FAO in Viet Nam

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

FAO has operated in Viet Nam since 1978. Years of war had devastated the nation's physical, economic and institutional capital. At the same time, Viet Nam was isolated from much of the outside world and many traditional channels of development assistance were out of reach. During these difficult years, FAO became an important partner and main contributor of agricultural sector technical assistance.

In the 1980s, FAO's programme in Viet Nam was its third largest in the world after India and China. During these years, FAO assisted Viet Nam to restore its agriculture, forestry and fisheries through important technical assistance. This valuable contribution during an acute time of need is valued by the Government of Viet Nam to this day.

As a predominantly agrarian society, the transition in the second half of the 1980s from a centrally planned to market-oriented economy had a huge impact on virtually every aspect of the rural economy. In response to the new challenges, FAO's focus changed during the 1990s towards provision of upstream policy advice. FAO contributed its vast international knowledge and expertise to policy development and planning to enhance the agricultural sector's ability to respond to challenges and opportunities posed by the new market environment.

Going forward, Viet Nam in partnership with FAO is committed to the 2030 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that form a comprehensive framework of related priorities centred on a higher level of ambition and scope beyond those contained in the Millennium Development Goals - primarily, the eradication of poverty in all its forms. In this context, FAO is fully responsive to country changes to pursue greater alignment with national development priorities, and take account of the broader regional and global aspirations of the country.
FAO plays key role in post-war recovery

In the aftermath of the war, Viet Nam’s priorities were to restore food security and rebuild agriculture sector institutions. FAO quickly identified the need to provide technical assistance in the agricultural sector, especially as the country emerged from a period of isolation with many traditional channels of development assistance out of reach.

During 1978-1981, FAO assisted the Government to implement an important five-year forestry sector plan, which formed the basis of a research programme to have direct and effective inputs into forestry programmes for the next two five-year plans.

The project particularly focused on plantation forestry through Forestry Research Project VIE/76/015-016 and supported implementation of afforestation targets set in five-year plans. As a result, 1-2 million hectares of plantations were established from 1976-1980, which helped address ongoing food security issues faced by the nation.
Viet Nam emerges as FAO’s third largest programme globally

During the 1980s, FAO’s programme in Viet Nam was its third largest in the world after India and China. Chiefly focused on agriculture, forestry and fisheries in Viet Nam, FAO assisted the Government to create research facilities to support rural development and to introduce new and more efficient varieties of plants and breeds of poultry. Through FAO-assisted projects, the Government could access modern technologies and equipment as well as improve local capacity to use them. These projects also promoted essential research, trained experts and built institutions to create favourable conditions for Viet Nam to move from backward rural production towards developed world levels.

During this period, FAO was the main contributor of technical assistance in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, while at the planning and management levels it provided advisory assistance, information and tools for decision-making. As such, FAO was viewed by the Government of Viet Nam as an indispensable partner in the country’s development.
A community-based approach to household food security

Households are food secure when they have access to enough food at all times to meet the nutritional needs of all members. Food can come from different sources - it can be grown, bought at the market or exchanged for other items. Lacking sufficient income to buy food or knowledge about how to achieve a nutritious diet, many rural Vietnamese suffered from food insecurity and malnutrition during the 1990s. Children and pregnant women were most at risk.

In 1996, as much as 42 percent of Vietnamese children were affected by malnutrition, 14 percent of whom were severely malnourished. Yet, experience had shown that relatively simple and low-cost measures could significantly improve the food and nutritional status of vulnerable populations. Based on this notion, FAO tested a community-based approach for delivery of household food security support services in Viet Nam. The results were impressive.

The pilot project, from 1990-1994, tested an integrated approach that combined home food production and education to improve the nutritional status of children under-5 years and women in their reproductive years. After just four years, the project’s impact was clear. Vitamin A deficiency was virtually eliminated and severe malnutrition among children under-5 years was reduced by 76 percent.

The provinces, districts and communes involved were effectively implementing and managing a community-based strategy to deliver food security support services to households. The multiplier effect achieved by training trainers created a large pool of skilled provincial, district and village educators able to reach out to households. Through this dialogue and educational exchanges, households saw the benefits of a balanced diet and the number of home gardens expanded rapidly.

Growth monitoring of children under-5 years confirmed the benefits of a good diet, improved breast feeding practices and weaning foods. By attacking the problem of food security at the source, via the integration of home gardening with health and nutrition education, the project’s strategy demonstrated its ability to sustainably prevent malnutrition and improve household access to nutritious food.
A snapshot of our work
Integrated Pest Management Programme in Viet Nam

With FAO assistance, Viet Nam implemented the Integrated Pest Management Programme to address pest problems and abuse of pesticides due to farmers’ lack of crop management knowledge. The Department of Plant Protection was responsible for programme implementation across 63 provinces nationwide.

The programme’s objective was to increase smallholder farmers’ knowledge and skills to enable more informed decisions on crop management systems to achieve sustainable production and greater farm-level benefits, including human health and environmental protection.

Whereas initially farmer training was funded from external donor sources, local governments at provincial level became the major funding sources for the programme’s Farmer Field School training. Moreover, the government provided policy directives to empower local governments to implement action plans to strengthen and scale-up the programme during 2015-2020.
ECTAD tackles serious disease threats

The FAO Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) Viet Nam programme was established early in 2006 to help the Vietnamese Government combat the spread and entrenchment of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) subtype H5N1.

As the emergency situation subsided, the ECTAD Viet Nam programme transitioned to address broader animal health, animal production and food safety issues guided by shifting government priorities. The disease prevention and control programme expanded to encompass other transboundary animal diseases, including rabies, foot and mouth disease, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome, classical swine fever and other influenza A viruses, including H7N9 and H5N6.

Most recently, FAO is supporting the mainstreaming of the One Health approach to address human, animal and ecological health in a collaborative cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary manner with a focus on zoonoses, food safety and antimicrobial resistance.

FAO supports Viet Nam to improve access to social services, with the target of reducing the under-5 stunting rate to 21.5 percent by 2020 as indicated in the National Plan of Action for Nutrition to 2020.

Remarkable results were achieved through the successful implementation of the UN Joint Programme on Integrated Nutrition and Food Security. This intervention was implemented by FAO, UNICEF, WHO and UN Women in two phases between 2012-2014 and 2015-2017. It provided support to 36 million women of reproductive age and 7.1 million boys and girls under-5 and resulted in strengthened coordination between the health and agriculture sectors. Related knowledge and coordinated action informed the development and enactment of relevant policies, plans and standards as a result of modelling and evidence generation at national and sub-national levels.

From 2015, FAO played a leading role in facilitating the Food Safety Working Group and ensuring regular sharing of food safety information and experiences among stakeholders, including government, development partners and civil society organizations.

Review of Food Safety and Quality Control (2015-2017)

The “Review of Food Safety and Quality Control” project was in response to a Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development request for FAO to strengthen national food safety management.

In response, FAO assessed all food control activities implemented at national and provincial levels for all food supply chains covering domestic supply, imports and exports. While the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was the principal beneficiary, other ministries such as those of Health as well as Industry and Trade also benefited through the identification of improved food safety management and coordination structures.
The One UN Fund-supported FAO project “Strengthening capacity of food safety management along the value chain for better quality of agricultural and fishery products” was designed to support the Vietnamese Government to strengthen national food safety control systems. Its key focus was the agro-product food chain to increase public confidence in food supplies, in compliance with the Food Safety Law. FAO helped enhance the technical capacity of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Industry and Trade as well as the Ministry of Health to establish policies and guide application of control measures nationwide to improve the quality and safety of agro products, including fish. The project built on previous FAO work to enhance food safety and the value chain of products for nutrition enhancement, hunger eradication and poverty alleviation, especially in rural areas.
BLUE GROWTH INITIATIVE

To support the sustainable growth of aquaculture for food security, nutrition and rural livelihoods, FAO implemented the Regional Initiative on Sustainable Intensification of Aquaculture for Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific in early 2014. This ‘blue growth initiative’ for Viet Nam and five other focus countries effectively addressed issues threatening the sustainability of aquaculture through multi-dimensional interventions. In particular, innovative farming systems and practices for improved resource utilization and production efficiency were promoted, climate resilience of small aquaculture farmers was built through innovative farming practices, while the Government was supported to develop policy and strategy frameworks for sustainable intensification of aquaculture. Key FAO-supported activities were:

Promoted scaling-up of innovative rice-fish farming and climate resilient Tilapia pond culture practices for blue growth (2017-2018)

The project contributed to aquaculture’s sustainable contribution to food and nutrition, livelihood development and overall ‘blue economic growth’ in Viet Nam through scaling-up climate resilient and innovative aquaculture practices. In partnership with the Directorate of Fisheries (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), the project achieved three key outputs. Firstly, the concept and good practices of innovative rice-fish farming were disseminated to relevant stakeholders to strengthen capacity. Secondly, farm demonstrations of good practices in innovative rice-fish farming were successfully conducted and lessons learnt shared among stakeholders. Thirdly, a national strategy proposal supporting the scaling-up of innovative rice-fish farming was developed.

Successful piloting of sustainable shrimp farming in Bac Lieu and Soc Trang provinces (2017)

The project identified reasons for shrimp breeding failures in the southern Mekong Delta provinces of Bac Lieu and Soc Trang. The project also helped farming households to pilot a sustainable shrimp breeding model through providing shrimp fry and training on farming techniques. As a result, they earned higher incomes and gradually mastered application of technology. FAO is working on advanced shrimp farming models adaptive to climate change to ensure farmers’ livelihoods and environmental protection, contributing to the shrimp sector’s sustainable development.

Establishment and operation of Farmer Field Schools on Agro-aquaculture (2017-2018)

Based on small farmers’ needs to adopt practices towards sustainable agricultural systems, training courses on “Establishment and operation of Farmer Field Schools on Agro-aquaculture” were conducted in Bac Lieu province. The courses aimed to provide farmers with knowledge and skills on sustainable rice-shrimp farming and on reduced application of pesticides and chemicals to protect the environment and human health.
Blue Carbon for Blue Growth: Promoting up-scaling of integrated mangrove aquaculture in southern coastal provinces (2017-2018)

In Viet Nam, mangroves are primarily located in the south, especially the Mekong Delta and Ca Mau province. This project brought together knowledge on linkages between the aquaculture sector and mangrove habitats in southern Viet Nam. It also identified best practices to ensure sustainable and climate smart blue growth and promoted the scaling-up of integrated management of mangroves and aquaculture as well as rice-shrimp aquaculture for blue carbon and growth in southern Viet Nam.

Bio-energy sustainability in Viet Nam (2016-2018)

FAO supported enhancements of bio-energy sustainability in Viet Nam through use of Global Bio-energy Partnership (GBEP) indicators. The project “Building capacity for enhancing bio-energy sustainability through the use of the GBEP indicators” provided technical support and capacity building to Viet Nam to monitor environmental and socio-economic impacts of bio-energy production. It particularly focused on actual contributions to greenhouse gas emission reductions by replacing fossil fuels and traditional biomass use, while harnessing socio-economic co-benefits. Moreover, the project contributed to strengthening Viet Nam’s ability to adapt to the negative effects of climate change, with better planning and management of resources, including soil, water and land use.

FAO actively supports Viet Nam to implement the national Green Growth Strategy and address the climate change mitigation, natural resource management and environment protection aspects.

The “Enhancing Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions Readiness: Building Capacity in Integrated Food and Energy Systems in Viet Nam” project (2013-2017) worked to improve national capacity for planning and implementing mitigation actions in agriculture. It also championed ‘climate-smart’ agriculture through Integrated Food-Energy Systems, with a focus on integrated crop-livestock systems and renewable energy options. The project strived to reduce fossil fuel-based energy and fertilizer use, sustainably increase agricultural productivity and improve the resilience of smallholder farming systems to climate change.

The project increased capacity of national policymakers to design and implement climate-smart agriculture policies and national experts’ improved technical capacity in data collection on greenhouse gas emissions, modeling of emission factors and identification of mitigation options in the agricultural sector.
UN-REDD PROGRAMME (2009-2018)

FAO joined other UN agencies (UNDP and UNEP) to roll out the UN-REDD Programme (Phases I and II, 2012-2018) and jointly supported the Government to develop “REDD+ Readiness” (UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), an intervention to end in 2018. FAO also led major interventions such as building national capacity in the establishment and submission of forest and forest reference emission levels, formulating a National Forest Monitoring System and sub-national REDD+ initiatives, supporting forest law enforcement to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as well as implementing interventions under the Provincial REDD+ Action Plan in pilot provinces.

STRENGTHENING FOREST TENURES TO SUSTAIN LIVELIHOODS AND INCOME (2014-2017)

FAO joined a range of stakeholders in 2014, including the Viet Nam Academy of Forest Sciences, to strengthen the regulatory frameworks and institutional capacity regarding forest tenures to achieve sustainable livelihoods and income. The ultimate beneficiaries were forest-dependent communities whose livelihoods and income depend on access and use of forest resources. In the long run, such communities are expected to have more secure and stronger forest tenures as a key prerequisite to ensure forests contribute to their livelihoods and income. The programme built on previous FAO work in this field, including awareness-raising activities, training on tenures and conflict management.
HELPING FOREST RESOURCES TAKE ROOT (2011-2015)

Support to the “National Assessment and Long Term Monitoring of the Forest and Tree Resources in Viet Nam” project was part of the global FAO Finland Sustainable Forest Management in a Changing Climate Programme. Locally, it assisted the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development from March 2011 to enhance the National Forest Inventory and Monitoring Programme (NFI).

Implemented by the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI), it successfully met all its targets through sampling designs for NFI, developing technical manuals for data collection and processing, capacity building for forest inventories and developing forest maps and inventory databases to benefit REDD+ monitoring.

The project contributed to Viet Nam’s strategies on socio-economic development and environment protection as well as efforts to mitigate climate change.
FAO's Forest and Farm Facility supports forest and farm producer organizations (smallholders, rural women's groups, local communities and indigenous peoples’ institutions) to increase their technical and business capacities to fight climate change and enhance food security.

In 2014, the facility engaged the Viet Nam Farmers’ Union, as the national implementing agency, with Yen Bai as the pilot province and Acacia Group as the target beneficiary. Group members attended training courses on market analysis and development, wood processing, facilitation skills and proposal writing. They visited successful forestry businesses in northern and central Viet Nam and met commune, district and provincial authorities to express their needs.

The facility also worked to link forest and farm producer organizations with governments, REDD+ and other climate change programmes towards landscape restoration and to end deforestation.
NATIONAL TARGET PROGRAMME FOR NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT (2014-2017)

FAO helps Viet Nam to achieve the National Target Programme for New Rural Development (NTP-NRD), with a target that 50 percent of communes are recognized as ‘new-style’ rural areas by 2020 and increase average incomes by 1.8-fold from 2015.

FAO collaborated in a joint UN project to support the NTP-NRD, implemented together with UN agencies (UNIDO, UNESCO, IOM and UNV) between 2014-2017.

FAO’s main technical contributions were policy support to design the programme, development of special mechanisms and policies for disadvantaged areas and ethnic minorities, development of technical guidelines for the programme’s implementation and formulation of a capacity building programme for NTP-NRD (2016-2020).

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION AND THE ZERO HUNGER INITIATIVE (2017-2018)

As a key player in the Zero Hunger Initiative launched in 2012, FAO is the leading UN agency providing technical assistance to develop a Zero Hunger Challenge results matrix following UN regional guidelines to anchor the national action plan to achieve zero hunger by 2025.

To help develop the matrix, FAO rolled out the “Support to agriculture production in line with new rural development, sustainable poverty reduction and Zero Hunger Initiative of Viet Nam” project in 2017, that focused on the development of selected policies in cooperation with Government partners.

Furthermore, scaling-up of good agricultural practices was achieved with development partners to support two national target programmes, where FAO is the lead technical UN agency in the National Target Programme for New Rural Development.
NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMMES
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF ZOONOTIC DISEASES

By identifying, managing and mitigating economic and public health risks along different animal value chains, FAO’s Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in Viet Nam strengthened the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development’s capacities for prevention and control of zoonotic diseases as well as the early detection and response to emerging disease threats, such as influenza A(H7N9).

The project supported the Department of Animal Health to conduct animal influenza surveillance, which enabled the Government to effectively control and prevent Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreaks (caused by influenza H5N1 and H5N6 viruses). The emergency centre also worked closely with WHO and other public health agencies under the One Health concept to mitigate public health risks from zoonotic diseases.
FIGHTING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE IN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION AND AQUACULTURE (2017-2020)

To tackle antibiotic resistance in livestock production and aquaculture, FAO co-developed the Viet Nam National Action Plan for management of antibiotic use and control of antibiotic resistance in livestock production and aquaculture (2017-2020).

Launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the plan helps guide the agriculture sector in step with a Ministry of Health national action plan to combat drug resistance during 2013-2020.

This helps mitigate the public health risk of antibiotic resistance arising from antibiotic usage in livestock production and aquaculture in Viet Nam.

In 2016, central and southern Viet Nam experienced their worst droughts in 90 years, with 18 provinces declaring states of emergency at the peak of the crisis. The drought led to one million people requiring food assistance and 1.75 million people losing their income due to damaged or lost livelihoods.

In 2017, central Vietnam was hit by typhoon Damrey, one of the strongest storms in 20 years. The typhoon resulted in more than 99 155 households losing their main livelihoods and at risk of food insecurity.

FAO, as the lead agency in the food security and livelihood sector, timely delivered support to populations affected by disasters. FAO reached 5 469 households affected by the 2016 drought in the Central Highlands (Dak Lak and Gia Lai provinces) and 7 468 households affected by typhoon Damrey in Khanh Hoa and Thua Thien-Hue provinces. A mix of unconditional cash transfers, agricultural input vouchers, post-harvest equipment was provided, while further support was delivered via behavioral change messages. The project significantly increased food security of beneficiaries and contributed to rehabilitation of their livelihood activities. Households were allowed the flexibility to choose support options according to their own needs and priorities. The local economy was stimulated and negative coping mechanisms – such as the sale of assets, reduced meals, migration, incurring debt and withdrawal of children from school – were substantially curbed.

DEVELOPING “EARLY WARNING EARLY ACTION” ON DROUGHT (2017-2018)

FAO has been piloting “Early Warning Early Action” model that is a mechanism which enables a community to put preparedness actions into play based on reliable climate forecasts. The mechanism releases funds to support preparedness actions before a disaster strikes, thus enhancing community preparedness and response, and making disaster risk management more effective. This project aims to ensure that drought climatic forecasts and early warning are available to communities in a systematic way and trigger pre-defined early actions which can mitigate the impact of drought.


Since 2015, FAO in collaboration with UNDP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has implemented the “Integrating the Agricultural Sector into National Adaptation Plans” programme to incorporate climate change concerns related to agriculture-based livelihoods within existing national planning and budgeting processes. The four-year programme aims to strengthen technical and institutional capacity, develop integrated roadmaps, improve evidence-based results and share knowledge on national adaptation plans to create an in-depth analysis and recommendations for climate adaptation options mainly for crop, livestock and aquaculture production, the three most vulnerable agriculture sub-sectors.
ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF COMMUNITIES TO DISASTERS AND THREATS
The fruitful partnership between FAO and the Government of Viet Nam began with an agreement signed on 27 January 1978 for the establishment of FAO Representation as a UN agency in Viet Nam.

The relationship between FAO and the Government is based on mutual interests and trust built over the years. FAO plays leading roles in key events and dialogues on agriculture, rural development, agro-trade, cooperatives, poverty reduction, animal and plant diseases, food systems and disaster risk reduction.
FAO and the Government of Viet Nam

- **Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development**: This is the most important line ministry representing Government in technical work with FAO.

- **Ministry of Planning and Investment**: General Statistics Office (on data management), Foreign Economic Relations Department and Office for Sustainable Development (coordinating work on SDGs).

- **Ministry of Health**: Viet Nam Food Administration, coordinating the ministry’s work on food safety and Codex Committee.

- **Ministry of Industry and Trade**: Co-organizing Viet Nam Food Forum on an annual basis, and collaborating on food safety based on the ministry’s market surveillance mandate.

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**: Coordinating protocol issues relating to FAO Representative, Host Country Agreement.

- **Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment**: Coordinating GEF projects and bio-diversity (through Bio-diversity Conservation Administration).
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