



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# FAO Viet Nam Newsletter

2nd semester 2023-Issue #20



FAO Director-General QU Dongyu at the COP28 meeting

## FAO to help Viet Nam harness COP28 momentum

FAO stands ready to support Viet Nam in harnessing fresh momentum generated from COP28 to unlock agrifood solutions in the face of the climate crisis.

COP28, officially known as the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, closed on 12 December with fresh commitments to tackle climate change. The gathering also witnessed FAO's support for a newly launched Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action, endorsed by 134 countries. The roadmap captures the vast contributions that nations can make to building climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation, as well as food security, through solutions that only the agrifood sector offers.

"We have to produce more with less. Agrifood systems must be transformed to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable to effectively contribute

to food availability, accessibility, and affordability, and to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals," said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu.

With the changing climate becoming a food and agriculture crisis, leaving small-scale farmers increasingly at the mercy of climate-induced disasters and extreme weather events, the agrifood sector is on the frontlines of the climate crisis. This is especially the case in an agriculture-reliant country like Viet Nam, also one of the world's most vulnerable nations to the intensifying impacts of climate change.

In response, FAO remains committed to supporting Viet Nam to address these multi-faceted challenges impacting the availability, accessibility and affordability of food, the quality of water, soil and biodiversity as well as shifting patterns of pests and diseases. These impacts increase food insecurity, reduce crop yields, livestock productivity, and the potential of fisheries and aquaculture as food producers.

In Viet Nam, this means supporting partners to fortify agrifood sectors, reduce agriculture losses, develop new technologies to reduce the exposure and vulnerabilities of food producers and consumers, such as drought-tolerant crops, water-efficient irrigation systems and early warning systems.

COPs are the world's only multilateral decision-making forum on climate change with almost complete membership of every country.

## Transforming Viet Nam's agrifood systems

Transformation of Viet Nam's agrifood systems has taken a key step forward with a landmark conference to realize a national commitment and map out a pathway to address intensifying agrifood challenges.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), United Nations and other key stakeholders held a conference titled "Implementing the National Action Plan on Food Systems Transformation towards Transparency, Responsibility, and Sustainability in Viet Nam" in Ha Noi to discuss ways for the government, private sector and international organizations to collaborate in the successful implementation of Viet Nam's National Action Plan on Food Systems Transformation (NAP-FST).

The conference, co-chaired by MARD Minister Le Minh Hoan and FAO Representative in Viet Nam Rémi Nono Womdim – featured more than 180 participants including France's Ambassador to Viet Nam, leaders from MARD, the Ministries of Health, Natural Resources and Environment, Industry and Trade, Provincial People's Committees, diplomatic missions and United Nations agencies.

This initiative comes at a critical time, with Viet Nam's agrifood systems increasingly impacted by the interconnected and cascading effects of the climate

crisis, pollution and biodiversity loss. In addition, agrifood systems drive the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems as well as greenhouse gas emissions, as they are largely based on non-renewable energy, inefficient technologies and overuse of fertilizers.

These challenges contrast with the agrifood sector's role as an important pillar in national poverty reduction and economic development efforts. In 2022, the sector generated 12 percent of gross domestic product, while in the first 10 months of 2023 the value of agrifood exports hit USD 43.08 billion, with rice a leading performer.

As a result of presentations on the NAP-FST from key stakeholders and plenary discussions, the conference realized several important outcomes. Key headlines include a renewed commitment by stakeholders to contribute to NAP-FST implementation as well as endorsement of a proposal to establish a "Food Partnership" and five technical working groups focused on agro-ecology, nutrition and local food diversification, food loss and waste, responsible consumption and policies. Conference participants were encouraged to join the groups, with the "Food Partnership" expected to be formally established by the end of April 2024.

Furthermore, conference participants agreed that a scientific and systematic approach, cooperation between public and private sectors, and international community support are essential for food systems transformation.

The FAO Representative underlined a continued commitment to support local partners in achieving these goals, while representatives from France, Ireland and other countries and international organizations expressed their readiness to cooperate with the Vietnamese Government to implement the NAP-FST.

FAO supported the government during formulation of the NAP-FST, approved by the Prime Minister's Office in March 2023. It followed the UN Food Systems Summit



Participants agreed that cooperation between public, private and international partners was essential for food systems transformation.





Partners and stakeholders gather to celebrate World Food Day 2023

held during the UN General Assembly in New York on 23 September 2021 that set the stage for global agrifood systems transformation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Implementation of the NAP-FST is led by MARD, which is directly responsible for 30 out of 36 tasks.

### World Food Day 2023 and 45th anniversary of Viet Nam-FAO cooperation

Viet Nam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and FAO joined hands to celebrate the 43rd World Food Day and 45th anniversary of Viet Nam-FAO cooperation.

The ceremony, on 16 October, was held at Thuy Loi University in Ha Noi with a range of participants including Vice Minister of MARD Nguyen Hoang Hiep, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam Pauline Tamesis and FAO Representative in Viet Nam Rémi Nono Womdim who joined leaders and representatives from government agencies, international and non-governmental organizations, development partners, university lecturers and students.

With the theme 'Water is life, water is food. Leave no one behind', World Food Day 2023 aimed to raise global awareness on wise water management and address global challenges, including rapid population growth, urbanization, economic development and climate change, all of which have significant impacts on water resources.

In Viet Nam and globally, water is a driving force for people, economies and nature and the foundation for our food. As such, FAO works in Viet Nam to achieve sustainable integrated water resources management, a key initiative to support agrifood systems transformation. This is part of FAO's commitment to support countries in developing National Water Roadmaps, as endorsed in the Dushanbe Declaration and by the FAO Council, as a tool to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination and accelerate Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) achievement at national level.

"All of us have a responsibility to value water, the food it produces, and the planet it nourishes. In the words of FAO Director-General: 'freshwater is not infinite, and we need to stop taking it for granted'," said FAO Representative tone for Rémi Nono Womdim.

At the ceremony, FAO and participants emphasized the crucial role of partnerships in achieving these management and transformation goals, while advancing progress across the SDGs. Thuy Loi University students and lecturers also had an opportunity to share knowledge, data and activities focused on promotion of water management in Viet Nam.

Achievement of agriculture-related SDGs is also one of the key features of FAO's work in Viet Nam that builds on the solid objectives set during 45 years of FAO engagement in the country. Having entered Viet Nam in 1978, FAO is a key partner and main contributor of technical assistance in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors nationwide.



World Rabies Day Event 2023 in the spotlight

## World Rabies Day 2023: All for 1, One Health for all

FAO, the World Health Organization in Viet Nam, U.S. Agency for International Development and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have renewed their commitment to stand with other sectors and stakeholders towards the global elimination of human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030.

This year's World Rabies Day theme is "Rabies: All for 1, One Health for All", in reference to Alexandre Dumas's famous novel – The Three Musketeers, builds on the 2022 success of One Health, taking it a step that further to focus more on collaboration, equality, and the strengthening of health systems. The Three Musketeers can be seen as a team of individuals who overcame challenges and inequity to achieve their goals: a clear correlation between the struggles of the stakeholders in rabies control and joint efforts to eliminate the disease.

There is a need for the global community to overcome imbalanced health systems and challenges to achieve the global goal of zero human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030 and the Viet Nam National Programme on the Control and Elimination of Rabies 2022–2030. This event is also an opportunity to remind stakeholders that the fight against rabies is not limited to a single day. Instead, it needs to be conducted in a sustainable way to ultimately decrease the number of rabies deaths.

The global strategic plan was jointly adopted by FAO, WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health, and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control in 2018. In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and local governments, with support from these international partners, have been working together to implement the National Programme on the Control and Elimination of Rabies. Reducing human deaths from dog-mediated rabies has been a critical goal and challenge for many countries in recent

decades. However, through greater collaboration and by taking simple steps today to accelerate rabies control, human deaths can be eliminated by 2030.

There is increasing international and high-level political support for One Health as a sustainable solution to combat threats such as rabies. Dog vaccinations is the most cost-effective single intervention to protect humans from contracting rabies. By working together using the One Health approach, to increase rabies vaccination coverage in animals to at least 70 percent, we can break transmission of rabies to humans and accelerate progress toward "Zero by 30".

In recognition of World Rabies Day 2023, the MOH, MARD and Gia Lai People's Committee, with support from FAO, WHO, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Agency for International Development and other organizations hosted a joint event and national conference in Gia Lai province on 27–28 September 2023 to highlight a shared commitment to the "Zero by 30" goal, review the results of Viet Nam's National Rabies Control Programme and discuss opportunities for supporting increased vaccinations of dogs.

## Sustainable landscape management to revitalize the Mekong Delta

Green value chains are to take shape across the Mekong Delta thanks to a new FAO project.

The Global Environment Facility-supported project "Integrated Sustainable Landscape Management in the Mekong Delta" was launched at a kick-off workshop on 10–11 October 2023 in Dong Thap province.

The objective of the five-year project – implemented by FAO, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development – is to support the transformation of rice-dominated landscapes in the Mekong Delta towards sustainable, adaptive and resilient models of production



Eco-tourism in the Mekong Delta





The smart farming project takes shape in Moc Chau district

and landscape management that deliver multiple environmental and social benefits.

The project has the potential to catalyze action at scale in one of the most productive regions of the country where intensive, unsustainable rice production practices have led to severe environmental challenges. The project will directly contribute to increasing diversification and sustainability of agriculture management of the Mekong Delta.

## The smart pathway to sustainable agriculture

The future of sustainable farming in Viet Nam came to life with a field day spotlighting smart approaches to agriculture.

The event – in northern Son La province’s Moc Chau district – featured FAO experts, farmers, local authorities and private sector representatives who saw firsthand the innovative approaches to tomato and sweet pepper greenhouse crops developed by the FAO project “Smart Farming for the Future Generation”.

This four-year project is co-implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute, with financial support from the Republic of Korea.

The project aims to improve the production and marketing of greenhouse vegetables through the application of

scientific and evidence-based solutions, innovative approaches, and advanced technologies. It supported 18 rural households in Moc Chau to improve and optimize their existing greenhouses through engaging in various activities.

These pilot households received high-quality seedlings, fertilizers, and agriculture technical tools and accessories, close technical support, monitoring, and on-the-job trainings throughout the crop cycle. The project team conducted a series of trainings aimed at increasing 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 and food safety, as well as improve the marketing of vegetables grown in greenhouses. As a result, beneficiaries have already experienced tangible benefits from implementing the new methods and growing healthy and safe plants.

During discussions after the field visit, FAO Representative Rémi Nono Womdim and participants further shared best practice knowledge in greenhouse production and management with local technical experts, showcasing the most suitable technologies and innovations in greenhouse production for adoption nationwide.

“FAO stands ready to continue to support the government in the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems,” said Nono Womdim.



Pawin Padungtod, Senior Technical Coordinator, ECTAD Viet Nam, delivers remarks at the launch of the new National AMR Strategy in Ha Noi

## Tackling Antimicrobial Resistance in Viet Nam

FAO has joined hands with local partners to combat the complex and rapidly growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Viet Nam.

It joined the ministries of Health, Agriculture and Rural Development, Natural Resources and Environment, Industry and Trade, the World Health Organization and FHI 360, with support from the European Union and other partners, to launch a new National AMR Strategy in Ha Noi during World AMR Awareness Week from 18–24 November 2023.

The new National Strategy on the Prevention of Antimicrobial Resistance for 2023–2030, with a vision to 2045, aims to unite all of Viet Nam to protect the power of medicines and tackle AMR.

FAO Representative Rémi Nono Womdim said: “WHO and FAO, along with other partners, are proud to have supported the development of the new national strategy. And the government and people of Viet Nam can count on the support of WHO and FAO, along with other partners, in the implementation of the strategy.”

AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines, meaning infections become increasingly difficult or impossible to treat. It also poses risks to food systems, livelihoods and economies, as it can spread among different hosts and the environment, and antimicrobial resistant microorganisms can contaminate the food chain.

Viet Nam has a high rate of antimicrobial resistance both in human health and the livestock sector due to the overuse

and misuse of antibiotics. To address this, Viet Nam has banned the use of antibiotics as growth promoters since 2018, issued a prescription circular which requires prescriptions for on all antibiotics use in animals since 2020, and will phase out the prophylaxis use of antibiotics in the livestock sector by 2026.

The National AMR Strategy outlines plans to enhance surveillance, promote responsible use of antibiotics in health care and agriculture, and raise public awareness about the consequences of antibiotic misuse and overuse in humans and animals.

## FAO supports flood-hit households in Thua Thien-Hue province

Flood-hit households in central Thua Thien-Hue province have received emergency support from FAO.

Following the most severe rainfall in a decade during November 2023, FAO and Viet Nam Disaster and Dyke Management Authority (VDDMA) activated the Anticipatory Action Protocol to deliver cash assistance to 731 affected households in seven communes as part of the Anticipatory Action project funded by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

Anticipatory Action is a growing concept in Viet Nam. Over the past few years, the partnership between the VDDMA, FAO and the European Union has explored ways to strengthen systems to act ahead of natural disasters that regularly hit the country, particularly typhoons and drought.

Recognizing the effectiveness of Anticipatory Action, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and the Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and FAO launched a three-year Pilot Programmatic Partnership in 2021 on increasing capacities and scale for Anticipatory Action through social protection systems. In Asia and the



Cash transfer for food security event in Thua Thien Hue Province





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## Impact of Anticipatory Action

Racing against Typhoon Noru



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A new FAO study document was released in November 2023 to showcase the outcomes and advantages of anticipatory action implemented in Viet Nam ahead of Typhoon Noru in 2022.

Pacific, the partnership focuses on regional collaboration and normative guidance building, which is complemented by implementation in Viet Nam and Bangladesh, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Pakistan. Critically, the partnership ensures funds are readily available at the country level when signs point towards a looming crisis.

### National Consultation in Preparation of the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

A national consultation between FAO and the Government of Viet Nam was held on 8 December to address the critical challenges surrounding food security, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and rural development. This national consultation – in preparation for the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 19–22 February 2024 – aims to ensure that the APRC will accurately capture the specific needs and priorities of Viet Nam and the Asia-Pacific region.

Consultation participants including ministries, development partners, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and business associations. Participants delved into five key thematic areas: financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2), combating food loss and waste, transforming capture fisheries and aquaculture towards sustainability, applying the One Health approach to accelerate agrifood systems transformation and building resilience through agrifood systems transformation.



Participants at the national consultation in preparation for the 37<sup>th</sup> APRC



Representatives from Nigeria and Sierra Leone at Hau Giang's Rice Festival in December 2023

Through in-depth discussions and expert contributions, the consultation yielded valuable insights and recommendations that will shape the priorities and actions of the upcoming APRC. The recommendations will focus on fostering inclusive, sustainable, and resilient food and agriculture systems that can effectively address the region's pressing challenges and contribute to achieving the SDGs.

"FAO remains committed to providing technical expertise, policy guidance, and support for resource mobilization to help Viet Nam translate the outcomes of the national consultation and APRC into tangible actions. This will transform agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind," said Rémi Nono Womdim, FAO Representative in Viet Nam.

## Viet Nam-Africa opportunities in the spotlight

FAO joined local partners to explore opportunities and challenges in Viet Nam's relationship with African nations to transform agrifood systems.

This Viet Nam-Africa Policy Dialogue on South-South Cooperation for Agricultural System Transformation policy dialogue a South-South Cooperation (SSC) for Agrifood System Transformation brought FAO together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) on 12 December 2023 in Vi Thanh city, Hau Giang province.

The event, part of the International Rice Festival in Viet Nam, aimed to promote exchanges on the scale, solutions, and effectiveness of technical cooperation between Viet Nam and several African countries through sharing SSC experiences in rice value chain development, trade promotion and facilitation, and global food security.

It offered a platform for experts from FAO, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), MARD, IRRI, and Grow Asia to present mechanisms to boost innovations in the context of Africa and Viet Nam working to transform their respective agrifood systems.

During the dialogue, an agreement was signed between Viet Nam, FAO and Sierra Leone on an SSC project for rice farming technology transfers. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between MARD and IRRI on technological and institutional cooperation to support agrifood system transformation within the SSC framework. These activities mark significant collaboration between Viet Nam and the international community, demonstrating the Vietnamese Government's commitment to jointly developing sustainable agriculture for global food security.

## STAR-FARM project to boost Mekong Delta climate fight

To help tackle climate change in the Mekong Delta, the FAO-managed STAR-FARM project was launched on 13 December.

The project, also known as "Smart Agro-ecological



Transformation of Farming Systems towards Resilience and Sustainability in Middle and Coastal Zones of the Viet Nam Mekong Delta”, was designed to facilitate smart agro-ecological transformation of agrifood farming systems and strengthened resilience to climate change, environmental degradation and other external shocks. With funding from European Union, in partnership with CIRAD and IRD, the project was officially endorsed by the Government of Viet Nam on 7 April 2023. It was launched as part of the National Rice Festival in Hau Giang province, with participants from the European Union delegation, Ministry of Agriculture Rural Development, development partners as well as representatives from the three beneficiary provinces of Dong Thap, Kien Giang and Tra Vinh.

The Mekong Delta is under tremendous pressure from climate change and since 2000, farming systems have drifted towards unsustainable trends, with farming practices that require excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides to achieve high, but unsustainable yields.

## Building resilient livelihoods for women in northern provinces

Women in the northern mountainous region are unlocking the potential of sustainable agricultural livelihoods.

These steps forward were taken as part of a FAO-supported pilot activity “Resilient Livelihoods for Rural Women in Viet Nam Northern Mountainous Region”, funded by the Government of Ireland and delivered in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Viet Nam Women’s Union, businesses, women’s and farmers groups. This one-year initiative concluded in December 2023.



A bee keeper gets to work in Tien Yen district, Tuyen Quang province

Its overarching goal is to increase ethnic minority women’s access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods and incomes from rural activities that are resilient to natural and climate-induced disasters.

With technical assistance from FAO, key project activities focused on developing an organic, circular garden economy, including training on waste treatment, making and using biological bedding, composting, vermiculture and contributing to the “One Commune One Product” strategy.

To translate this knowledge into action, women-managed



The STAR-FARM project launching ceremony in Hau Giang



cooperative groups were established at commune level to explore income-generating opportunities in key commodities, such as longan, bees and bamboo shoots.

By strengthening capacity for value-addition and income generation related to agrifood systems, target provinces have built capacity to provide social and economic services for their citizens to contribute to enhanced prosperity in the northern mountainous region.

## Boosting farmers to fight-off a major crop threat

Vietnamese farmers are now better equipped to counter the spread of a major crop threat.

FAO has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to counter the Fall armyworm (FAW) through a range of initiatives, including setting up a monitoring tool known as FAW Monitoring and Early Warning System and forming a National Task Force on FAW control. Recently-developed Farmer Field Schools play a central role in informing farmers about FAW management, particularly to protect maize crops in a safe and effective manner.

Progress to date was recently reviewed, with lessons shared among participants, at a workshop held in partnership with MARD and featuring the Plant Protection Department, National Centre for Agricultural Extension, Viet Nam Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Plant Protection Research Institute and the Maize Research Institute.

Viet Nam's response to the threat is part of a regional FAW control network formed by FAO, which has a key focus

on capacity building of agricultural officers and farmers' organizations to respond to the arrival of the pest. In particular, cultivation habits of farmers are examined to avoid incorrect usage of chemical pesticides in the field. Viet Nam is a pilot country for Global Action on FAW control (2020-2023) as well as supporting regional initiatives such as the Regional IPM Package on FAW and ASEAN Action Plan on FAW.

FAW has caused significant damage since its first appearance in Viet Nam in 2019. The pest, since its arrival in Asia from Africa and the Americas region, has become economically damaging to major cereal crops – particularly maize.

## High-tech farming cooperative takes centre stage

Sustainable forest and farm production took centre stage during a recent FAO and Viet Nam Farmers Union joint mission.

The delegation visited FAO Forest and Farm Facility Programme sites in Hoa Binh province to review progress in developing a cooperative to boost sustainable forest and farm production. This included farming and income generation from range of activities, including growing mushrooms, raising goats, wild pigs, beekeeping and free-range chickens. With programme training, business match-making and provision of small grants, the cooperative has conducted its own market research and established contacts with local customers, traders and supermarkets in Ha Noi and nationally.



Farmer Field Schools share knowledge on FAW controls to protect maize crops





A FAO delegation met with Hoa Binh People's Committee and the provincial Farmers' Union

During the visit, the delegation met with Hoa Binh People's Committee and the provincial Farmers' Union to get a better understanding of how it supports member farmers. FAO in Viet Nam Representative Rémi Nono Womdim said agro-forestry production played an important role in the country's agricultural and rural development strategy. He said the delegation was impressed with the diversity of agro-forestry products in Hoa Binh province and congratulated the provincial leaders and departments for their efforts to achieve significant results. He also committed to work closely with Hoa Binh province to further develop sustainable agriculture and realize greater prosperity within rural farming communities.

## Keeping Viet Nam safe from wildlife-triggered pandemics

The FAO-supported SAFE project is boosting Viet Nam's ability to prevent wildlife-related pandemics.

To achieve this, the project is targeting facilities and locations at high risk of disease agents' transmission from wild animals to humans.

To examine its progress to date and the way forward, a national consultation meeting was held on 24 November 2023 in Ha Noi between FAO Viet Nam's ECTAD programme, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, other key ministries, in full FPD and United Nations agencies. It provided an opportunity to update the SAFE project work

plan, consolidate its contribution to the Viet Nam One Health Master Plan and review findings from a field survey and legal review.

The field surveys were conducted in four regions (northern, central, Central Highlands and southern), covering 24 provinces from July to November 2023. Wildlife facilities surveyed included captive breeding farms, zoos, rescue centres, wildlife markets and restaurants. The project focuses on infectious agents and human/livestock exposure to wild species at different sites along the value chain in Southeast Asia.



Surveying potential threats at wildlife facilities



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