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FAO Director-General earns second term

Director-General Qu Dongyu has been re-elected as FAO Director-General. Since first taking on the role in 2019, Director-General Qu Dongyu has championed a wide range of reforms and initiatives to overhaul the organization's business model, improving efficiency and implementing best practices that support programme and administrative effectiveness.

Director-General Qu Dongyu has strongly advocated for the transformation of agrifood systems to make them more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, with the ultimate goal of helping members achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promote the Four Betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind. Another highlight of Director-General leadership was the creation of the World Food Forum (WFF) in 2021. Over the past two years, the WFF has identified powerful ideas, scientific and evidence-based knowledge, innovations, policies and solutions, while forging new partnerships and investment opportunities to transform our agrifood systems. Congratulations to our Director General!

Realizing a transparent, responsible and sustainable food system by 2030

Viet Nam now has a national pathway to a sustainable food system. This was achieved with the launch of its "National Action Plan to establish a Transparent, Responsible and Sustainable Food System in Viet Nam until 2030". The document serves as Viet Nam's National Pathway, presenting the country's vision for food systems transformation, a set of specific goals, measurable indicators and key tasks, such as developing transparent and responsible mechanisms and regulations, promoting sustainable food production and processing, and improving food consumption practices. The approval of the National Action Plan on 28 March 2023 provides the legal framework for food system transformation. The development and implementation of the plan involved active participation from multiple stakeholders. FAO is committed to continue working with all partners to support implementation of the plan.



FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu, delivers the opening speech at the conference

Moving the needle for long-term food systems transformation

Food systems transformation was at the heart of the Viet Nam-hosted 4th Global Conference of the One Planet Network's Sustainable Food Systems Programme "The Transformation We Need".

The event, which took place between 24–27 April 2023 in Ha Noi, brought together ministers and vice ministers from eight countries from four global regions, national convenors and actors involved in the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) process, as well as multiple stakeholders from all world regions.

More than 350 people attended the conference in-person and thousands virtually.

Through nine main sessions and 18 side events, the discussions underscored the importance of food systems transformation to address interlinked and complex challenges, such as food insecurity, malnutrition, health, climate change, biodiversity loss, conflict, as well as high energy and food prices.

More sustainable, resilient, healthy, and inclusive food systems are urgently needed to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. Speakers and attendees agreed there was a need to link short-term and long-term efforts, while recognizing that shocks to the system such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine require short-term action. This action ideally should be conducted in the framework of a long-term strategy, one that uses a holistic and inclusive approach to food systems governance and policy making.

In addition to the main sessions of the conference, FAO co-organized sessions and side events on a range of food systems topics, including urban food systems, sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean, and the launch of a new guide on multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The importance of cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels emerged as a key element also from these meetings, alongside a shared perspective on existing inequalities to be addressed.

Connection and collaboration must become the norm, through multi-stakeholder collaboration, as it is not a choice but an essential ingredient for food systems transformation because it enables governments and other



FAO participated in a television talk show on food system transformation in Viet Nam

actors that worked in isolation and were fragmented to connect and collaborate and develop a shared vision, understand each other's roles and responsibilities, and work together to unblock blockages to implementation.

The 4th Global Conference on Sustainable Food Systems is part of a long process that began with the United Nations Food Systems Summit in New York in September 2021.

FAO field day offers a window into the future

FAO has showcased the future of sustainable farming in Viet Nam with a field day in northern Son La province to illustrate a smart and innovative approach to agriculture.

The event, in collaboration with the Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute and Plant Protection Department of Son La province, featured FAO experts, farmers, local authorities, and private sector representatives who firsthand saw cutting-edge approaches to growing tomatoes and sweet peppers, crops grown in optimized greenhouses under the FAO project "Smart Farming for the Future Generation."

This four-year project which concludes in 2024 is co-implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), with financial support from the Republic of Korea Government. It aims to improve the production, post-harvest, food safety, and marketing of greenhouse vegetables through the application of scientific and evidence-based solutions, innovative approaches, and advanced technologies.

FAO Representative Rémi Nono Womdim said the field day was valuable as participants further shared best practice knowledge in greenhouse production and management in a guided environment with local technical experts, showcasing the most suitable and adopted technologies and innovations in greenhouse production for adoption nationwide.

The project supported 18 rural households in Moc Chau district to improve and optimize their existing



Tomatoes take root in a greenhouse in Moc Chau province

greenhouses through receiving and utilizing high-quality seedlings, fertilizers, agriculture technical tools and accessories, close technical support, monitoring, and on-the-job trainings throughout the crop cycle. This allows beneficiaries to increase business opportunities and improve income streams and as well as provide sources of diversified diets through affordable and safe food all-year round. The project team conducted a series of trainings to increase technical capacity in greenhouse vegetable cultivation, phytosanitary compliance, sustainable water, soil and plant nutrition management, and integrated pest management. The project also plans to increase the capacity and infrastructure for post-harvest handling, food safety and the marketing of vegetables grown in greenhouses.

Reviewing the state of swiftlet farming and farm database development

FAO is supporting Viet Nam to ensure the biosecurity and biosafety of its swiftlet farming and export sector.

There are currently 24,000 swift bird houses across 42 provinces that generate an estimated 130-150 tonnes of products each year. This agriculture production commodity, swiftlet birds' nests that are edible and considered a delicacy in many Asian countries, is poised for significant growth following a recent export trade agreement with China.

However, there is no adequate database to support the management and traceability of swift bird products nor biosecurity and biosafety instruction guidelines for farming. In response, the Department of Livestock Production (DLP), in collaboration with FAO Viet Nam ECTAD, organized a conference "Reviewing the state of swiftlet farming and database development" to support building a national livestock database including bird nest house ID codes, introduce good bird house management practices and requirements for exporting.

The event welcomed more than 100 participants from 10 central level agencies, 18 provinces and cities, companies, associations and private sector. After the meeting, the DLP and related agencies visited bird nest houses in southern Ho Chi Minh City and Long An province.

Participants highlighted challenges along the swiftlet supply chain and proposed solutions to ensure the sustainable development of the industry as well as understanding the requirements to meet export market requirements and obtaining an international export code. The DLP identified issues to be addressed, including guiding stakeholders on granting the codes for swift bird houses, developing a circular on management of other animals including swift birds, developing a database on swift bird house good management practices and supporting the private sector to apply biosecurity guidelines and a traceability system.



Experts from USAID and FAO visited a live bird market in Mong Cai district, Quang Ninh province

Avian influenza H7N9 surveillance at border provinces

Surveillance of Asian influenza H7N9 at Viet Nam's borders remains vigilant. The Department of Animal Health, with technical support from FAO Viet Nam and financial help from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has implemented active surveillance programmes for avian influenza H7N9 using a rapid Penside PCR assay at live bird markets in border provinces since 2017. Although illegal border crossings of live poultry into Viet Nam significantly reduced over the past few years due to COVID-19 restrictions, the risk of H7N9 introduction may increase following the easing of border restrictions.

A mission team consisting of experts from USAID, FAO, and the department visited Cao Bang, Lang Son and Quang Ninh provinces from 21 to 24 February 2023 to review implementation of Penside PCR surveillance, assess provincial preparedness for H7N9 virus introduction, and discuss how the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FAO and USAID can collaborate to strengthen Viet Nam preparedness and response to the possible incursion of new avian influenza subtype including H7N9.

The provinces would like to continue conducting active surveillance for H7N9 using the Penside PCR as provinces have limited budgets to conduct surveillance, despite having long borders with unofficial border gates. Reducing detection times using Penside PCR can facilitate trace backs and timely interventions to prevent further spreads of new avian influenza virus subtypes in poultry and minimizing public health risks.

Enhancing pig farm biosecurity in Viet Nam

FAO Viet Nam ECTAD, with financial support from USAID, is working to enhance pig farm biosecurity and good management practices in Viet Nam towards reducing disease risks, antibiotic use and improving production efficiency.

These efforts, under project OSRO/VIE/001/USA with the National Agriculture Extension Centre (NAEC) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, kicked-up a gear with meetings on 10 and 24 February 2023 to realize biosecurity-model development activities in Ha Nam and Thai Nguyen provinces. Thirty participants including representatives from NAEC, provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development, Sub-Departments



A FAO expert works with local authorities to enhance pig farm biosecurity

of Livestock Production and Animal Health, Centre for Agricultural Extension, extension officers assigned to participate in model development and FAO national technical consultants agreed on the plan and criteria for selecting model pig farms.

After the meetings, a mission team consisting of FAO national technical consultants, NAEC livestock technicians and provincial agricultural extension centres conducted a survey to assess the current status of biosecurity and livestock management in 25 small and medium-sized pig farms in the two provinces. The team selected eight farms to enhance biosecurity and livestock management.

The model farms developed will be replicated by the agricultural extension system, following a cost-benefit analysis, to reduce the risk of diseases and antibiotic use in the pig production value chain in Viet Nam.

Healthy forests for healthy people

To celebrate the International Day of Forests 2023, FAO in collaboration with the General Department of Forestry and Viet Nam National University of Forestry showcased the importance of forest resources.

With the theme 'Forests and Health', national stakeholders, the international community and students were engaged to celebrate and acknowledge national forest resources. Participants also identified options to increase action for conservation and responsible use of forest resources and services with a view to protecting biodiversity, maintaining life-supporting ecosystems, and addressing climate change.



Celebrating the International Day of Forests 2023

The event specifically focused on management of forest ecosystems for reducing emerging infectious diseases and green growth and forestry development. This can include prevention of emerging diseases, forest-derived medicinal products, recreational activity and mental health benefits of forests.

Launch of the FAO ASEAN-RAI handbook

A key publication on responsible investment in food, agriculture and forestry has been launched.

"Promoting the application of the ASEAN Guidelines on Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry: A Practical handbook for ASEAN Parliamentarians", developed by FAO and the International Institute for



The FAO Representative presents the publication to the delegates



Celebrating the International Day of Plant Health

Sustainable Development, with the support of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), was released in the context of the 14th AIPA Caucus Meeting hosted by the National Assembly. The event was chaired by Mr. Vu Hai Ha, chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of Viet Nam and Mr. Rémi Nono Womdim, FAO Representative in Viet Nam.

This publication provides practical guidance for ASEAN's parliamentarians on how to play this role effectively, highlighting the importance of addressing the needs and interests of their constituents, and collaborating with other key stakeholders.

International Day of Plant Health

The International Day of Plant Health took centre stage at a FAO Viet Nam project closing ceremony. The project "Support for Development of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Plant Health Management (IPHM)" has completed its two-year implementation period.

The project was designed to support the development and roll-out of the National Plant Health Strategy (NPHS) and its National Plan for Integrated Plant Health Management (NP-IPHM) during 2021–2025. Through the project, FAO provided technical assistance to review the NP-IPM during its previous phase (2015–2020), analysis and stock-taking of relevant global frameworks, approaches, models and good practices on plant health management.

Appetite to enhance food safety

Tackling food safety, specifically antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and Salmonella contamination in foods of animal

origin, will be a key focus of a new FAO project in Viet Nam.

The four-year European Union-funded 'Working Together to Fight Antimicrobial Resistance in Asia and the Pacific' project will be rolled out by FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). It aims to support nine Asian countries in their efforts to tackle AMR by strengthening the countries' National Action Plans on AMR and data sharing.

In Viet Nam, this project will also address food safety which is a major concern given the large number of outbreaks of gastrointestinal disease reported, often attributed to foodborne organisms such as non-typhoidal Salmonella (NTS), in some cases are also antimicrobial resistant. Working across the animal, environment and public health sectors, the project will establish linkages between hospital, animal health and environmental laboratories to identify key sources of NTS infections in humans and designing interventions to reduce NTS contamination and AMR.



The finishing touches are added to a new project to tackle AMR

Exploring challenges and innovations to improve animal disease detection and monitoring in Viet Nam

Viet Nam's animal disease surveillance system is under the spotlight. In close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's Department of Animal Health (DAH), with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), FAO Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) is working to further develop animal disease surveillance capacities in Viet Nam based on input from stakeholders at different levels of the animal health surveillance system.

To do this, an evaluation team composed of epidemiologists from FAO ECTAD Viet Nam, DAH and the ECTAD Regional office for Asia and the Pacific used the Surveillance Evaluation Tool (SET), developed by FAO and widely used in Africa and Asia.

SET consists of a comprehensive and repeatable methodology to assess surveillance systems along 96 indicators specific to animal disease surveillance. Using information gathered from interviews with surveillance actors in the country, indicators are scored, generating graphs that can clearly highlight surveillance strengths and areas to improve. Outputs of the tool can be used by government and partners to guide development of Viet Nam's animal disease surveillance capacities in a coordinated approach.

The team then separated into two groups, one of which travelled north to Lao Cai and Dien Bien provinces, while another went to Dak Lak and Lam Dong provinces. This was the opportunity to meet with stakeholders, provincial Sub-Departments of Animal Health, Agricultural Service Centres, as well as with animal quarantine officers, animal health workers, live animal market workers and slaughter points managers. This allowed the evaluation team to understand the challenges and innovations of the surveillance system at all levels.

FAO a hive of activity with World Bee Day

Protecting bees and other pollinators to help address global food supplies and eliminate hunger challenges in developing countries was championed by FAO Viet Nam to mark World Bee Day on 20 May.

To spotlight the sector and its potential, a field visit to beekeepers in Phu Tho province was held with participants from FAO, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Centre for Bee Research and Technology Transfer, provincial beekeeping cooperatives and beekeeping households. Despite Viet Nam being one of Asia's largest honey exporters, the sector faces hurdles. The challenges include the need for adoption of new technologies in honeybee farming and additional training courses for beekeepers to access advanced techniques in beekeeping.



Beekeepers in Phu Tho province showcase their products

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Taking aim at zoonotic disease risks in wildlife

On 3 November 2022, the FAO Director-General launched the implementation of the Country Projects under the FAO Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products (SAPs): “One Country, One Product”. This initiative is well aligned with Viet Nam’s own “One Commune, One Product” (OCOP) and presents a good opportunity for new collaboration, especially since MARD nominated honey as the SAP from Viet Nam.

Viet Nam is contributing to FAO South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) programme in Sierra Leone

Viet Nam-based experts visited Sierra Leone to contribute alongside FAO officers to the formulation of a rice development project, as part of the FAO SSTC programme.



Vietnamese experts share knowledge with peers in Sierra Leone

It is expected that over the course of this four-year project, Viet Nam will provide its expertise in rice-value-chain development to Sierra Leone. This project will support diverse actors to increase productivity and production of rice through increased access to improved technologies and upscaling of best practices along the rice value chain in Sierra Leone.

Viet Nam kicks-off a project to combat zoonotic disease risks from wildlife

COVID-19 has brought people’s attention to zoonotic diseases-transmitted between animals and humans-and the risks of bush meat consumption to global health security. However, wildlife trade is still a common source of livelihood in many countries in Southeast Asia.

In response, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam, in close collaboration with FAO, UNODC, and UNEP have kicked-off the Safety Across Asia for the Global Environment (SAFE) project. This project aims to reduce zoonotic disease risks at high-risk wildlife facilities with the generous support from the European Union.

The SAFE project is a joint initiative implemented in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

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