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please share your knowledge with us!*

1. Development results management to be discussed

Ha Noi, 16/01/2007: The third international roundtable on development results management will be held in Ha Noi from Feb. 5-8, announced the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI).

The conference will be co-organized by the MPI, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development, the ministry added.

The roundtable will provide an opportunity for representatives from various countries and organizations to discuss and share experiences and

solutions on improving aid effectiveness and managing for a results oriented approach.

It will bring together approximately 350 participants, including high-level representatives from international organizations, development and cooperation donor agencies, ministers, deputy ministers and experts from different countries, as well as representatives from diplomatic agencies in Viet Nam.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam is expected to attend the opening and closing sessions.

Source: MPI

2. Approval of ODA attracting and utilization proposal.

Hanoi: Prime Minister has just approved the proposal for the orientation of ODA attracting and utilization period 2006-2010. *(This document can be obtained from ISG website).*

Prioritized areas for ODA utilization include agricultural and rural development in combination with poverty reduction; construction of synchronous and modernized economic infrastructure, construction of social infrastructure, protection of the environment and natural resources management, institutional capacity strengthening and human resources development, technology transfer, enhancing the research and development capability.

The proposal also forecasts the possibility of attracting and disbursing ODA; priority sectors, fields, and areas for ODA attraction and solutions for effective utilization of ODA.

Source: VNA

3. Agriculture to get technical overhaul by 2010: ministry

Ha Noi, 18-01-2007: Viet Nam plans to mechanise more than fifty per cent of its entire agriculture industry by 2010.

A report released recently by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) said that by 2010 about 90 per cent of agricultural products preservation and processing work would have been mechanised.

Bach Quoc Khang, Director of the Department for Agro-forestry Processing and Salt Making, MARD, said in order to achieve the set targets, the ministry has initiated a series of measures which focus on the restructuring of agriculture production.

Khang said pilot mechanisation projects would first be introduced to major rice producing regions and other agricultural centres. Upon successful completion of the projects they would be then replicated in other regions.

Phan Thanh Tinh, Director of the Institute for Agriculture Electrical Engineering and Post Harvest Technology, said over the past 20 years of doi moi or renewal, the agro-forestry electrical engineering sector has seen many advances.

Compared with 1990, the number of tractors now in use within the country has increased by 9.5 times and water pumps used in irrigation projects have increased by 7.9 times

Tinh said, on average about 67 per cent of cultivated lands were ploughed by tractors. Farmers nation-wide used more than half a million rice harvesting and threshing machines, an increase of ten times that of 1990.

Over the last 20 years, the institute has conducted numerous studies to develop technical procedure in rice seedling and sugar cane production.

Tinh said the technical procedures developed by his institute for sugar cane plantations was honoured with a special prize for science and technology innovation in 2002.

The procedures initiated by the institute has enabled sugar cane productivity to increase by 30-35 per cent.

Science and technology has been at the forefront of reducing post harvest losses and stabilising the consumption market for agriculture products.

Tinh said some machines and equipment manufactured by his institution, particularly drying equipment has helped farmers reduce post harvest losses to 12 per cent for rice, down from 13-16 per cent in 1994 and 15 per cent for vegetables and roots down from 20-30 per cent a decade ago.

The use of high technology in agriculture has increased export turnover from processed agro-forestry products by over 20 per cent per annum.

According to Tinh, the mechanisation drive has spread to amongst others, the husbandry industry. Compared with 1990, the number of machines used in the industry has increased by 20 times, amounting to 45,000 machines nation-wide. A particular push has been made to use equipment that has been produced in the country. "Vietnamese made machinery costs between 30-50 per cent of the cost of imported models and allows farmers to utilise the saved capital in other areas of production," Tinh said.

Source: VNS

4. International Roundtable to Discuss Improving Results from Aid

Hanoi, Viet Nam - More than 400 experts and government officials from 40 countries, 33 aid and donor agencies, and about 30 NGOs and private companies will come together in Hanoi, Viet Nam, next week to discuss how to better improve the results made possible with development aid.

The Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results will run from 5 to 8 February. The event is hosted by the Government of Vietnam and sponsored by the African Development Bank; ADB; the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and its members; the Inter-American Development Bank; the United Nations Development Programme; and the World Bank.

Source: ADB web

5. Checking the use of chemical substance in preserving fruits and vegetable

Hanoi: Responding to the request by Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of Agro-Forestry Product Processing and Salt Industry dispatched an inspection mission to some Southern provinces like Binh Thuan, Ho Chi Minh city, Tien Giang and Ben Tre from 22nd Nov. to 8th Dec. 2006.

It was found that almost of units involving in fruits, vegetable business thereof used allowable chemical substances such as Umikai, Chitosan, Liquid Wax, Ozon, Anolit, ect. Some units that were still using SO₂, Ethrel, CaCl₂, were recommended by the local authorities to limit the utilization of these chemicals and control their residues. For example, Tien Giang's Provincial Department of Natural Resources and Environment guided the logan producers who used SO₂ to set up the SO₂ revoking system to minimize environment pollution and control residues.

Though the inspection did not find out any special chemical substance, the collectors and big fruit granary owners released that some fellow traders intended to use unclear originated chemical substances in order to lengthen the preservation time and increase products' attraction. Hence, the state management in this field should be strengthened to ensure the interests of consumers, as well as increase the competitiveness of Vietnam's fruits and vegetable.

Source: Department of Agro-Forestry Products Processing and Salt Industry

6. Boosting Agriculture Science and Technology in Viet Nam

Manila, Philippines, 2 January 2007: – A US\$30 million loan from ADB will contribute to the sustainable growth of Viet Nam's agriculture sector by helping improve and modernize agriculture science and technology in the country.

Over the past decade, Viet Nam's agriculture sector has grown rapidly. From a net importer of rice in the late 1980s, the country has become one of the largest rice exporters in the world and now exports large quantities of commercial crops.

The Government plans to further improve the quality of the country's produce, diversify into higher value products and markets, increase productivity and value addition, and improve technology development.

In practice, access to new technologies by farmers and agro-based enterprises is essential as Viet Nam's agriculture is gradually shifting its focus from increased production volumes to increased production values.

The project will address critical issues in three key areas – agricultural research, extension, and rural-based training. It aims to promote more client-oriented activities with improved mechanisms for disseminating technology that reflects demand,

develop better physical and human resources, and improve linkages among the three covered areas.

To boost agricultural research and capacity training, it will fund research proposals that respond to the sector's practical needs, support further training and graduate studies for staff of agricultural research institutes, and upgrade research and laboratory equipment in selected institutes.

It will also improve farmers' access to agricultural extension services, or information or education, in mainly upland or remote areas in five provinces – Dak Nong, Nghe An, Ninh Thuan, Quang Nam, and Thanh Hoa. Training, such as on business skills, advanced agricultural science and technology, and integrated pest management, will be provided based on needs. The project will also support on-farm demonstration trials through contractual arrangements with regional or national research institutes to strengthen the links between research and extension.

Last, teachers will be trained in 10 rural-based technical and vocational training schools where school equipment and facilities will be upgraded under the project.

The project complements the Agriculture Sector Development Program, which was approved in 2002 with a \$90 million loan from ADB.

ADB's new loan, from its concessional Asian Development Fund, carries a 32-year term, including a grace period of 8 years. Interest is charged at 1% per annum during the grace period and 1.5% subsequently.

The Government will contribute \$10 million equivalent toward the project's total estimated cost of \$40 million. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is the executing agency for the project, which is due for completion around December 2011.

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development, and good governance. Established in 1966, it is owned by 66 members – 47 from the region. In 2005, it approved loans and grants for projects totaling \$6.95 billion, and technical assistance amounting to \$198.8 million.

Source: ADB

7. Large-scaled animal husbandry a must by 2008

Hai Phong, 20/01/2007: Northern provinces have been told to finalise its master-plan on developing animal and poultry farms by 2008 so as to increase the number of farms by 30 percent annually.

The target was set by experts at a conference held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the northern port city of Hai Phong from Jan. 18-19 amid increasing threats to outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease as well as bird flu.

Once the target is achieved, farms can make up between 45 and 50 percent of the nation's meat supply by 2010 and between 60 and 65 percent by 2015, said participants.

Over the past five years, animal and poultry farms have developed fast nationwide at a growth rate of 58 percent annually, reaching over 17,720 farms in total from 1,761 in 2001.

Animal husbandry on large scale would help it easy to apply scientific and technological advances to all steps such as hybridization and animal feeding, thus contributing to a considerable improvement in product quality and production output.

Source: VNA

8. Central Highlands province targets 4,200-ha tea plantation

Lam Dong, 11/01/2007: The Central Highlands province of Lam Dong is working towards establishing a 4,200 ha-plantation of high quality tea by 2010, the largest of its kind in Viet Nam.

To this end, measures aimed at improving and speeding up tea cultivation have been taken at all local tea farms, according to the Agricultural and Rural Development Department.

To date, the province has nearly 2,000 ha of high-quality tea.

Lam Dong, the country's tea basket, produces up 27 percent of the national output.

Source: VNA

9. MARD launched its Work Plan 2007

Hanoi, 11-12/1/2007: During the two day meeting of 11 and 12/1/2007, MARD held its meeting to review the sector work plan 2006 implementation and launched the new plan 2007. MARD Minister Cao Duc Phat and his Vice Ministers chaired the meeting. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung participated and provided guidance concerning the tasks of the sector for 2007.

Source: <http://www.mard.gov.vn/>

10. Czech Republic finances sustainable agriculture development project

Thua Thien-Hue, 23/01/2007: The Czech Republic will provide nearly 350,000 USD for the central province of Thua Thien-Hue to launch a project on sustainable agriculture development in its outskirts district.

The project, aimed at improving living conditions for the people in Phong My commune, Phong Dien district, will help diversify and accelerate agriculture production by boosting agro-forestry combination, developing irrigation systems, efficiently using water resources and improving post-harvest technology.

It will also provide training for local authorities and people to help them improve their natural resources management capacity.

The project will be carried out until 2009 through the co-ordination between the Hue Agro-Forestry College and the Prague University of Czech Republic.

Source: VNA

11. Denmark helps develop flower growing in Da Lat

Ha Noi, 12/01/2007: Danida Copenhagen of Denmark has decided to assist three projects on development of flower growing in Da Lat, the Central Highlands province of Lam Dong, through a programme on support of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), according to the Ministry of Trade.

Among the three projects with a total capital of 4.9 billion VND, the Dalat Hasfarm Company's project will receive more than 2.9 billion VND to provide technical assistance to farmers in growing high-grade flowers, flower gathering, post-harvest protection as well as purchasing flowers for exports.

More than 600 million VND, meanwhile, will be provided to a Da Lat Flower Association, aimed at uniting flower growers in a professional organisation.

A project of the Mai Nguyen Co. Ltd will receive more than 1.3 billion VND to develop post-harvest services for flower growers and to build a model of high-grade flower production for export to Europe, the US and Japan.

The steering board for the programme on support of SMEs in Lam Dong province said that these projects, which will be implemented in two years, are a good start for change in flower production in Da Lat in the future, particularly in terms of farming technique and marketing.

Source: VNA

12. More than 29 trillion VND invested in farm economy in 2006

Hanoi, Jan 2007: Farm owners invested some 29.32 trillion VND (roughly 1.83 billion USD) in intensive farming and production expansion in 2006, an increase of more than 90 percent over 2001, according to the General Statistics Office (GSO).

Preliminary figures of a GSO survey also showed that the average investment capital of each farm ranged from 144.4 million VND to 575.5 million VND, depending on cultivation areas.

According to the survey, together with the increasing investment capital scale, farming economy has been developing toward commodity production in line with the market.

The country's farms earned a combined revenue of 19.82 trillion VND, 3.6 times higher than that of 2001.

The development of farming economy, especially in the southeastern region, Central Highlands and the Red River Delta, has contributed to creating jobs and increasing income for labourers in rural areas.

Source: Vietnam Agency-VNECONOMY updated: 11/01/2007

13. UN Programmes boosted to support national fight against Avian Influenza

HA NOI, January 9, 2007 – The Second Phase of the Joint Government-United Nations Programme on prevention and control of avian influenza (AI) is signed today along with three other AI-related projects of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), as the country faces a renewed threat with confirmed disease outbreaks.

Built on the success of the First Phase of the Joint Programme which mainly dealt with emergencies of prevention and containment of the spread of avian influenza, the programme and projects signed today will support Viet Nam's Integrated Operational Programme on Avian and Human Influenza (OPI), 2006-2010, also known as the "Green Book".

The Joint Government – UN Programme aims to enhance coordination between the Government of Viet Nam and international agencies supporting the implementation of the OPI. It will focus on building capacity for progressive control and prevention of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in poultry in the country, in order to minimize incidence of human infections, reduce the risk of the occurrence of a potential human influenza pandemic, and to take necessary measures to reduce the impact of a pandemic, if it does occur.

A key area of focus which will continue to be a priority and integrated in all the programme activities is to increase public awareness aimed at bringing about effective behaviour change and eradication of HPAI from poultry in Viet Nam.

Meanwhile, the projects implemented by FAO include activities such as field epidemiology training, support for mass vaccination campaigns and post vaccination monitoring, strengthening of laboratory capacity and national disease surveillance; operational research in the role of wild birds and free-range ducks and; vaccine efficacy trials.

"The Government of Viet Nam highly appreciates the valuable support from the UN agencies in our fight against Avian Influenza. The Joint Programme has played a significant role in the development of the National Operational Programme and now in its implementation" said Dr. Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and Chairman of the National Steering Committee. "We are also grateful for the tremendous support

from the Donor community, which will be important for achieving the targets set out in this difficult area".

The Joint Programme is led by the National Steering Committee on Avian Influenza with active participation of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Ministry of Health and other ministries such as Culture and Information and Education and Training. Four UN Agencies including FAO, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) work closely with national ministries.

"The Government-UN Joint Programme on Avian and Human Influenza has shown that together with strong national leadership, coherent UN efforts can make a change. We are pleased to see how the two key ministries and the UN agencies work together in an integrated approach to address both animal and human health aspects of Avian Influenza", said UN Resident Coordinator John Hendra.

Mr Andrew Speedy, FAO Representative in Vietnam reaffirmed FAO full commitment to closely working with the Government and other partners. He said the First Phase of the Joint Programme had demonstrated that strong spirit of collaboration in the right direction had led to achievement of targets with more cost effective use of the available resources.

"The reappearance of bird flu in South Vietnam last month serves as a timely reminder of the need to be fully prepared in facing this and other infectious disease threats. The establishment of an Early Warning and Response System and the development of a Field Epidemiology Training Programme with support from Phase II of the Joint Programme are important steps in the right direction" said Dr Troedsson, WHO Representative in Vietnam.

The first phase of the Joint Government-UN Programme received support from eight donors - Australia, Canada, Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and UNDP-through a single channel. The Governments of Japan and the United States also provided parallel support. Australia, Canada, Finland, and Luxembourg continue to support the Second Phase along with a new grant from New Zealand. Bilateral funding agreements between the UNDP and Australia and New Zealand were also signed at today's ceremony. This US\$ 16.2 million Phase of the Joint Programme has secured US\$ 14.7 million in funding to date. Together with almost US\$ 6.9 million spent in Phase I, the total budget of the Programme is US\$ 23.1 million.

Bilateral projects funded by the Governments of the United States, Japan and Ireland through the FAO amount to around US\$ 4 million.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr. William Tweddell, Australian Ambassador to Viet Nam said: "We are pleased to see concerted efforts by the UN and Government Agencies through the Joint

Programme and other related initiatives. The Integrated Operational Programme has set a sound framework for national and international efforts to fight against Avian Influenza in Viet Nam. Enhanced donor coordination is vital to the successful implementation of the Programme and we are pleased to see that the UN is taking the lead in supporting the Government in this area”.

Viet Nam recently announced avian influenza outbreak in three Southern provinces. This is the first outbreak reported since December 2005. The three main waves of outbreaks of avian influenza in Viet Nam since late 2003 have claimed 42 human lives and affected eight million Vietnamese households, the majority of whom are poor.

For further information, please contact:

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14. Localities urged to step up fight against avian influenza

Ha Noi, 12/01/2007: The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has sent missions to central and southern provinces to urge the local authorities to take urgent measures to prevent the spreading of avian influenza, including supplemental vaccination for poultry.

In Ha Noi, the city's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is speeding up the development of a system of abattoirs meeting the requirements of necessary environmental and food hygiene.

The department has stepped up verification of poultry meat and eggs. Those without certificates of quarantines will be done away.

The capital city plans this year to stop poultry cultivation in its city centre.

Southern provinces of Soc Trang, Kien Giang and Long An have established quarantine posts in districts to prevent transportation of ducks. Veterinary branches in central Quang Ngai province and southern Kien Giang province has also been intensifying poultry vaccination and sterilisation of open market abattoirs and breeding farms witnessing outbreaks. They also are verifying legal status of egg hatching farms to sanction households illegally hatching eggs.

The Veterinary Department reported the bird flu's resurgence has been found in five southern localities, namely Ca Mau, Bac Lieu, Hau Giang, Vinh Long and Kien Giang.

Source: VNA

15. Government issues Decree on plant quarantine

Ha Noi, 5/01/2007: On January 5, the Government issued Decree 02/2007/ND-CP which is made of seven chapters and 31 articles regulating the inspection of plants in import, export, cross-border trade, temporary import for export, temporary export for import, transit; the quarantine of domestic plants and the treatment of objects subject to plant quarantine.

The Decree is based on the Ordinance on Plant Protection and Quarantine issued on August 08, 2001 and designed to replace the Regulation on Plant Inspection issued attached to Government Decree 58/2002/NĐ-CP dated on June 03, 2002. The Decree creates a legal framework to regulate activities of Vietnamese and international individuals and organizations in relation to plant quarantine on the Vietnamese territories. The inspection of imported plants is mentioned in Chapter II, inspection of exported plants in Chapter III, inspection of transit plants in Chapter IV, inspection of domestic plants in Chapter V, and treatment of objects subject to plant quarantine in Chapter VI.

As well as the technical terms available in the Regulation on Plant Inspection, the Decree also provides new terms with a detailed explanation such as harmful creatures, pests to be put under control but not plant quarantine, pests to be controlled, exotic harmful creatures, useful creatures, analysis of pest risks, pest monitor, similarity of plant quarantine measures, and crop species imported for the first time.

The Decree stipulates the responsibility of the object's owner, the plant quarantine authority, concerned public agencies, People's Committees at all levels as well as the term of reference of plant quarantine staff. Different from the previous regulation that stipulates that the plant quarantine authority has the mandate to monitor the plant inspection, the new Decree identifies it as the responsibility of plant quarantine authorities at all levels. This change is meant to improve the sense of responsibility and efficiency of the plant quarantine authority.

Besides the practices banned in the Regulation (bringing the pests that are under control and exotic harmful living creatures at any stage of evolution into Vietnam and spreading the living pests that are under control to immune areas), the Decree also bans the bringing into Vietnam in any form plants with soil and objects that are in the list of pests and plants to be analyzed for risks. The object owner violating regulations will be fined with civil penalty.

The Decree will take effect 15 days after it is publicized in the Official Gazette.

Source: VNGOVNet

16. Poorest economic region to depend on forests and animals

Ha Noi, 31/01/2007: animal husbandry and forestry will become key resources for the northern mountainous region to lift itself out of being the poorest region in Viet Nam, said the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

Deputy Minister Hua Duc Nhi said MARD is finalising its strategy of forest development, giving top priority to forest materials in service of production, thus improving the income of forest growers.

The five-year strategy calls for the expansion of forest materials to almost 2.4 million ha, making up one-third of the region's total forest areas. These forests will be mostly reserved for the paper industry, plank wood production, construction materials and special foods.

Once the plan is achieved, the northern region will produce 770,000 tonnes of paper pulp and 150,000 tonnes of plank annually, thus meeting 70 percent of the export-oriented wood industry's demand for raw materials by 2020, which is estimated at 20 million cubic metre of wood a year.

Domestic supply has so far met just 20 percent of raw materials for the export-oriented wood processing.

In regard to animal husbandry, MARD Minister Cao Duc Phat said the region is doing well in tapping its vast meadows and locals' rich experience in animal husbandry to improve the quality of its livestock.

"The trend puts it that raising cows and buffalos for meat should be the best way for the northern mountainous provinces to develop their economy," said the minister.

In its 2010 strategy, MARD has set forth a target for the region to almost quadruple the livestock production value from 3.3 trillion VND at present to 13 trillion VND.

The northern mountainous region comprises of 15 provinces covering a territory of over 100,000 sq. km. and having a 11.8 million strong population, making special advantages for the region.

However, mountains strongly divide the region into small areas and the economy is mostly based on small-scaled production as the population has a low education level and the processing industry is still underdeveloped.

Source: VNA

17. MARD sum-up the pilot of one-door policy

Hanoi, 18th Jan. 2007: The Steering Committee of Administrative Reform under MARD organized a sum-up workshop on pilot "one-door" policy period 2005-2006 which was chaired by Vice Minister Nguyen Ngoc Thuat cum Vice chairman of the Steering Committee.

Participating the workshop is representatives of the Government Steering Committee of Administrative Reform, Secretariat of the government Steering Committee of Administrative Reform; members of MARD Administrative Reform Steering Committee, and representatives of departments, party committee, labour union, youth union in MARD.

Source: MARD

18. Natural disasters cause heavy loss in Vietnam

Hanoi, January 2007: Natural calamities last year including hailstorms, whirlwinds, flash floods and typhoons caused a total loss of US\$1.17 billion – the heaviest economic loss during the past 25 years, according to the Central Steering Committee for Flood and Storm Control.

At a meeting held in Hanoi on January 3, committee chairman Cao Duc Phat pointed to lessons drawn from two most destructive typhoons, Xangsane and Durian, saying that a number of localities and people failed to take prompt actions and strictly follow the guidance of the committee, in the face of the approaching typhoons.

To minimise human and property losses in 2007, Mr Phat said it is imperative to raise public awareness of the need to take preventative measures against such natural calamities and to upgrade the storm warning system in order to provide timely and precise forecasts.

Mr Phat said that the committee will rebuild storm shelters for fishing boats and reinforce the river and sea dyke systems by planting protective forests upstream and in coastal areas.

Source: Disaster Management Working Group-NDMP

19. Ha Tay builds villages for bamboo exports

Ha Tay, 27/01/2007: The northern province of Ha Tay developed 317 villages specialising in producing bamboo and rattan products for export, creating 108,500 local jobs.

The province also established the Bamboo and Rattan Producing Association which will support villages in improving competitiveness and training activities.

The province exported between 85-90 million bamboo and rattan products with a total value of 860 billion VND (53.75 million USD) last year.

Source: VNA

20. Agricultural production grows 3.1 percent in 2006

Ha Noi, 02/01/2007: Despite natural calamities and epidemics, agricultural production grew by 3.1 percent in 2006, with the highest growth rate of 7.7 percent recorded in the livestock breeding sector.

In 2006, the output of rice, a main agricultural product and the biggest hard currency earner among the country's farm produce, was estimated at 36.2 million tonnes, an increase of 400,000 tonnes over last year. The rice production increased in the central and northern regions while the Mekong Delta, the country's biggest rice producer for export, had a bad harvest due to droughts and plant disease. As a result rice prices have continually risen.

High increases were also seen in the output of rubber (58 percent), coffee (50 percent), and pepper (26.4 percent) over last year.

According to the General Statistic Office, four of the country's nine products earning more than 1 billion USD from exports in 2006 are farm produce. They are wooden products with an export value of 1.9 billion USD, rubber (nearly 1.3 billion USD), rice (1.2 billion USD) and coffee (over 1.1 billion USD).

Viet Nam's wooden products have been exported to 120 foreign markets. However, the sector had to import materials for production and most wooden product exporters are small enterprises.

Many major rubber producers in the world, including Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, have reduced their rubber production while the world demand for latex was on the rise, which resulted in a high increase of latex price from 1,600 to 2,000 USD. Viet Nam's rubber export in 2006 increased by 31 percent in volume and 78 percent in value. However, the country still mainly exported unprocessed and semi-processed latex.

Experts from the Trade Ministry said that the number of agricultural products which earned modest sums from exports also had great potential for export in the near future. They are cassava, cashew nuts, fruit fine art and handicrafts made from materials supplied by the agricultural sector.

According to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Cao Duc Phat, the development of the agricultural sector has ensured food security for the country, which sees an annual increase in population of 1.2 million people, and provided farm produce for export.

In an effort to raise the effectiveness of agriculture, the ministry plans to restructure agricultural production and rural economy, focusing on promoting development of livestock breeding, forest, industry and rural handicraft, diversifying crops to increase the productivity of land use.

Source: VNA

21. Agriculture urged to focus on value

Ha Noi, 12-01-2007: Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung has called on the agriculture industry to hasten the switch from agricultural production to agricultural services while boosting production of products with higher economic value.

Addressing a meeting to review production during 2006 in the capital yesterday, PM Dung asked agriculture leaders across the country to make plans on increasing agricultural output while switching the economic structure in rural areas.

Dung said one of the primary tasks of the sector this year was to adjust the tree planting target so that by 2010 forest cover would account for 45 per cent of the country's total area.

He suggested planting rubber trees on land which was not suitable for forest plantations.

"Rubber trees are of high economic value and are good for environmental protection," said Dung.

The Prime Minister lauded the achievements gained by the sector last year despite severe natural calamities, epidemics and raw material price hikes.

In 2006, Viet Nam earned US\$1.3 billion from exporting 4.7 million tonnes of rice while still being able to maintain national food security; \$1.27 billion from exporting 700,000 tonnes of latex; \$1.1 billion from 900,000 tonnes of coffee and \$500 million from cashew nut exports, Dung said.

He asked farmers nation-wide to apply high tech practises in agricultural production in order to raise the competitiveness of Vietnamese produce on international markets.

According to Trang Hieu Dung, director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's (MARD) Planning Department, in 2007 Viet Nam set a target to raise agro-forestry product export turnover to \$7.4 billion, an increase of \$400 million compared to 2006; maintain 3 per cent annual increases in the value of agro-forestry; and ensure 70 per cent of people living in rural area have access to clean water supplies – an increase of 4 percent against the previous year.

Dung said in 2007, some 7.2 million ha would be devoted to rice cultivation to make sure rice output would reach 36 million tonnes, the same as that of 2006.

If that target was achieved, Viet Nam would ensure food security and export four million tonnes of rice, Dung said.

To achieve the target of 4.2 million tonnes of maize for the year, MARD planned to expand maize acreage to 1.1 million ha, an increase of over 70,000 ha.

Dung said that to achieve these targets, the sector should prioritise products that have comparative advantages.

In addition to that, MARD would try to introduce new and advanced technologies for agricultural production, with the aim to increase efficiency.

A report by MARD presented at the meeting said in 2006, gross turnover of agro-forestry products nation-wide stood at \$7.1 billion, an increase of 19.7 per cent against figures from 2005. Major exports

included forestry products, rice, coffee, rubber latex, tea and black pepper.

Source: VNS

22. Australia to fund small-scale projects

HCM City, 04/01/2007: The Australian Government, through the Australian Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, has funded 770 million VND (48,000 USD) for six small-scale development projects.

The projects on education, health care and infrastructure will be undertaken in the provinces of Ca Mau, Dac Lac, Phu Yen, Binh Thuan, Ben Tre and Binh Duong.

The funding provided by the consulates is through the Direct Aid Programme (DAP), a small, flexible grant programme for development activities funded by the Australian Government.

The DAP priority areas include education, basic infrastructure as well as health and environment, and the programme aims to assist low-income communities in southern provinces of Viet Nam.

The Australian Consulate General has also provided disaster relief funding of 5,000 USD for housing for victims of the Xangsane typhoon in Da Nang.

Source: VNA

23. Viet Nam reduces tariffs on some product lines

Ha Noi, 11/01/2007: Viet Nam's tariff cut on a number of product lines under the country's commitments to the World Trade Organisation officially took effect on Jan. 11, announced the Ministry of Finance.

According to the ministry, upon its accession to the WTO, Viet Nam will cut import-export duties on 3,800 categories of goods or 35.5 percent of its committed Tariff List.

The country, in addition, also accepted higher ceiling duty rates for 3,170 tariff lines or 30 percent of the Tariff List, mainly levied on such product groups as petrol, metals, chemicals and some specialised transport vehicles.

The biggest reductions were applied to ready-made clothes (from 50 percent to 20 percent), fabric (40 percent down to 12 percent) and fibre (from 20 percent to 5 percent).

Gold, silver, gemstones, glass, footwear, household commodities, electronic appliances, steels, alloys, water filter appliances, vacuum cleaners, alcohol, beer, soft drinks and medicines saw tariff reductions ranging from 10 to 25 percent.

Viet Nam's commitments cover 10,689 tariff lines which will be reduced in between five and seven years.

Source: VNA

24. Rubber industry earns profit of 4 trillion VND

Ha Noi, 05/01/2007: The Viet Nam Rubber Corporation earned a turnover of 9 trillion VND with a profit of 4 trillion VND in 2006.

In 2006, the rubber industry put more than 12,400 ha of land to rubber plantation, bringing the total acreage under the industrial crop nationwide to almost 39,000 ha with one ha of rubber trees yielding between 1.83-1.95 tonnes of latex.

The industry also processed 325,900 tonnes of rubber latex, 9.9 percent or 29,000 tonnes more than last year's figures.

Source: VNA

25. Strengthening promotion of investment in foreign countries

Hanoi, 1st Jan, 2007: In 2007, Ministry of Planning and Investment continues organizing the missions calling for foreign investment overseas and pushes up strengthening investment promotion agencies in some key countries like the United States, Japan, and Germany.

Ministry of Planning and Investment will request Prime Minister to approve soon the list of national projects calling for foreign investment period 2006-2010 as the base for investment campaign.

In 2006, MPI received about 400 investigation missions, including many multinational groups.

Many workshops calling for foreign investment in Vietnam were also held in some countries such as Japan, the United States, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, France, China, Taiwan, and Korea.

The Investment promotion centers in 3 regions of the country has conducted a lot of remarkably activities.

Source: VNA

26. Vietnamese farm produces introduced at Berlin Fair

Berlin, 24/01/2007: Vietnamese farm produces are being introduced at an international fair in Berlin called "Green Week 2007".

Over 1,600 representatives from 56 countries participated in the fair bringing some of their agricultural products, foodstuff and plants to display.

Four Vietnamese residents in Germany brought Vietnamese fruits, and a number of traditional products like Thai Nguyen tea and Da Lat wine. Vietnamese palm-leaf conical hats have been sold successfully at a price of 2 euros each.

Vietnamese traditional dishes are also being sold at the fair.

The fair, which opened on Jan. 19, has welcomed over 200,000 visitors.

Source: VNA

27. Viet Nam, India to exchange cashew information

HCM City, 25/01/2007:The Viet Nam Cashew Association (VINACAS) and the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI) inked a Memorandum of Understanding regarding their cooperation in Ho Chi Minh City on Jan. 25.

Under the MoU, the two sides will work out a mechanism to exchange crop forecasts, statistics relating to productivity, exports and imports, market information and government policies regarding cashew.

The two sides called for the establishment of a committee to set up global technical standards on cashew-nuts, thus facilitating world trade of the product.

The MoU will be sent to the Association of Brazilian Cashew Producers (SINDICAJU) for verification and supplements (if necessary) so as a tripartite MoU will be signed by VINACAS, SINDICAJU, and CEPCI on April 30 this year.

According to VINACAS Vice President Nguyen Duc Thanh, the country's cashew yield soared from 28,000 tonnes in 1990 to 350,000 tonnes in 2006, which places the country the second in the world in terms of raw cashew output.

At present, India is the largest producer of raw cashews with 450,000-500,000 tonnes a year. Brazil ranks third with 180,000-200,000 tonnes.

Source: VNA

28. WTO full membership marks Viet Nam's deep participation in global trade system

Ha Noi, 11/01/2007: Foreign Ministry Spokesman Le Dung on Jan. 11 announced that Viet Nam had gained full WTO membership, describing it as an important event in the country's international economic integration, marking its comprehensive participation in the global trade system.

On Jan. 11, the WTO organised a ceremony to hand over an official membership card to the Vietnamese delegation, headed by Vietnamese Ambassador Ngo Quang Xuan. The ritual meant the recognition of Viet Nam's representative mission and Ambassador to the WTO.

The spokesman noted that from Jan. 11, Viet Nam is engaged to implement all its commitments to join the WTO, as well as the organisation's regulations and common principles; on the other hand, the country are now entitled to full rights and an equal role in its relationship with other WTO members.

"WTO accession created great opportunities for Viet Nam to expand markets for its goods and services exports, increase its trade partners, attract more foreign direct investment, and furthermore, all future commercial disputes will be solved following WTO mechanism," the spokesman said.

However, Dung warned that WTO accession also brought serious challenges, requiring Viet Nam's economic sectors, especially enterprises, to exert maximum efforts in making use of opportunities and overcoming challenges.

Dung promised that as a new member, Viet Nam will work actively to contribute to building a multilateral trade system based on equality and common benefits.

Source: VNA

29. Viet Nam invests more for trade promotion programmes

Ha Noi, 18/01/2007: Viet Nam will increase its financial support to national-level trade promotion programmes this year in a bid to improve their efficiency, a government official said on Jan. 18.

Deputy Trade Minister Luong Van Tu told a conference on the issue that the Ministry of Finance is expected to provide nearly 170 billion USD for trade promotion programmes in 2007, an increase of more than 50 billion VND over the previous year.

Trade promotion activities have helped Vietnamese businesses update information about every market, while maintaining close relations between local and foreign professional associations, Tu further said.

According to the deputy minister, 155 national-level trade promotion programmes were approved in 2006, with State funds reaching 144.77 billion VND.

The conference was held by the Department for Trade Promotion under the Ministry of Trade to review activities in 2006 and discuss plans for this year.

Source: VNA

30. List of legal documents issued in January 2007

By the government

1. Decree 02/2007/ND-CP dated 5th Jan. 2007 by the government on plant quarantine.
2. Decree 05/2007/ND-CP dated 9th Jan. 2007 by the government on rabies prevention and protection.
3. Decree 05/2007/ND-CP dated 15th Jan. 2007 by the government supplementing and amending Decree 115/2003/ND-CP dated 10th Oct. 2003 by the government on civil servant on probation.
4. Decree 09/2007/QD-TTg dated 15th Jan. 2007 by the government supplementing and amending Decree 117/2003/ND-CP dated 10th Oct. 2003 by the government on recruitment, utilization, and management of staffs, civil servants in state agencies.

By the Prime Minister

1. Decision 02/QD-TTg dated 02 Jan. 2007 by the Prime Minister approving the proposal

“Improvement of capacity for forest fire prevention and fighting for forest protection force” period 2007-2010.

By Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

1. Circular 01/2007/TT-BNN dated 15th Jan. 2007 guiding the implementation of the project supporting production development and economic structure transition, improving production level of ethnic minority and mountainous people under the program 135 period 2006-2010.
2. Decision 02/2007/QD-BNN dated 18th Jan. 2007 on the establishment of Hydraulics Construction and Investment Management Board No. 2 under Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
3. Decision 03/2007/QD-BNN dated 19th Jan. 2007 issuing “Decision on releasing quality standards of agriculture sector specialized products and commodities” .
4. Decision 04/2007/QD-BNN dated 19th Jan. 2007 providing regulations on safe vegetables production and certificating management.
5. Decision 05/2007/QD- BNN dated 22 Jan. 2006 amending Decision 38/2006/QD-BNN dated 16th May, 2006 regulating foot and mouth diseases prevention and protection.
6. Decision 06/2007/QD-BNN dated 23rd Jan. 2007 regulating function, tasks, power, and organization structure of Forestry Protection Department.
7. Decision 07/2007/QD-BNN dated 23rd Jan. 2007 establishing an agency to manage the Convention on international trading of emergency wild animals and plants.

Source: ISG Sec