

MPED SUCCESS STORY — VIETNAM

This article is part of a series written to highlight some of the success stories from FCM's Municipal Partners for Economic Development (MPED) program. MPED projects seek to improve local governance and economic policy development around the world while, at the same time, emphasizing the importance of gender equality and environmental sustainability. From 2011 to 2014, the District of North Vancouver, Canada, worked with the City of Soc Trang, Vietnam, to support and improve local economic development (LED) in the City.

The City of Soc Trang collaborates with the University of Can Tho to improve farming practices

The Government of Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has developed the Vietnam Good Agriculture Practice (VietGAP), which is a methodology to support better farming using more organic, sustainable practices. VietGAP is a 50-step adaptation of the slightly more sophisticated Global Good Agriculture Practice (Global G.A.P.¹) approach, which has 80 steps. The VietGAP methodology and value-chain analysis approach were brought to the City of Soc Trang through a collaborative project with the University of Can Tho.

"The University of Can Tho provided us with the theory. The City is providing support for the implementation," says the leader of the Association of Farmers of Ward 8, who helped find farmers to join and champion the initiative. The University of Can Tho was also paid to undertake soil testing, which was needed to inform farming practices.

Farmers tend to be conservative in their adoption of new ideas and risk-taking. Farmers in Soc Trang are no different, and they were only willing to try new ideas if they had a formal contract from the City in place to provide them with some sort of guarantee. At the present time, 13 farmers from Soc Trang have received VietGAP certification, and a further 52 are part of the current expansion plan.

"I benefit from VietGAP by saving costs on seeds (quantity) and fertilizers (including chemicals)," says Mr. Thuc Dang Tran, who is a member of the group of

farmers certified by VietGAP. "Vegetables produced in a more organic, sustainable way don't yet fetch a higher market price.² Nonetheless, the savings we get from our collaboration represent an additional 5-20 per cent profit, depending on the crop we cultivate. Most of my produce is sold at the market outlet that was set up with assistance from the City in Ward 2. I am currently training 15 other farmers to join our more sustainable farming movement."



¹The G.A.P. standard is primarily designed to reassure consumers about how food is produced on the farm by minimizing the detrimental environmental impacts of farming operations, reducing the use of chemical inputs and ensuring a responsible approach to worker health and safety, as well as animal welfare. www.globalgap.org.

²The City secured a contract setting the price farmers receive at 500 VND/kg above market rates. This represents a very small difference compared to non-organic competitors.

www.fcm.ca



FEDERATION
OF CANADIAN
MUNICIPALITIES

FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE DES
MUNICIPALITÉS



Foreign Affairs, Trade and
Development Canada

Affaires étrangères, Commerce
et Développement Canada



The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' international programs are undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

Another farmer, Mr. De, is growing rice seedlings under a contract with the City. “I’ve been a farmer since 1975 and inherited the farm from my parents,” he says. “I had always used traditional rice growing methods until 2011, when I agreed to take part in this pilot initiative. Traditionally, farmers plant their fields for three purposes, using different seeds. Part of the crop is to be sold at market, part is for personal consumption, and part is for seedlings. All my life, I’ve been very sceptical about trying new things, so I fully understand why most farmers are reluctant to change their practices. Mentalities will change when people see the benefits of new practices.”



Mr. De is currently involved in a City program to grow rice for seeds for other farmers in the area. “I am too old to work on the farm, so I hire two people to do the work,” he says. “The City provides me with a contract to sell the seeds I provide to local farmers.”

Mr. Ngan, chairman of the City of Soc Trang, says that local governments have to promote the adoption of VietGAP. “Our project with farmers in ward 4 is not just about contributing to the production of more sustainable and more organic food; it also provides direction to farmers, and they really appreciate it,” he says. “The participation of the University of Can Tho in this initiative has been an important part of our success.”