

VIETNAM: Food and Nutrition Security Situationer

Section 1: Overview of Food and Nutrition Situation in Vietnam

With more than 85 million people, Vietnam began its economic reform in 1986, with a vision to transform the centrally planned economy to a market economy and fully integrate into the International trading regime.

During the reform process, food security has been prioritized in national policy. Therefore, Food Security at the national level has significantly improved, to which, Vietnam has become the 2nd largest rice exporter in the world. However, “Food security is not only the question of the adequate supply, but also a question of effective demand, stability of supply and access”¹. In other words, both elements of the availability of the nutritious food and the accessibility to the production resources to earn for food, should be taken into account. By that concept, many poor in Vietnam remain food-insecure and face risks such as land loss, land degradation, unemployment, unfair trading, and so on, in which, their rights to food, rights to production resources are disregarded.

Hunger: The fact is that, in Vietnam the average annual yield of grain is about 40 million tons. At the total population of 85 million people of Vietnam, it means 470 kg grain food per capita per year. Therefore, Vietnam’ annual export of rice to world market is about 4-5 million tons. However, there still are over 3 millions of poor households and about 1.6 millions of marginal poor households². Each household has an average of four or five people. As the result, there are more than 20 million poor people or, approximately one quarter of the population are living under the poverty line. Most of them, especially in mountainous areas, are falling in a situation lacking food in 2-3 months a year.

Malnutrition: The phenomenon on undersized, dwarfish and lightweight state because of lack of micro-nutrients (vitamin A, iron, zinc,...) is still common in children, which affects seriously to the development of physical, mental, intellectual and resistance of children and they will be more susceptible to infections.

According to the survey by the National Institute of Nutrition (2009), more than 30% of children under 5 year age are malnourished with low height for their age (stunting). Lack of micro-nutrients (Vitamin A, iron, zinc,...) is still common in children under 2 year old. Only 17% of children are fully breast-fed for first 6 months. Only in 6 first months of 2011, there have more than 23,000 children infected Hand-Food-Mouth disease, of which tens of children dead.

Climate changes are threatening the agriculture: With the population of 85 million and 73% if its population live in rural area, Vietnam is ranked among the lowest rate of agriculture land per capita in the world³. Natural disaster, disease and the impacts of climate changes are threatening the agriculture. Vietnam is one of the five countries that suffered the most from climate changes. With the scenario of high rise of sea water by one metre, the Red River Delta and the Cuu Long River Delta, the two rice production area of the countries is estimated to be intruded by 5,000 km² and 15,000 to 20,000 km² respectively. The total food production,

¹ Action Aid

² Source: Report of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MONALISA) at June, 2011 and 20 USD monthly income/person as Poverty line.

³ In the South of Vietnam the average cultivation land is 1,000m² per capita, meanwhile this is only 400m² in North.

therefore, will be reduced by 5 million tons. Particularly, some regions like the Northern mountainous areas and Central Highlands will be severely influenced by rising of temperatures and changing in rainfall. In both areas, the climate tends to become drier, while in some areas of fallow land, rain output is complicated with high rainfall, which often leads to floods and over-controlled diseases.

Section 2: Initiatives in promoting sustainable smallholder agriculture and increasing household food security (government, CSO, multistakeholder)

Programs that aim to reduce hunger and malnutrition

- **Government programs**

From 1998 Poverty reduction has become one of the National policies among the social policies system in the country. Since then, the poverty of Vietnam has achieved certain accomplishments such as consistently achieved and exceeded the target poverty reduction set by the stages and the millennium goals as well.

Program 133: In early 1998, Vietnam Government has officially approved the National Target Program on Poverty Reduction for the period 1998-2000 as an integration part of the National Socio-Economic development program. The objective was to support mountainous and remote areas including Settled Agriculture and Residence work; Support the poor and ethnic minorities developing production and raising incomes... to assure a 10% hunger-poverty rate at 2000.

As the result, in 2000, the country's poverty rate was 10% by the old poverty line ⁴

Program 135 (1st phase): 7years/1998-2005, Vietnam Government approved a socio-economic development program for specially disadvantaged communes of ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. The overall goal to make quick changes in production, promote agriculture restructuring towards production of goods associated with the market... reduce the development gap among/and between regions in the country.

The objective: no more hungry households and reduce poverty household rate to 30% at 2010 with following specific objectives:

- (i) Production development for improving living standard of ethnic minorities,
- (ii) Development of infrastructure,
- (iii) Development of local public services relevant to Electric, Road, School, Health provision stations...
- (iv) Improving culture life of local people.

Decision 134: 20/7/2004, Vietnam Government issued Decision No. 134/2004/QD-TTg with main policies to support productive land, residential land, housing and clean water for poor ethnic minority households. This is an important decision, expressing special concern of the Government towards ethnic minorities.

CGPRS strategy: 2002, the Prime Minister has approved the "Comprehensive Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (CGPRS). This strategy was fully detailed in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations / IMF, UNDP, WB, mainly:

1. Eliminate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. To enhance gender equality and empowering women.

⁴ National Report on Poverty reduction.

4. Reduce the rate of infant mortality.
5. Strengthening maternal health.
6. Prevention of HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Establishing a global partnership for development purposes

Program 135/II: 2006-2010, Vietnam Government continued to supplement the “Program 135”- The main objective of this program is to support the construction of infrastructure systems such as electrical provision systems, roads, schools, health stations in 1715 poor communes

Program 135/III: Approved on 27/12/2008

The Government continued to implement the National target program on poverty reduction/ Program 135 Phase 3 including “30a Resolution” with the Objective on “Rapid and Sustainable Poverty reduction in 62 poor districts of 20 provinces, where the actual poverty household rate is more than 50% following new poverty line” assuring a max. 40% rate of poor households by a new poverty line in respective provinces.

From 1992 to 1998 with a lot of effort, the poverty rate in Vietnam annually decreased from 2 to 3%. By the end of 2010 Vietnam's poverty rate is 9.45%.

The urgent aid for people in natural disaster areas:

Depending on the natural disasters that happened in different areas, Vietnam Government has directed and had guide for mobilisation of different sources (MARD, Ministry of Defence, different organisations ...) joining in emergent aid in supporting food for affected people timely and effectively.

Agricultural insurance: In order to mitigate losses in Agriculture raised by Natural disaster and diseases Vietnam government has decided a Program on Agricultural insurance (Decision 315/QD-TTg) for the period 2011-2013.

- **NGO/ Community programs (particularly to promote Smallholder agriculture)**

Sustainable and smallholder Agriculture based Household Food and Nutritious

security: The program has been piloted by Civil Society inclusion in food security and poverty reduction network (CIFPEN).

Main effects on community in terms of ensuring household food security and nutrition:

- Using ecological principles increases bio-diversity. Not only are animals' homes salvaged (saved), but the natural ecological system protects itself (sustains itself) from soil erosion, severe herbivore predation, and crop disease;
- Since insecticides and pesticides are not used, pollution and the harmful effects of ingesting these poisons are not an issue;
- Since each intercropping plant supplies a different nutrient to the soil, less or (even no) fertilizers are added to the soil;
- This type of agriculture is aligned with nature and uses the principles of nature to sustain itself (there's nothing better than that!)

- Farmers experience less or no economic loss with this type of agriculture system because the natural environment protects itself from crop disease (due to diversity of species), soil erosion (benefits of intercropping plants with different harvesting periods), flooding (the intercropping plants absorb heavy rain-falls), droughts (the intercrops provide moisture and shade for each other), and fire (extra moisture and shade keeps plants from drying out and becoming more susceptible to fire).

There're some activities in these areas:

- Development of VAC Integrated systems as Sustainable Agriculture practices;
- Bio-fertilizer production and use by recycling agricultural waste;
- Biochar, biogas as multipurposed technologies for smallholder sustainable agricultural practices;
- Climate change - Mitigation and Adaptation at Small-holder farming production;

These Agricultural Researches and its priorities and issues include institutions involved and role of CSOs.

- **Problems arising from government and inter-governmental policies and action that affect smallholders**

Vietnam initially integrated through bilateral trade agreements (BTA) with many countries, in which the most significant one is The Vietnam – US'BTA (2001), that helped to speed up the process of Vietnam's integration into Regional and the Global economy. Regional agreements (AFTA, ACFTA,..etc) have gradually been signed and which led to Vietnam's accession to the WTO as its 150th member in early 2007. A WTO member requires Vietnam to amend its policies as a negotiated roadmap in order to comply with WTO rules and regulations. According to the WTO requirements, tariff and non-tariff barriers will be reduced, national policies will be changed, which may not benefit the poor and marginalized people. There may be negative consequence for the poor, as they are vulnerable have less access to a good education system, information, less opportunities, and less power.

Vietnam has to suffer from trade injustice that has been reflected in a series of unfair anti dumping petition against some Vietnamese products:

WTO negative impacts: Vietnam is joining WTO in the context that the rich members enjoy the most power within WTO. Like many other countries, what so called non-market economy implied for Vietnam has brought this country many disadvantages in dispute regulations in the WTO. Regardless of how much market orientation Vietnam has previously practice. Vietnam argument that it was not dumping strong factors arguing that Vietnam products did not dump in the international market were disregarded. Moreover, being a developing country, Vietnam have insufficient resources to enable her to enjoy the instruments for dispute resettlements "granted" within WTO. Vietnam is suffering from recent anti-duping duties imposed on Vietnamese products such as catfish, shrimp, footwear and unless such unfair treatment ceases. These factors have made Vietnam vulnerable in which, the poor suffer the most.

Insufficient Property rights of the poor: With the poor infrastructure, limited funding and human resources in Vietnam intellectual property rights (IPRs) are not dealt with sufficiently. This affects the poor the most as they cannot afford to patent their products and thus cannot protect their own product rights.

Unfair competitiveness, the poor is at risk: The attractive FDI policies with many incentives offered to Foreign Investors are in the National interest to a certain extent. However, until the pro-poor elements are integrated in the favored corporation policies, the poor is at risk. Trans national corporations (TNCs) have joined into the play in such a big FDI wave and potentially created risks for small producers as well as the poor, whom are in a vulnerable situation in the competitive game. As foreseen from the practice in other countries, TNCs may use their economic power to have the most favoured treatment of the Government, to dominate the market, to have not respect their corporate social responsibility, gradually decrease the competitiveness of small producers, make consumers as well as input suppliers totally dependant on their businesses. In addition, violate environment protection policies, biodiversity, etc. have been observed to attribute to TNCs in many other countries and it likely happened in Vietnam. While the legal framework is being revised or developed, the poor law itself and its enforcement will likely affect the poor and marginalized group.

Industrialisation and regardless of interest of the poor in term of land use: Opening up the economy also puts pressure on land issues, in which, re-structuring the land use has caused conflict between the National interest and the land user's interest. At the policy level, the policy itself for such land issues is not comprehensive and does not adequately cover practical issues related to the life of the poor. Consultation with the poor not conducted properly in correlation with the overall economic social objectives. The process of restructuring land use does not fully apply the given rules. This in turn creates more burdens the people, especially the poor . With rapid development over the past decades, the country has put priorities of industrialization and urbanization over agriculture. According to statistics by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the period of 2001-2005, up to 366,000 ha of agricultural land has been shifted in to non-agricultural production, accounting for 3.9% of the total agriculture land. By 2025, it is estimated that 10-15% of the agriculture land will be used for industrial development. In many provinces, the local governments do not have the insights into food and agriculture development and has traded off food security for non-productive industrial development. This conflict has wasted land leading to the Land resources loss of livelihoods of the poor and farmers. Lack of livelihoods, production resources, and knowledge on how to use the land, no land loss compensation money, no financial support policies, etc, equates to people living in a very difficult life situation that threatens their food security. Over the past five years, the loss of agricultural land has threatened the livelihood of 3 million people.

Furthermore, according to The Land Law promulgated at 1993, land allocation to farmers for production has 20 year validity only. Due to allocation time is running out, farmers are wondering what will happen in coming 2 years, caused their unstable livelihood.

Overused chemical fertilizers in Agriculture: Despite many progresses in fertilizer use, the coefficient of nitrogen fertilizer use is only 35-45%, that of phosphorus and potassium fertilizer is about 50-60%, resulting in large amounts of chemical fertilizers being lost to leaching, erosion, volatilization and fixation. This does not only cause fertilizer waste but also leads to the danger of environmental pollution. It is estimated that, in Vietnam only, the annual loss of nitrogen fertilizer accounts for about 1-1.2 million tons of urea-equivalent fertilizer⁵. This is an economic disaster that requires farmers paying more than necessary, caused also negative impact to food security.

⁵ "The role of fertilizer in modern agricultural production in Vietnam". Dr.Prof. Nguyen Van Bo-Vietnam Soil Science Society – Vietnam News 2004

Section 3 – Mechanisms and Institutions (programs and activities on food and nutrition security)⁶

Description of mandate of mechanisms (government-led, CSO-initiated, multistakeholder) in terms of

- *objectives*
- *roles and functions*
- *structure and membership*
- *programs and activities*
- *implementing the programs and activities*

Provide a brief analysis on the effectiveness of the various mechanism, in terms of achieving their respective objectives, active involvement of members and outcome of interventions (i.e., whether policies were introduced, changed, implemented, etc)

Section 4: Recommendations on the possible role of the Alliance (at national & regional)

1. The possible role and value-added of the national alliance in the country:

The AAHM national alliance in the country can:

- Create the forum for connecting many CSOs interested in Food and Nutrition security in order to have collective action it fight poverty together.
- Gain achievements in moving forward the participatory working way with the level gradually development of advocacy competence in both a theoretical and practical.

The AAHM national alliance in the country can be able to on behalf of the poor to:

- Participate in the policy dialogue in the process of the Government formulation of the Social Economic Development Programs towards:
 - Sustainable Agricultural Smallholder production;
 - Value chains and small scale enterprises led by small farmers, fishers, indigenous people organizations, and cooperatives.
 - Climate change mitigation and adaptation to provide a good living income of the poor.
- Mobilize people to participate in the rolling out of grassroots democracy scheme in budget tracking, in formulating food security policy, and implementation,
- Enable community to network to support each other and to have a strong collective voice to the upper level.

The focus interventions of the AAHM National alliance for the next two years:

- ***Policy advocacy for enhancing food and nutrition security especially in small food producing households (What 3 key themes should we influence at policy level?):***
 - ❖ Policy advocacy for supporting Agricultural insurance for the poor and small-scale producers to provide a good living income.

⁶ The issue is not clear or N/A.

- ❖ Policy advocacy for supporting Livelihoods for the poor in context of land losses (Land losses by Climate change impacts, land degradation, land loss due to industrialization and urbanization...)
 - ❖ Policy advocacy for Supporting Agricultural markets for small producers.
- **Capacity building for NGOs and Rural poor organizations for policy advocacy and field projects**
 - ❖ Capacity building for NGOs and CSOs on Policy advocacy skills.
 - ❖ Capacity building for CSOs and poor people on Sustainable small-holder agricultural practices towards food and nutrition security.
 - ❖ Capacity building for disaster control and Climate change assessment on Food and Nutrition security.
 - **Researches/ Studies needed**
 - ❖ The livelihoods for the poor in the context of land losses (Land losses by Climate change impacts, land degradation, land loss due to industrialization and urbanization...).
 - ❖ Assessment on Consultation capacity on Livelihood and Value chain of small-scale producers in order to identify a Strategy on capacity building for NGOs.
 - ❖ Assessment on the real impacts of climate change and verifying the realities of Climate change scenario and National strategy on Climate change for Food and Nutrition security.

2. What should be done by the alliance at the Regional level in the next two years?

Networking all Regional AAHM Alliances for sharing experiences on Practical Food and nutrition security achievements including policy dialogue between CSOs, decision makers and duty bearers at the national/Regional level.

Section 5: Sources/References

DECISION No.20 ON APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FOOD SAFETY IN THE PERIOD OF 2011 - 2020 AND A VISION TOWARD 2030

<http://luatvietnam.vn/VL/Decision-No-20QD-TTg-dated-January-04-2012-of-the-Prime-Minister-on-approval-of-the-National-Strategy/BA67FB78-5262-47F1-9F9C-19A5687>

DECISION OF VIETNAM GOVERNMENT for Agricultural Insurance No. 315/QĐ-TTg :

http://www.mof.gov.vn/portal/page/portal/mof_vn/ttsk/3312584?pers_id=2177014&item_id=68165384&p_detail_s=1

Vietnam committed to meeting MDGs:

<http://en.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Vietnam-committed-to-meeting-UNs-MDGs/20109/12208.vnplus>

Decision No.135 on 07/2006/QĐ-TTg of The Government Approval Socio-Economic Development program for Special Difficult Communes of Ethnic minorities, the Period from 2006 - 2010

<http://chuongtrinh135.vn/Default.aspx?tabid=140>