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International Conference on Avian

Influenza

Ho Chi Minh City, January 23- 25, 2005 -

An International Conference on Avian Influenza was jointly organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Conference attracted around 160 participants and observers from 30 countries including Asian countries, USA, Australia, Hong Kong and some European countries such as the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Denmark. The conference was also participated by nearly 60 foreign news and media agencies.

The objective of the conference is to produce an overview of the bird flu and evaluate achievements after 12 months of hard works as well as to deliver and discuss the most up-dated studies on the virus and to outline directions and action plans for member countries.

In his address at the conference, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Cao Duc Phat evaluated that the bird flu epidemic caused serious losses for Vietnam. In terms of economy, during the bird flu epidemic from the end of 2003 to March 2004, around 43.8 million fowls have been destroyed, accounting for nearly 17% of the countrywide poultry flocks. The bird flu outbreaks were re-occurred in 35/64 provinces and centrally-administered cities at the beginning of this year. However, there have not been an official statistics on losses caused by these outbreaks. In terms of human being, 44 cases have been confirmed of positive with the avian virus, of which 32 led to fatality.

At the conference, the Minister highly appreciated supports from international organizations such as FAO, WHO, OIE, WB and ADB for Vietnam in an unbalancing fight against the virus and confirmed Vietnam's willingness to share experiences and lessons learnt from other countries and recommendations made by international organizations and experts to stop and push back the pandemic.

After 3 working days, the Conference officially concluded with the following recommendations:

- Segregation in farm settings of chickens, ducks, and other animals such as pigs and a reduction in contact between these animals and humans.
- More than US\$100 million is a minimum data needed to urgently cope with the present epidemic, in which US\$ 1 million should be mobilized from international communities, another US\$ 1 million from regional countries and the rest of US\$ 100 million are from domestic resources. This amount is not used for compensation for destroying and restoring the poultry flocks accordingly.
- The meeting agreed that vaccines can be a strong weapon in the fight against the disease in poultry. The possibility of vaccinating ducks should be explored.
- The bird flu virus does not respect borders and needs a strong regional response. Existing regional cooperation networks recently established by FAO should be extended.
- Countries are urged to report occurrences of the disease to the OIE in a timely and transparent manner.

Source: FAO

The World Bank is willing to support

Vietnam to control the bird flu

Mr. Laurent Mselatti, Coordinator of the Rural Development Programme, World Bank (WB) Office in Vietnam said WB is willing to support Vietnam in its fight against the spread of bird flu. Answering the interview of Vietnam News Agency reporter on February 24 2005, Mr. Mselatti said "If Vietnam needs further financial resources, WB will be willing to consider that need". Mr. Mselatti took part in the Asia-Pacific International Conference on Avian Influenza held in Ho Chi Minh City from 23-25 February 2005.

Source: VNA

Sustainable Agricultural

Development

Improved investment in science and technology is the most important and prioritized task of the agricultural sector in the coming years for sustained growth of

Vietnam agricultural production and rural economy at 5.5% annually.

Obtaining good seedlings is a decisive factor to improve productivity, quality and competitiveness of agricultural products. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), at the same time, promotes diversification of rural industries and considers sustainable economic development as the basis and momentum for sustainable social and environmental development.

The Ministry is about to map out diversified solutions to support rural agricultural small and medium enterprises; strengthen the capacity of the people; speed up the planning and development of modern and sustainable infrastructures in service of production and daily lives of the people in order to improve their production conditions and living standards.

Although Vietnam have made great achievements in the past years, but it is hard to say that the agricultural development process is sustainable. Rapid and strong transformation of plant and animal structure has led to changes in approaches of using natural resources such as land, water and biology system in a large scale. Additionally, insufficient survey, planning, design, monitoring and evaluation give birth to the dangers of ecological imbalance, which is threatening the sustainable competitiveness of the sector.

Source: MARD

New poverty reduction program in

Viet Nam targets women and ethnic minorities

Rome, 15 February 2005 – About 70,000 poor households in 841 rural villages will benefit from a new poverty reduction programme in two provinces in Viet Nam. The US\$38.7 million decentralized programme will be largely financed by a US\$ 24.1 million loan and a US\$ 630,000 grant from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The program will operate in the remote, northern provinces of Ha Giang and Quang Binh, which is home to more than 15 different ethnic groups. One of the key aspects of the Decentralized Programme for Rural Poverty

Reduction in Ha Giang and Quang Binh Provinces is supporting the creation of self-help groups that will enable poor people to identify their own development needs and empower them to participate in local institutions.

By supporting the rehabilitation of roads and irrigation systems, the programme will also create new employment opportunities, as well as improve water supplies and market access. Self-help groups will assist the programme in targeting the region's poorest households for preferential access to jobs, training and financial services.

With this loan, IFAD will have financed six projects in Viet Nam, totaling US\$ 104.8 million.

Source: IFAD

Joint GoV-Donor Review of Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Health in Viet Nam

Ha Noi, February 2005 - the Joint GoV-Donor Review of Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Health in Viet Nam has completed the Document "Issues and Options for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation in Viet Nam: Building Capacities for Increased Choice".

This Document is now being commented by relevant stakeholders. A meeting of the RWSS Task Force is tentatively held in March 2005 to discuss the Document and the overall progress with the Review.

This Document and progress reports by the Review Team have been updated in English and Vietnamese on the ISG website: <http://www.isgmard.org.vn/Information%20Service/Report/Report.asp#water>

Any comments to the review documents are welcomed at the ISG Secretariat. Please kindly be requested to forward this link to any one who may be interested in./.

Source: ISG Sec

Using web based application to monitor and evaluate projects

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is in the development process of a

web based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to manage ODA funded projects. The system will be developed with the support of Vietnam-Australia Monitoring and Evaluation Strengthening Capacity Project (VAMESP) and some other donors. In the time to come, MARD will pilot this system on big loan projects funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB) within the water sector.

For more information please contact ISG Secretariat.

Source: ISG

Promote development potential of farms and rural enterprises

After 4 years of the Government Resolution implementation, 16,060 farms and more than 56,700 rural enterprises have come into being, which contributes considerably to transformation of rural agricultural structure and improvement of the people lives as well as job creation for millions of laborers.

Farming economy models have created a basic transformation step in terms of goods value, bypassing the household economy. In 2004, the total value of goods and services produced by farms was estimated at 70,047 billion VND, which means that each farm has made an average production value of 980 billion VND, 6 - 8 times higher than that of an agricultural household.

Development of farming economy and rural enterprises not only helps improve the people living standards and reduce poverty but also largely contributes to job creation for the people in the area.

According to preliminary statistics, farming economy attracts and creates employment for more than 60,000 people, which contributes to reducing unemployment pressure in rural areas and at the same time ensures stable income from VND 400,000 - 600,000/month for the laborers.

Rural enterprises create jobs for more than 1 million people with an average income from VND 700,000 - 1,000,000/month.

Source: VNA

Linkages Between Farmers and Enterprises for Contract Farming Must be Improved

AN GIANG, 12 January 2005 - The linkages between farmers and enterprises for contract farming must be improved, a workshop on contract farming held by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in cooperation with An Giang University under the "Making Markets Work Better for the Poor" project was told.

The two-day workshop was attended by about 70 participants from local departments; research institutes; farmers' organizations and collectives' unions; purchasers and processors from the Mekong Delta provinces of An Giang, Can Tho, Tien Giang, Kien Giang, Dong Thap, and Vinh Long; donor organizations; private consulting firms; and domestic and international nongovernmental organizations.

The workshop tried to derive potential policy messages and directions for future research from a series of case study presentations on the different dimensions of contract farming and group discussions on how to improve contract farming practices based on varied experiences.

Most of the participants agreed that contract farming is profitable for farmers, collectives and enterprises, resulting in benefits for the whole society.

However, farmers are still unfamiliar with contract farming despite the enactment of Decision 80/2002/QD-TTg on 24 June 2002 by the Prime Minister, which encouraged agrifood consumption through contract farming and local authorities to improve the linkages between farmers and enterprises by a number of policies, such as "four houses" coordination, farming collective development, processing and market oriented production reorganization.

The workshop suggested some solutions to limit the negative aspects of contract farming and to encourage farmers to participate in contract farming to get benefits from the agricultural value chain:

- Create a more favorable business environment to encourage both

domestic and foreign enterprises to invest in agrifood trading. The participation of many enterprises in the market will create necessary competitiveness to fully exploit and increase farmers' production capacity

- Improve the legal environment, particularly articles on punishment of contract violations to improve contract performance
- Encourage and assist the development of farmers' organizations as a linkage channel between farmers and enterprises
- Encourage and create a favorable environment for enterprises and collectives coordination in improving product quality and establishing trademark for each commodity

The policy implications of these suggestions will be taken into consideration for a future study under the "Making Markets Work Better for the Poor" project.

Source: ADB

Farmers taking a lead role in research to improve drainage in the Red River Delta

The irrigation and drainage systems in the Red River Delta were designed and constructed in the 1950's and 60's. These systems are usually complex with their infrastructure serving both irrigation and drainage. Under the recently completed first Red River Delta Water Resources Sector Project cofinanced by ADB, many pumping stations were constructed or rehabilitated. Increases in agricultural production have, however, remained less than expected, probably because of physical constraints or problems in the management of the drainage canals connected to the pumping stations.

Under the Second Red River Basin Sector Project initiated in 2002 and co-financed by ADB, AFD and the Government of the Netherlands, a participatory research program has been initiated to investigate the effectiveness of drainage systems. This program is unique for Viet Nam as farmers, local communities and a local NGO will play a key role in the program's field assessments and in the formulation of measures to improve the drainage performance. The

Vietnam Institute for Water Resources Research supported by the Wageningen University and Research Centre of the Netherlands is executing the research program.

To obtain the active involvement of the local stakeholders, the program has adopted the "Participatory Learning and Action" approach.

In this approach, the voices of the people living the project area (both agricultural and non-agricultural), their aspirations, needs and potentials are the point of departure for the development of improvement options for the drainage systems. The research is undertaken in the service areas of two pumping stations, i.e. the Phan Dong pumping station in Bac Ninh Province and the Trieu Duong pumping station in Hung Yen Province. The irrigation and drainage management companies in charge of the two pumping stations are collaborating in the research program. The program's field activities will be undertaken during the 2005 rainy season and in November and December proposals for improved drainage performance will be finalized in workshops with the local stakeholders.

Source: ADB

Poverty reduction gets a boost in Bac Ninh

This year's spring rice season has stimulated an unusual level of interest and activity in many of the poorest communes of Bac Ninh Province. With support from a grant financed by the Japanese Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFRP), almost five thousand farming households have embarked on a campaign to lift their agricultural income. These households have recognized that their income will always hover around the poverty line unless rice yields can be lifted substantially.

As a first step in their campaign, the farmers have decided to upgrade their agricultural knowledge and technique. With support from provincial experts, the farmers have begun attending training courses on each stage of rice production. Unlike the normal lecture-based approaches, this training involves 29 village demonstration sites covering a total of 125 hectares. Already, in preparing nurseries for the current season, the women have learned to apply seed at the optimum rate, abandon their traditional use of urea in favour

of organic phosphorous fertilizer. The old method of leaving their bag of seed rice in the pond has also been abandoned in favour of a simple but more scientific, leaching process and the women now know exactly the right growth stage at which to lift the seedlings.

The improved technology will also involve upgrading the quality of seed, increasing organic fertilizer rates and introducing integrated pest management. Through these changes, the farmers confidently expect to lift average crop yield by 30% (to 6.5 tonnes per ha). To monitor their experiences, each of the farmers has started a logbook that will allow her to evaluate the costs and benefits of the new technology for next season.

But for five communes in Gia Binh, Thuan Thanh and Luong Tai Districts, improving rice technology is just the first step in increasing farm incomes. Each of these communes has formed a Rural Development Support Committee (RDSC) to tackle more fundamental problems. For the RDSCs, the priority task is to overhaul the dilapidated irrigation systems on which they have depended for decades. An early problem faced however, is the mismatch between funds available and the large number of canals and infrastructure to be renovated. To resolve this problem the RDSCs have learned how to select options according to their poverty reduction impact. Using a simple formula, the farmers calculate the priority for each option based on how much it will cost, how many poor people will benefit and how much their incomes will increase.

For some farmers, particularly those from female headed households, the small farm holding (average size of less than a quarter of a hectare) will never allow escape from poverty. For these households, the RDSC has investigated a large number of livelihood options. Village women's groups have finally selected sow raising as the activity that will best allow them to maintain their household tasks while boosting their income. Detailed plans are now being finalised to train several hundred women in modern sow breeding technology. Each of the women has been selected from the poorest households in the 32 villages involved in the Rural Development Support (RDS) program.

The RDS program represents a new approach by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure genuine participation in rural development projects that it finances.

RDS is an innovative component of the \$156.2 million Second Red River Basin Sector Project, supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD) and the Netherlands Government. This project aims to sustainably increase rural incomes in the densely populated Red River Basin. A major portion of the investment is earmarked for upgrading the aged irrigation infrastructure that typifies the region. An amount equivalent to 25% of the construction costs will be set aside for the RDS program. Through its RDS activities, the project hopes to ensure a high level of poverty reduction and a commitment to participatory irrigation management.

As well as focusing on Vietnam's highest priority of poverty reduction, the RDS program is also being implemented in a manner that gives practical support to the Government's decentralization and village democracy policies. RDS committees are based on elections held in village meetings of poor households. Provided they meet simple guidelines and help boost farm incomes, the use of the investment funds will be decided entirely at Commune level by the RDSC itself. Women too are given special emphasis under the RDS program and at least half of those elected to the RDSC must be women.

Source: ADB

Ethnic Minorities and Gender Issues

in Agricultural Extension

The study "Ethnic Minorities and Gender Issues in Agricultural Extension" has been carried out by the subgroup on Agricultural Extension for the Poor and the Ethnic Minority Working Group in 2004.

The study aimed to:

- Review agricultural and forestry extension policy in the light of gender equality and ethnic diversity
- Analyse factors that hinder women and ethnic minority farmers the access to, the participation in and the benefits of extension activities
- Document experiences from various projects and programs (government, donor, INGO) on extension in relation to gender equality, ethnic diversity
- Recommend changes in policies and practices concerning mainstreaming gender equality and ethnic diversity

Main recommendations drawn up by the findings of this study are to:

- Emphasize poverty reduction and social equity in the mission of the extension system and assign clear roles and responsibilities of the different types of extension services providers (public, private) in this respect
- Emphasize the extension agent's tasks of providing livelihood management advise and of facilitating farmers' problem solving
- Enhance the participation of women and ethnic minority farmers in planning, implementing and monitoring extension activities
- Focus extension messages and transfer methods more clearly to women and ethnic minority farmers
- Provide a legal framework and assistance in establishing voluntary farmers association for promoting technology transfer, input delivery and outlet organisation, in particular for women and ethnic minority farmers.
- Increase farmers' decision in extension planning by allocating part of the funds to them
- Strengthen the linkages between farmers, extension services and research in order to generate appropriate technologies and integrate local knowledge and experiences
- Focus extension activities to market opportunities with special attention for access of and benefits for women and ethnic minority farmers

For more information or a copy of the report, please contact Nico Janssen (nico@snv.org.vn) or Joep Slaats (slaats.boeni@hn.vnn.vn)

Source: Oxfam GB

New ADB President Vows to Meet the

Challenge of Fighting Poverty in Asia

MANILA, PHILIPPINES - 1 February 2005

- Haruhiko Kuroda took the reins of the Asian Development Bank today as its eighth President and immediately called on the institution to re-invigorate itself to meet the challenges of operating in the world's most dynamic region.

In his first day in office, Mr. Kuroda outlined the vision of a bank that works in close consultation with the nations of Asia to provide effective development assistance. "As the Asia and Pacific Region is experiencing dynamic and rapid change, ADB - as the "Family Doctor" - should respond to the region's needs in a flexible and timely manner," he said.

Mr. Kuroda, who was unanimously elected ADB President by its Board of Governors in November 2004, acknowledged that he was coming into office at a critical time when several countries in the region are struggling with the effects of the recent tsunami.

For the region as a whole, the new President singled out poverty as the primary challenge. Though poverty in developing Asia has declined from 34% in 1990 to 22% in 2002, most of this reduction has been isolated to a few areas.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) continue to be the major guideposts of progress in poverty reduction, Mr. Kuroda said. But they should be fulfilled with sensitivity to local circumstances and priorities. He also noted that the most vulnerable people in society should never be forgotten in the race to greater economic growth.

Mr. Kuroda noted that foreign direct investment (FDI) is vital to economic growth and poverty reduction, and said that ADB is committed to helping build healthy business environments in the region.

Building physical infrastructure is also critical for economic growth, and institutions such as ADB play a vital role in the process by ensuring that environmental and social safeguards are maintained. "Even if financing comes from the private sector, the role of the public sector is crucial," he said.

Another important aspect of economic growth in Asia will be the promotion of alliances among its countries. He called regional integration initiatives "a special and unique mission of a regional development bank."

As for the institution itself, Mr. Kuroda said ADB will continue to pursue the aggressive Reform Agenda that it has undertaken to make it a more effective development organization. He said the bank needs to be more client-oriented and that it should deal

better with member governments and stream-line its procedures.

Source: ADB

ADB increases capital for Vietnam to US\$ 225 million

Hanoi, 24 February 2005 - The General Director of Mekong Department, Asia Development Bank (ADB) said ADB decided to increase the capital for Vietnam to US\$ 225 million in 2005 in view of well-implemented ADB investment projects.

In his meet with Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem, Mr. M.Nag highly appreciated impressive achievements of Vietnam in efforts to maintain the macro economy and implementation of hunger elimination and poverty reduction and confirmed that Vietnam played an important role in development cooperation program in Sub - Mekong region.

Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem highly valued ADB development projects in Mekong River region, and at the same time expressed wishes and expectation of further supports for Vietnam, Lao and Cambodia in Mekong sub-region development projects, especially the development of infrastructure, transportation and technical assistance.

Source: VNA

Vietnam reports severe drought "devastating" Central provinces

Hanoi, 26 February 2005 - Severe drought is devastating central highlands and southern central coastal provinces, causing water shortages for both production and the daily lives of local people. Dr Nguyen Dinh Ninh, deputy head of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's Water Resources Department, told VNA (Vietnamese News Agency) that the central coastal provinces of Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan and the central highlands provinces of Dac Lac, Dac Nong, Lam Dong, and Gia Lai are the worst hit by drought. Some places have had no rain since last September.

There are around 2,800 hectares of rice fields and 68,000 hectares of coffee crops in Dac Lac province either damaged or ruined by the drought.

Farmers in Lam Dong Province cannot harvest anything from 1,200 hectares of rice, maize and cassava fields. Some 10-15 per cent of families in Dac Lac Province and almost 130,000 families in Gia Lai Province are suffering a severe shortage of safe water. Dr Ninh said: "Water for agricultural production

shall be temporarily suspended to ensure water supply for the locals' daily living." He added that wells will be dug in places without irrigation systems while more reservoirs will be built in such areas.

Source: Disaster Management Working Group -
Viet Nam