



Pro-Poor Livestock
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Dept. of Agriculture, Forestry,
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Agricultural Atlas of Viet Nam

A Depiction of the 2001 Rural Agriculture and Fisheries Census

I. Introduction

Vietnam is located in the centre of Southeast Asia, comprising the eastern boundary of the Indochinese Peninsula, with a natural area of about 330,000 km². The country borders China to the north, and Lao PDR (Laos) and Cambodia to the west. Vietnam lies completely within the tropical belt of the Northern Hemisphere, extending for over 15° of latitude between the equator and the northern Tropic of Cancer. The country stretches from its furthest point north at 23°22'N on the Dong Van Plateau, to its southernmost tip on Ca Mau cape, at 8°30'N, while its westernmost point is 102°10'E at Khoang La Xan mountain in Muong Te district in Lai Chau province, and the easternmost point at 117°21'E on the Truong Sa archipelago. In the east and the south Vietnam faces the Eastern Sea, the Gulf of Bac Bo, and Thailand. The coastal zone from Mong Cai at the border with China to Ha Tien is 3,260 km long. The country measures 50 km at its narrowest point in the North Central Coast and 600 km at its widest point between Mong Cai and the Vietnam-Lao PDR border.

Vietnam is at the crossroads of several natural systems. It possesses great diversity in geology, terrain, climate, hydrology, soil types and fauna. Its territory is criss-crossed with mountain ranges and high hills, presenting substantial obstacles to human access and thus constraining economic development. These upland areas are also characterized by low population densities, high rates of poverty and extensive agricultural production systems, but are often rich in minerals, hydroelectric potential and forest resources.