural environment, particularly depletion of natural resources, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as triggering critical rural-urban migration."

The FAO-led position paper proposes a number of recommendations for the Government of Viet Nam's consideration, including strengthening resilience of farming communities towards climate change and natural disasters, reversing the continuous rural-urban drain to make the rural and agricultural setting more attractive for youth and transforming agricultural and food systems to become healthier, environmentally sustainable, and more equitable; and, modernization of the rural sector through multi-sectoral approach.

Further recommendations encompassed addressing malnutrition, dietary changes and food safety concerns as well as reducing land disputes and the conversion of agricultural land to urban and industrial uses, strengthening and improving water management as well

as its governance and security, strengthening rural economic organizations and business cooperatives and finally, incentivizing private sector investments in agri-business and value chain development.

Speaking at the event, MPI Minister Nguyen Chi Dung welcomed the valuable inputs from FAO and other development partners. He underlined the significance of the continuous Development Partners Group support to address strategic issues and challenges facing Viet Nam.

World Food Day 2019 Celebration in Viet Nam



Participants at the 2019 WFD event in Hanoi.

This event, held on 14 October 2019, was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, General Department of Preventive Medicines and NIN under Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education and Training, United Nations agencies, World Health Organization and UNICEF as well as about 200 students and teachers from the school who received valuable nutrition information and knowledge from NIN specialists. The event benefited from the presence of celebrities well-known to the young generation of Vietnam through social media.

This year's World Food Day (WFD) message "Our Actions are Our Future. A Healthy Diet for a #ZeroHungerWorld" called for action across sectors and society to make healthy and sustainable diets accessible and affordable to everyone. At the same time, it called on people to improve their nutrition awareness, practices and produce safe food through effective use of natural resources to help protect the environment for today's and tomorrow's generations. "More than 820 million people

in the world do not have enough to eat, but at the same time the rates of overweight and obese people continue to increase in all regions, particularly school-age children and adults. There is a need to introduce food and nutrition education and culinary skills in schools and at home," said Albert T. Lieberg, FAO Representative in Viet Nam.

Viet Nam has made significant progress in improving nutrition status and public health, with a sustainable reduction in child malnutrition in parallel to enhanced food security and diets. In particular, its efforts to reduce the stunting rate of children under-5, towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, is particularly noteworthy.

However, Viet Nam still faces intensifying challenges encompassing nutrition, environmental pollution and climate change. The stunting and underweight rates of under-5 children remain relatively high, 23.8 and 13.4 percent respectively (National Nutrition Surveillance System 2017). In addition, overweight and obesity rates are soaring, especially in urban areas. The nutrition status of children and students is alarming, with NIN research during 2017-2018 revealing the overweight/obesity rate of 5 000 sampled school children in a variety of provinces was 29 percent (17.8 and 41.9 percent in rural and urban areas, respectively).

"In recent decades, besides great improvements in socio-economic conditions, we have seen a lot of negative changes in eating habits, food consumption and lifestyle. A diet with few vegetables, much fat and processed food, a sedentary lifestyle – all of these factors are seriously affecting the nutrition and health of Vietnamese people," said Associate Professor Tran Dac Phu, Director-General of General Department of Preventive Medicines. He added: "To deal with these problems, we should enhance our awareness of optimal nutrition practices, change our unhealthy lifestyles and diets to create the best nutrition and health for each of us." To help achieve these changes, a communication strategy on "Nutrition and Development" was also launched by the MoH from 16 - 23 October to celebrate WFD with the key message "Proper nutrition is the foundation of health". At the event, Nguyen Hue High School students had an opportunity to talk with NIN specialists and other guests about proper nutrition, healthy diets and practical activities to promote "A Healthy Diets for a Zero Hunger World".

FAO and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment boost ties for sustainable development

Another milestone in the fruitful partnership between FAO and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of Viet Nam was marked with the signing of a Letter of Intent for collaboration between the two agencies, headed by Albert T. Lieberg, FAO Representative in Viet Nam, and Tran Hong Ha, Minister of MONRE on 30 July 2019 and the subsequent Work Plan was endorsed in December 2019.

Since its early days in Viet Nam - besides supporting agriculture, rural development and food security sectors - FAO has assisted the country in the implementation of international treaties and commitments on environmental protection and natural resources management. With this more formalized working arrangement, FAO and MONRE will work together in a more strategic and coordinated way to leverage respective capabilities, expertise and resources.

FAO Viet Nam Representative Albert T. Lieberg emphasized that FAO's efforts to support MONRE would: "Address ongoing and new challenges, such as the improvement of agricultural and rural ecological settings, sustainable use of natural resources such as soil and water, protection and conservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and finding ways to reduce soil and water pollution - particularly plastics, as well as chemicals from agriculture."

It would also focus on "the prevention of potential negative impacts of mass tourism activities on the environment, biodiversity and natural landscapes as well as building resilience for farming and fishing communities against natural and man-made threats and disasters.

FAO has also assisted Viet Nam in improving technical regulations, norms and standards, which are inclusive of GAP and biosecurity practices, as well as to facilitate product traceability. Minister Tran Hong Ha welcomed FAO's commitment and underlined its ability to deliver positive impacts as well as long-lasting results in eradicating poverty, ensuring environmental integrity and sustainable development for Vietnamese people.

FAO and MONRE look forward to further deepening their partnership with innovative, transformative and scalable initiatives in the near future.

FAO supports Viet Nam's ratification of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture



FAO Representative at the Consultation Workshop

The conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are key to ensuring that the world will produce enough food to feed its growing population in the future.

The historic adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources took place in 2001. Effective from 29 June 2004, the Treaty is in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing.

Viet Nam ratified these instruments in 1995 and 2014 respectively but has not yet ratified the Treaty. On 4 August 2019, MARD and FAO co-organized the consultation facilitating the country's accession to the instrument. Speaking at the meeting, Albert T. Lieberg, FAO Viet Nam Representative, emphasized FAO's continuous effort in supporting MARD and relevant government bodies of Viet Nam in joining the Treaty in order to benefit numerous small-scale farmers, researchers, private sector entities, and development agencies.



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