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HIGHLIGHTS

1. POLICY DEVELOPMENT/REVIEW (p 1)	2. INNOVATIONS IN THE SECTOR (p3)
3. NEW PROJECTS FOR THE SECTOR (p4)	4. STATE INVESTMENT IN THE SECTOR (p5)
5. ODA PERFORMANCE (p6)	6. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT (p6)
7. INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION (p6)	8. EXPORT PERFORMANCE (p7)
9. MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS (p8)	10. NEW PUBLICATIONS POSTED ON ISG WEBSITE (p9)
11. OTHER NEWS (p10)	12. LIST OF LEGAL DOCUMENTS ISSUED IN APRIL 2007 (p11)

*Information and experience equal knowledge,
please share your knowledge with us!*

1. POLICY DEVELOPMENT/REVIEW

Good News for Mekong Farmers

Beijing, China, 10 April 2007: Farmers, especially smallholders, and the rural poor of six nations stand to benefit from a new program that aims to foster cross-border trade and investment in agriculture, contribute to food security and poverty reduction, and promote environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

The Core Agriculture Support Program (CASP) was endorsed today by the agriculture ministers of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, which make up the Greater Mekong Subregion or GMS.

This was the first time that the agriculture ministers of the six countries have come together. The meeting was hosted by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

The program is the centerpiece of the Strategic Framework for Subregional Cooperation in Agriculture, which the agriculture ministers have approved. It is the latest in a series of cooperative strategies and programs among the six countries, which have been working together for their mutual benefit under the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program since 1992. Other areas of strategic cooperation include energy,

environment, telecommunications, transport, and tourism.

A major thrust of the CASP is to ensure that the benefits from new opportunities opening up in agriculture through biofuel crops and the attendant new technologies, and the opening of borders among GMS nations will be spread out equitably.

The CASP will also address concerns over the spread of animal diseases, especially those that can affect humans, such as bird flu, which in recent years, has affected the subregion. Through the CASP, sub regional emergency response mechanisms for agriculture-related crises, such as outbreaks of transboundary animal diseases, will be established.

"We are very happy that the other GMS countries share our concern about these diseases," said Cao Duc Phat, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam. "The project on control of transboundary animal diseases will minimize the chance and effects of outbreaks in the future."

Donor agencies active in the region also participated in the meeting. Several agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and Centers of the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research, presented proposals for new areas in research and development.

Source: ADB

Approving National Strategy on Post Harvest of Rice, Corn, Soya-bean, Groundnut

Hanoi, On 15th March 2007, MARD Minister issued decision no. 20/2007/QĐ-BNN approving the National Strategy on Post Harvest of Rice, Corn, Groundnut, and Soya-bean by 2020.

The overall objective of the strategy is “increasing efficiency of producing and trading rice, corn, soya-bean, groundnut through reducing post-harvest loss, increasing their quality and competitiveness; promoting agricultural structure transition and rural economy; addressing employment, improving income of farmers and those involved in post-harvest activities. Contributing to ensured household food security, improved nutrition, and food safety hygiene”.

The strategy sets out specific objectives for each period:

Period 2006-2010:

1. Reduce loss rate of rice by 9-10%; increase rate of finished rice up to 65-66%; increase the proportion of 5-10% broken rice up to 50% of the total export volume.
2. Reduce loss rate of corn down to 12-13%
3. Reduce loss rate of soya bean down to 5.5%;
4. Reduce loss rate of ground-nut down to 4.5-5.0%;
5. Create employment for 240-250 thousand people/year.
6. Contribute to improved household's food security; reduce number of food-poor households to below 4% by 2010.

Period 2011-2020:

1. Reduce loss rate of rice down to 5-6%; increase rate of finished rice up to 69%; increase the proportion of 5-10% broken rice up to 70% of the total export volume. By 2015, the rate of yellow rice below 0.2 %, and rate of bad-quality rice not higher than 0.25%.
2. Reduce loss rate of corn down to 8-9%;
3. Reduce loss rate of soya bean down to 3.0%;
4. Reduce loss rate of ground-nut down to 2.0-2.5%;
5. Create employment for 200 thousand people/year.
6. Contribute to improved income and increased livelihoods of rural areas, wiping food-poor households.

The strategy specifies activities to develop rice, corn, soya bean, and groundnut post-harvest area by 2020 and major measures.

Source: ISG

A Review Meeting on Science Technology and Advanced technology Transfer in 2006 and launching Work plan for 2007

Hanoi, 28th March, 2007: A Review Meeting on Science Technology and Advanced technology Transfer of 2006 and launching Work plan for 2007 was organized by MARD with the participation of more than 120 representatives of line ministries/agencies, MARD's affiliated institutes and universities, and DARDs. The meeting was chaired by Minister of MARD Cao Duc Phat and Vice Minister Bui Ba Bong.

After the report by Director of Science and Technology Department and other comments, Minister Cao Duc Phat made a conclusion as follows:

1. Seven ministry-level programs and 161 themes implemented in period 2001-2005 were assessed, checking-upon accepted, and reviewed in 2006. As results, 355 varieties, technical process, technologies have been recognized. Agriculture extension has been improved. Results of studies and agriculture extension contributed a lot to the development of the sector. However, they has not responded to the requirements and some of them have low efficiency.

2. In order to improve the efficiency of scientific technology activities, MARD adopted organizational adjustment measures (establishment of VAAS), applied procurement mechanism for the implementation of ministry-level themes, increased ownership of research agencies, and implemented agriculture extension under projects. These adjustments created remarkable changes but not much in both research and agriculture extension.

In 2005 and the coming years, the government will continue to strengthen investment in both research activities and agricultural extension. It's requested that the implementation should be effective and meet the requirements of the major sector tasks. Of which, the major solution is to carry on renovating management mechanism, pushing up socialization, mobilizing involvement of all sources and economic sectors in researching and transferring of scientific technology in agriculture and rural development.

3. MARD asked its organizations to be active in implementing following specific tasks:

3.1. Research institutes, National Agriculture Extension Center are active to review and push up the implementation of assigned themes and projects. The approval of the outlines and cost estimations should be finished before 30th April, 2007; regularly check, supervise, speed up and control the implementation progress to achieve the stated targets with high efficiency; promptly deploy the implementation of Decree 115, guide the implementation of capital construction projects for effectiveness, mobilize proactively assistance resources for training human resources, especially high-grade staffs.

3.2. Department of Science and Technology: presides in coordination with related agencies to: (i) review the direction of scientific research in complying with the sector development; (ii) review the renovation of progress of procurement, checking, assessment and checking-upon acceptance, strengthen supervising and controlling the implementation of scientific technology duties of state agencies; make recommendations for mechanism to attract economic sectors and resources to participate in technology transfer and research in agriculture and rural development; (iii) preside the formulation of regulations to coordinate scientific technology and agriculture extension (to be completed in April 2007); (iv) strengthening electronic information activities in the field of scientific technology.

3.3. Department of Finance: Presides, in coordination with related agencies, to develop the finance regulation to implement scientific technology tasks (to be completed in April 2007) towards strengthening decentralization for research and transfer organizations.

3.4. Department of Personnel Organization: Presides, in cooperation with Department of Science and Technology, to assess the results of implementing the Regulation on Institute-School Coordination and make recommendations.

3.5. National Center of Agriculture Extension: Strengthens supervision and controls the implementation of assigned agriculture extension projects, recommending for renovated management mechanism; strengthening agriculture extension at all levels.

Source: MARD

Draft National Strategy on Natural Disaster Control and Mitigation by 2020 submitted to the Government

Hanoi, On 25th Jan. 2007, MARD, in its letter No. 269/TTr-BNN-DD, submitted the draft National Strategy on Natural Disaster Control and Mitigation by 2020 to the Prime Minister for consideration and approval.

The overall objectives of the Strategy are to (i) reduce human and material damages (ii) and ensure national sustainable development.

The strategy proposes national priority programs and projects by fields like: zoning for natural disaster risk assessment, planning, improving forecasting capacity, increasing community awareness, non-structure and structure measures.

It's estimated that the budget for implementation of the mentioned programs and projects will be VND 30,000 billion, which will be

mobilized from state budget, provinces' budgets, ODA, FDI, community contribution and other legal resources.

During the strategy development process, MARD already carried out the following activities:

- Assessing the first National Strategy and Action Plan on Natural Disaster Mitigation – 1994.
- Researching and consulting completed studies on natural disasters.
- Conducting studies on natural disasters with various specific themes.
- Consulting with line ministries/ agencies, sectors, provinces, and experts on the strategy drafts.
- Organizing workshops in the North region, Central region and South region, and 5 national and international consultation workshops.

It is expected that the draft will be approved at the end of April or early May 2007.

Source: NDMP

2. INNOVATIONS IN THE SECTOR

Netherlands okays 3.7 ml euros for biogas in Viet Nam

Ha Noi, 16/04/2007: The Government of Netherlands has agreed to finance Viet Nam 3.7 million euros to build 140,000 more biogas units for small farms nationwide.

Dutch Ambassador, Andre Haspels announced his government's intentions in Ha Noi on April 16 at a ceremony to announce the Energy Globe Award, one of the world's prestigious environmental prizes, to Viet Nam 's biogas project for animal husbandry.

The biogas for animal husbandry programme, part of a cooperative agreement between the governments of Viet Nam and the Netherlands , helped build 27,000 household-based biogas units in 24 cities and provinces nationwide between 2003 and 2006.

Biogas units convert animal waste into fuel that is immediately useable for cooking, heating, lighting and generating electricity.

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Cao Duc Phat emphasised the project has helped boost rural development while at the same time dealt with environmental pollution issues to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of rural people.

The awards, handed out to 10 projects from around the world, were selected from a short list of over 700 entries and were presented at a special gala event at the European Parliament in Brussels, on April 11.

Source: VNA

VND 290 bil. Invested in improvement of agriculture quality management

Hanoi, 04.04.2007: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is going to implement the Program for improving quality management capacity of agricultural materials, Agro-forestry products, and food safety hygiene by 2010 with total cost of VND 290 bil.

The main objective of the program is to develop a big-scale clean agriculture products area that meets regional and international standards. Under the program, there will be 80-85% agriculture preservation and processing units over the country to apply the HACCP, ISO quality management system by 2010.

As planned, there will be about 30-40 inter-commune clean vegetable areas in such big cities as Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai Phong and neighbouring provinces. A safe tea area with total of 30,000 – 40,000 ha will be established in the northern mountainous provinces. Safe poultry and livestock raising area will be focused in the Red river delta and Mekong river delta, and South East provinces.

In addition to the development of agriculture products area, the sector will review and issue a set of standards for clean agriculture products so that there will be 90% of process and standards of clean agriculture products, agriculture material quality to be effective by 2010.

MARD will invest in building up 4 centers for analyzing agriculture products, health animal medicines, etc. in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Can Tho to make them as standard laboratories to consider testing results upon occurrence of disputes. MARD encourages enterprises/ sub-sectors to set up a system to check and control biological pollution, residues and some types of agriculture materials.

Source: VNA

Mekong Delta to shift agricultural structure

Ha Noi, 26/04/2007: The Mekong Delta, the country's largest rice bowl, is working for agricultural production restructure, focusing on intensive growing and improvement of product quality, to meet the increasing demand for integration process.

To this end, by 2010, the delta will have 3.8 million ha of rice, ensuring an annual output of 4-5 million tonnes of rice for export.

To improve the staple's quality, the local provinces will pour more investment into processing and post-harvest technology.

Under the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the next 3-4 years, as many as 30 rice processing centres with a combined capacity of 3-3.5 million tonnes a year will be set up in the delta. High-quality rice growing areas will be widened to supply rice for export.

In addition, orchards will be expanded to 400,000 ha in 2010 for the growing of fruits of high value, such as mango, longan, orange, pomelo, watermelon, star fruit, mangosteen and durian.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development encouraged local people to use new varieties of trees and animals to develop goods-based agriculture in the Mekong Delta.

The ministry will also continue supporting the provinces to develop material zones and a system of goods distribution.

The Mekong Delta, including Long An, Dong Thap, Tien Giang, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, Tra Vinh, An Giang, Kien Giang, Soc Trang, Bac Lieu and Ca Mau provinces and Can Tho city, is one of the country's seven major economic zones. Every year, these provinces contribute about 18 percent to the national GDP.

Being the country's largest food production zone, each year, the delta contributes 50 percent to the nation's rice output and 90 percent of the total rice export volume. Its agro-forestry and fisheries products account for 40 percent of the nation's total.

Source: VNA

3. NEW PROJECTS FOR THE SECTOR

US-funded human influenza prevention project approved

Ha Noi, 07/04/2007: The Prime Minister has approved a 1.15 million USD project on the control and prevention of bird flu in humans for the 2007-2012 period with non-refundable aid from the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The PM assigned the Ministry of Health to be in charge of completing the project's documents, signing agreements with the CDC and being responsible for the project implementation.

Source: VNA

Approving the project "Strengthening capacity of Veterinary Sector System"

Hanoi, 4th April, 2007: MARD issued Decision 904/QD-BNN-KH on approving the project "Strengthening capacity for Veterinary sector's state management system, period 2007-2010".

The objective of the project is to complete the organization system of veterinary system from Central level to grass-root level in order to ensure sustainable development of the country's husbandry sector and gradually improve state management capacity of veterinary sector to meet the demand of production, social life, and international economic integration.

This project plays as a framework for MARD at Central level and DARDs at province level to

develop and complete the veterinary system at all levels.

Source: MARD

ADB loan for irrigation project waits for approval

Ha Noi, 13/04/2007: Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, on April 12, proposed that the country's President approve a loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for an irrigation scheme that will run in six central provinces.

Total funding needed for the project will run to the tune of 99 million USD, with 74.3 million USD of that to come from the ADB. The remaining capital required is to be provided by the State budget and the targeted project provinces of Thanh Hoa, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue, Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh.

The loan is structured to have a maturity of 32 years and a grace period of eight years. Its interest rate will be fixed at 1 percent during the grace period and 1.5 percent for the remaining years.

Source: VNA

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The loan is structured to have a maturity of 32 years and a grace period of eight years. Its interest rate will be fixed at 1 percent during the grace period and 1.5 percent for the remaining years.

Source: VNA

FAO supports Vietnam to combat against

Hanoi, 12/04/07: Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem approved the project "Technical Assistance to Vietnam in combating against rice grassy stunt disease and rice ragged stunt disease.

The project is financed by FAO with total of more than USD 100,000. MARD was assigned to sign the project agreement with FAO and to implement it.

Source: ICARD

Signing of US\$38 million project on Avian & Human Influenza Control & Preparedness between the World Bank and the State Bank of Vietnam

Ha Noi, April 12, 2007: The State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) and the World Bank today signed a Financing Agreement and related documents for a US\$38 million project to better control outbreaks of bird flu and prepare for possible epidemics in humans in Vietnam.

The signing of the agreements for the project took place while provinces are now vaccinating poultry en-masse for a 1st round in 2007. The three year project aims to achieve its goals by increasing the effectiveness of Government services in reducing the health risks to poultry and humans from avian influenza – often known as bird flu virus – in eleven high priority provinces. This project was developed based on the successful implementation of the Avian Influenza Emergency Recovery Project, and aims to support Vietnam in the medium and long terms.

The provinces receiving assistance, including Lang Son, Ha Tay, Thai Binh, Thanh Hoa, Ha Tinh, Thua Thien-Hue, Binh Dinh, Tay Ninh, Long An, Tien Giang, and Dong Thap, have all been hit by the deadly virus.

The Project comprises three components, namely Avian Influenza Control and Eradication in the Agricultural Sector; Influenza Prevention and Pandemic Preparedness in the Health Sector; and Integration and Coordination, Results Monitoring & Evaluation, and Project Management.

The International Development Association – the entity within the World Bank Group which provides concessional funds for low-income countries – will finance US\$20 million for the project implementation, together with grant money of US\$10 million from the EU-funded window of the multi-donor Avian and Human Influenza Facility, and US\$5 million from Japan. The government of Vietnam will provide US\$ 3 million in counterpart funding.

Source: WB

4. STATE INVESTMENT IN THE SECTOR

Additional 1.1 trillion VND for people in flood-prone areas

Ho Chi Minh City, 20/04/2007: An additional 1.1 trillion VND (68.7 million USD) will be poured into a programme to build houses for people living in the Mekong Delta's flood-prone areas.

Of the amount, 750 billion VND was mobilised by the Viet Nam Bank for Social Policies.

Houses will be constructed before the 2007 flood season.

Source: VNA

Development project for Mong ethnic group in Thanh Hoa

Ha Noi, 19/04/2007: Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Sinh Hung on April 18 approved an initiative that will aid ethnic Mong in Muong Lat district, Thanh Hoa province, to further develop their production capabilities.

The project, to be carried out from now until 2010, will cost 291 billion VND (18.1 million USD), and is funded to the tune of 184 billion VND by the State budget.

Thanh Hoa province is home to close to 9,000 Mong, with most residing in Muong Lat district.

Source: VNA

5. ODA PERFORMANCE

Austria's ODA for Vietnam taking effectively

Hanoi, 5th April, 2007: President Nguyen Minh Triet thanked the Austrian government for its assistance to Vietnam's building and development process on the occasion of receiving Austrian Minister of Sciences and Research. President also affirmed the efficiency of Austrian's ODA.

The President expressed his happiness to grace with the good development in the relation between the two countries in general and the relation between MOET and Ministry of Science and Research in particular.

The President believed that the relation between the two countries would further strengthened and developed. The president's visit to Austria in this year will be aimed to express Vietnam's willingness to further develop and heighten the relation with Austria more comprehensively.

Minister Johannes Hahn affirmed Austria's willing to share experiences on training with Vietnam. In addition to offering scholarships for Vietnamese students, the Austrian Government also pays attention to sending his students to Vietnam for study and research.

Minister highly appreciated Vietnam's development achievements and wished that Austria would be one of the leading countries of European Union in cooperating with Vietnam. He hoped that there would be many Vietnamese universities participating in Europe-ASEAN university network.

Source: MPI web

6. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Central Highlands looks to water works

Dak Lak, 09/04/2007: The Central Highlands provinces of Dak Lak, Kon Tum, Gia Lai and Lam Dong are at present constructing six large scale

irrigation projects in an effort to curb the negative impacts that drought has wreaked on the region.

When completed, the State financed public works will provide ethnic minorities, local inhabitants and farmers with their daily water and crop irrigation needs, said provincial authorities.

Dak Lak province is home to both the Ea Sup and the Krong Buk works. Ea Sup is slated to come on line by 2009, at a cost of 611 billion VND, and will be capable of watering close to 10,000 ha of rice fields. Krong Buk has been designed to provide water for 72,000 people, 11,400 ha of rice and subsidiary crops and industrial plants in the districts of Drong Pach and Ea Kar and is expected to run close to 1,100 billion VND by the time it is completed.

Ethnic minority people in Kon Tum province will also soon benefit from the 60 billion VND Dac Yen initiative as 90 percent of the construction work has been completed.

Gia Lai province will also see two major water security projects finished soon. The La Ring and La M'la systems will allow 54,000 ethnic minority people to access clean water for daily use and to irrigate more than 7,400 ha of land.

Ka La irrigation works in Lam Dong province has finished 80 percent of building activities and will be operational by early 2008. 20,000 people will soon gain access to water and over 2,000 ha of crops will be irrigated.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is also currently preparing two other water infrastructure initiatives, the 1,263 billion VND Ia Mo in Chu Prong district, Gia Lai province; and the 177 billion VND upper Dac Long in Lam Dong province's Bao Lam district.

Source: VNA

7. INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

ASEAN finance ministers eye regional economic community

Ha Noi, 06/04/2007: ASEAN finance ministers have agreed to review all integration roadmaps on capital market, financing services, capital accounts and monetary cooperation to meet the target of an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015.

Last January, ASEAN leaders decided to speed up the establishment of an AEC by 2015 instead of 2020.

During the 11th ASEAN finance ministers meeting held in Chiang Mai, Thailand recently, the ministers also agreed to enhance cooperation on taxation by setting up a working group in the area.

Regarding building a roadmap on finance-money cooperation to meet the AEC's target, Vietnamese Finance Minister Vu Van Ninh emphasised the short time allotted to meet the target.

He urged the countries to exert efforts to complete the institutional framework at national and regional levels and share experiences and information to narrow the development gap among ASEAN members.

According to the minister, this is one of many fundamental requirements needed to have a successful AEC and a necessary condition to ensure a sustainable community.

The upcoming regional finance ministers meeting will be held in Viet Nam in 2008, the Vietnamese minister added.

Source: VNA

Approving two Protocol agreements under ASEAN-China economic cooperation agreement

Hanoi, 04/April 2007: On 3rd April, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung approved the protocol amending the framework agreement on comprehensive economic cooperation between ASEAN and China and the protocol amending the issue of goods trading under the framework agreement.

Ministry of Finance was assigned to issue an expected roadmap of tax and duty reduction & taken off; to include amended things in the two mentioned protocol in domestic legal documents and issue guideline documents to implement the Agreement on Goods Trading ASEAN-China from 2007.

Prime Minister also assigned the inter-ministry working group of ASEAN cooperation with other countries to monitor and negotiate with ASEAN and China to address issues relating to the implementation of two protocols.

Source: VNA

8. EXPORT PERFORMANCE

Increasing pepper prices, good news for exporters, bankers

Ha Noi, 13/04/2007: 2007 should prove to be a bumper year for Vietnamese pepper exporters who are expecting to earn close to 300 million USD from total exports of over 100,000 tonnes.

Export figures for the year should be much higher than last year's 195 million USD, said market experts as global pepper stocks dwindled due to environmental pressures and reduced production from world leading pepper producer India.

El Nino along with drought as well as pest and disease wreaked havoc on huge swathes of pepper-growing areas in Viet Nam, affecting supplies and driving up prices, experts said.

In an effort to keep prices at between 2,500 and 3,000 USD per tonne, the country's top ten domestic exporters reviewed the world market and decided to sell part of this year's harvest and

warehouse the remainder for speculation purposes, hoping that prices will continue to climb.

Sensing an opportunity, the speculation efforts of the big ten, which account for 70 percent of the gross export output, was warmly welcomed by local bankers.

ABBank, Vietcombank, Techcombank, the Asian Commercial Bank (ACB) and other major financial institutions have expressed interest in extending loans for pepper businesses for their speculation plans.

Thousands of billions of Vietnamese dong in credits are expected to be disbursed to the pepper industry. CEO of An Binh Bank, Luu Duc Khanh, said his ABBank is willing to provide pepper exporters, especially leading producers, with soft loans in an effort to establish a platform to build long lasting relationships with one of the country's exporting success stories.

Source: VNA

Pepper exports down, prices on the rise

Ha Noi, 09/04/2007: Viet Nam's pepper exports rose last month, but were well down on the previous year, according to the Ministry of Trade.

Officials said that export figures for the first quarter of 2007 were down by almost 40 percent.

Vietnamese exporters shipped 10,000 tonnes of pepper last month, worth a total of 20 million USD. Since January, 18,000 tonnes were exported and sold for approximately 45 million USD.

The slump in sales was offset by surge in the price of pepper.

Ministry officials said the value of pepper has surged by 72 percent since 2006, balancing most losses suffered by farmers and vegetable traders, the industry as a whole reported a year-on-year growth of 13 percent.

The Viet Nam Pepper Association said, pepper exports are down due to plant diseases and farmers are delaying harvest in the hope that prices will rise further still.

By the end of March, the price of domestic pepper reached a record high of 41,000 VND (2.50 USD) per kilo for black pepper and 62,000 VND (3.87 USD) per kilo for white pepper.

Source: VNA

Vietnam's exports will reach USD 100 bil. by 2010

Hanoi, 6/04/2007: Vice Minister of Trade Luong Van Tu stated that Vietnam's enterprises would have opportunities to integrate more deeply in global trading market as Vietnam's becoming WTO members. It's expected that the country's exports turnover will reach USD 100 bil. by 2010.

At the Vietnam export promotion forum held on 5th April, in Hanoi, Mr. Tu said that Vietnam's business environment-one of key factors to push up

export activities – is internationally ranked in the group of most active improvement countries.

However, Vietnam's enterprises should further develop promotion activities of trading, investment, and tourism, especially apply those regulations that are not subjected to WTO's prohibition to push up exports and attract investment.

According to Dr. Le Dang Doanh, a senior expert of MPI, in order to promote export, it's necessary for Vietnamese enterprises to apply the strategy "both cooperation and competition". The Vietnamese government and enterprises should coordinate closely to develop strategies for different markets and continue signing bilateral trading agreements to create a more advantageous framework for business and cooperation.

According to economic experts, Ministry of Trade should coordinate and cooperate with related ministries to continue innovation and improvement of Vietnamese trade promotion agencies in neighbouring countries; supporting foreign invested companies to increase production; exploiting benefits of the regional trade agreements that Vietnam already involved.

In recent years, Vietnam's export has had a strong growth, averagely more than 20%/year. In 2006, exports reached about USD 39.6 bil., an increase of 22.1%. The export of this quarter reached nearly USD 10.5 bil, an increase of 18% compared to that of the same time last year.

Source: VNA

9. MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS

Finance program of water sector period 2006-2010

Under the ADB's financial assistance program for water resources sector period 2006-2010, Ministry of Planning and Investment coordinated with ADB to organize a Workshop on Water Sector Finance Program from 22nd to 23rd March, 2007 in Hanoi. The workshop was co-chaired by Vice Minister of Planning and Investment Cao Viet Sinh, Vice Minister of MARD Nguyen Ngoc Thuat, Director of ASEAN Department under ADB Arjun Thapan, and ADB Country Director Ayumi Konishi.

The workshop focused on: (i) Introduction and exchange on orientations in developing roadmap for water resources sector to support the Vietnamese government in reaching MDGs relating to water resources, (ii) proposing projects in this field for ADB's assistance period 2007-2010 and (iii) defining possible funds from ADB, specifically as follows:

- ADB's Water Sector Finance Program for this period will invest in renovation and capacity development in three main areas:

+ Water and Rural Environment Sanitation, including hydraulic works for improving health and living conditions for rural community.

+ Urban water supply

+ River basin management through strengthened integrated water resources management in river basins through investment in infrastructure and management of multi-function regulating structures, power-generation structures, flood control, preservation of basins, inundated areas, and biological system.

– At the group discussions, members reaffirmed and proposed some key projects on Water and Rural Environment Sanitation and Irrigation for ADB's assistance.

– ADB introduced new financial tools and schemes with reduced commitment cost and more flexible long-time investment management for different options. These options are also suitable to those countries implementing decentralization and very attractive to local authorities.

Source: ICD-MARD

WB, ADB increase help to Mekong sub-region

Ha Noi, 06/04/2007: A seminar took place in Ha Noi on April 6 as part of an effort from the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to help the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

Addressing the seminar on GMS economic cooperation strategy, WB Country Director Ian Porter said his bank will focus its investment on such fields as water resource management, electricity trade, transport and human resources development.

The WB is also likely to assist GMS in the areas of environment, forestry, healthcare and risk management, he added.

Ayumi Konishi, ADB Country Director, also pledged loan and personnel support to GMS and continued that his bank will coordinate with the WB to reduce risks that may arise during the project implementation process.

Noteworthy in the GMS economic cooperation strategy is a regional electricity market project, which is aimed at increasing electricity trading between GMS members.

This year, the WB is expected to extend support to a project to build electric grids between Cambodia and Viet Nam as well as between Cambodia and Laos. It also plans to map out a feasibility study for a project on a high-voltage electric grid connecting Viet Nam with southern China.

The GMS includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and two Chinese provinces, namely Guangxi and Yunnan.

Source: VNA

A review meeting on 15-year implementation of settlement for hydraulic works and hydro-power projects

Hanoi, 17th April, 2007: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) organized a review meeting on 15-year implementation of settlement for hydraulic and hydro-power projects at the International Conference Hall No. 11 Le Hong Phong street. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Standing Prime Minister Nguyen Sinh Hung. The meeting were participated by Minister of MARD Cao Duc Phat, Vice Minister Ho Xuan Hung, heads of departments, ministry offices, and representatives of Province People's Committees relating to settlement activities.

Over 15 past years, a lot of national hydraulic and hydro-power works have been constructed, significantly contributing to meeting the water and power demand of agriculture production, domestic uses, and the country's industrialization and modernization process. Construction of hydraulic works and emigration for site clearance are always associated. And emigration and settlement are challenging the construction of this work.

Statistics have shown that about 21,580 households with more than 103,434 people have been emigrated over the past 15 years, accounting for 54% of the total number in need of emigration. Most of them are ethnic minorities like the Thai, Kho mu, Mong, Dao, Tay, Ba Na, Gia Rai, O Du, Xo Dang, Van Kieu, and Mo Nong,...In overall view, their life has been gradually stabilized and improved. Special attention has been spent much on such social policies as compensation, reinvestment, and employment creation.

In addition to the achievements, there remain issues:

- Policy for resettlement people is not really appropriate.
- Quality and feasibility of planning is low.
- Emigration has not linked with the customs/habits of emigrated people.
- Management mechanism is not unified.

The meeting also focused discussions for effective solutions for the next phase.

Source: MARD

Launching a report on national environment in 2006

Hanoi, 12th April 2007: MONRE organized the launching ceremony of the National Environment Report 2006. There were participants as representatives of the National Assembly office, line ministries/agencies, provincial DONREs, universities, research institutes, social-political organizations, mass-media agencies, and international organizations in the field of environment in Vietnam.

In 2006, MONRE developed a report on "Status of water environment in 3 river basins: Cau, Nhue – Day, and Dong Nai system" to implement Article 101 of the Environment Protection Law issued in 2005. It's the first time MONRE has made a report on water environment because of the urgent pollution problem in Vietnam's river basins in general and in 3 river basins in particular. At present, water sources of these basins are seriously polluted, which is caused by activities of social-economic development at urban areas, trade villages, industrial zones, especially from domestic, industrial and health service waste water pouring directly into rivers without any treatment.

In addition to the status of surface water in each river basin, the report also defines the main pollution-caused sources, assesses the environment protection work at each river basin over the past time, and recommends solutions.

Source: MONRE – Department of Environment Protection

Japan shares expertise in "One Village, One Product" movement

Ha Noi, 10/04/2007: Japanese experts shared their expertise with Vietnamese craft businesses in promoting the "One Village, One Product" movement for rural development at a seminar in Ha Noi on April 10.

Tadashi Ando of the Japanese "One Village, One Product" Movement, stressed the basic principle of selecting products with distinctive local features for development.

The movement, which originated in Japan 25 years ago, has spread to many nations worldwide. In Southeast Asia, Thailand and Cambodia have gained big achievements in their rural development by applying experiences from the movement.

The "One Village, One Product" has also received warm response in Viet Nam with the typical example of the northern mountainous province of Phu Tho.

Source: VNA

10. NEW PUBLICATIONS POSTED ON ISG WEBSITE

List of reports newly posted on ISG website in the month

1. [Report: Reviewing implementation of MARD's 2006-2010 Five-Year Plan in 2006](#)

(By MARD Department of Planning; presented at ISG Steering Board meeting 24 Jan 2007)

2. [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – PAR in MARD Project Termination Report and Minutes of the Final Meeting](#)

If you cannot download documents from the links, please follow this:

<http://www.isgmard.org.vn/Information%20Service/Report/Report.asp>

List of new publications posted on ISG website

1. [ISG Newsletter -Vol1-2007](#)
2. [ISG Monthly Briefing-March - 2007](#)
3. [RWSS Partnership News Briefs](#)
4. [MARD Brochure](#)
5. [Questions and answers on Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness](#)

11. OTHER NEWS

New target for rubber plantations in northwestern provinces

Ha Noi, 20/04/2007: The Viet Nam Rubber Industry Group has set a new target to grow 10,000 ha of rubber trees in two northern mountainous provinces of Lai Chau and Son La from now through 2010.

In the first stage of the project, rubber trees will be planted on a 10 ha area in Lai Chau province in the second quarter of this year and the corporation will provide saplings for a further 100 ha in the year-end, said Le Van Binh, Deputy General Director of the Group.

A recent survey has shown that conditions in Phong Tho district in Lai Chau province and Mai Son and Yen Chau districts in Son La province are good for this type of industry crop.

The group has set up a steering board for developing rubber trees in the northwestern region. It also plans to establish joint stock companies to exploit and process rubber latex in these two provinces.

Source: VNA

Bird flu vaccine for humans officially approved

Paris, 19/04/2007: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a vaccine to prevent bird flu in humans, local media reported.

The vaccine, produced by Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccine division of the France-based Sanofi Aventis Group, was the first avian influenza vaccine for humans approved in the US, Le Figaro newspaper, said on April 19.

The approval will serve as a first step in achieving the goal of stockpiling vaccine intended to protect those who are at increased risk of exposure to the H5N1 influenza during the early stages of a pandemic, said David Williams, President, Chief Executive Officer of Sanofi Pasteur.

As the world's leading manufacturer of influenza vaccine, Sanofi Pasteur vows to be on the frontlines in safeguarding human health if an influenza pandemic strikes, he said.

According to Le Figaro, the US government has decided to buy the vaccine for national vaccine stockpiles. The French government also placed an order of more than one million doses of the vaccine, the newspaper added.

Since the outbreak of the virus in 2003, half of all recorded cases of people infected with the H5N1 virus died.

Source: VNA

12. LIST OF LEGAL DOCUMENTS ISSUED IN APRIL 2007

NO.	ISSUING AGENCY, TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT	BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS
By The Government		
1.	Decree 53/2007/ND-CP dated 4th April, 2007 regulating fines on administrative violations in planning development and investment	Decree includes 5 chapters and 62 articles, regulating administrative violations acts, forms of sanctions, fines, authority to give fines, procedures applied to settling administrative violations regarding planning and investment.
2.	Decree No. 64/2007/ND-CP dated 10th April, 2007 on application of information technology in the state agencies	Decree includes 5 chapters and 56 articles, regulating application of information and technology in the GoV's administration agencies, applied to state agencies, including ministries, ministerial-level agencies, government-attached agencies and provincial-level People's Committees.
By the Prime Minister		
3.	Directive No. 08/2007/CT-TTg dated 3rd April 2007 on strengthening flood and storm prevention and protection, rescuing, and natural disaster – caused damage/loss mitigation in 2007	Prime Minister directs/steers ministries, agencies, provinces including MARD to be active in prevent and protect flood, storm and life rescue in order to minimize damages and losses caused by natural disasters in 2007.
By Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development		
4.	Decision 24/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 9th April, 2007 issuing the supplemental list of major forestry plants.	Issuing the supplemental list of major forestry plants, including new varieties recognized in 2006 and varieties of species (total 23 species)
5.	Decision No. 25/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 9th April, 2007 on supplemental list of forestry plants varieties to be under application of the sector standard.	A supplemental list of forestry varieties to apply the sector standard regulating applied species, varieties, standards, and areas.
6.	Decision No. 26/2007/QĐ-BNN, dated 9th April, 2007 issuing supplemental list of forestry plants subjected to allowable production and trading.	A supplemental list of forestry plants subjected to allowable production and trading, including: recognized varieties, varieties from seedling gardens, seedling forests, varieties of allowable production and trading species but at least selected origins or recognized mothers, and implementation process and procedures.
7.	Decision 27/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 12th April, 2007 issuing the regulation on managing key program on bio- technology application and development in agriculture and rural development by 2020.	5 chapters and 18 articles on managing the program of bio-technology application and development in agriculture and rural development by 2020.
8.	Directive 28/2007/CT-BNN dated 18th April, 2007 speeding up the planning of rural industries and environment pollution protection.	Minister directs some measures of rural development planning, and rural trades' environment pollution protection in order to implement agriculture structure transition effectively.
9.	Decision no. 29/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 19th April, 2007 regulating tasks, function, powers, and organization structure of the Inspectorate under Department of Forestry Protection	The decision specifies the inspectorate to be an affiliated unit of Forestry Protection Department, perform administrative and professional inspections in Forestry Protection Department based on legislations.
10.	Decision 30/2007/QĐ-BNN, dated 20th April, 2007 establishing Forestry Protection Subdepartment Area I under Department of Forestry Protection based on the Forestry Protection Techniques Center No. I	Forestry Protection Subdepartments Area I, covering Ninh Binh, Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, Ha Tay, Ha Noi, Hoa Binh, Son La, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Phu Tho, Vinh Phuc, Thai Nguyen, Bac Can, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, Quang Ninh, Hai Duong, Hung Yen, Thai Binh, and Hai Phong
11.	Decision no. 31/2007/QĐ-BNN, dated 20th April, 2007 establishing Forestry Protection Subdepartment Area II under Department of Forestry Protection based on the Forestry	Forestry Protection Subdepartment Area II, covering Thanh Hoá, Nghe An, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Quang Tri, Thừa Thiên-Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Bình Định, Quang Ngãi, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Dac Nông, Dac Lac,

	Protection Techniques Center No. II	Gia Lai và Kon Tum
12.	Decision no. 32/2007/QĐ-BNN, dated 20th April, 2007 establishing Forestry Protection Subdepartment Area III under Department of Forestry Protection based on the Forestry Protection Techniques Center No. III	Forestry Protection Subdepartment Area II, covering Lâm Dong, Ninh Thuan, Bình Thuan, Ho Chí Minh, Dong Nai, Bình Duong, Bình Phuoc, Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, Tây Ninh, Long An, Ben Tre, Can Tho, Tien Giang, Hau Giang, Vĩnh Long, Dong Tháp, Trà Vinh, An Giang, Kiên Giang, Cà Mau, Bạc Liêu và Sóc Trăng
13.	Decision no. 33/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 23 April, 2007 issuing regulations on certificating labs for fertilizer testing, samples takers, and fertilizer verifiers.	3 chapters and 18 articles: regulating on process, procedures of recognizing certificating labs for fertilizer testing, samples takers, and fertilizer verifiers and state management arrangement in this field.
14.	Decision no. 34/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 23rd April, 2007 issuing list of objects subjected to be plant quarantine under advance analysis before importing in to Vietnam	The decision issues a list of plants and plant products, alive organism to be analyzed before importing in Vietnam.
15.	Decision no. 35/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 23, april, 2007 releasing HS code table of objects to be under plant quarantine of Vietnam	A HS code table of objects subjected to be under Vietnam's plant quarantine attached to Decision 72/2005/QĐ-BNN dated 14 th Nov. 2005.
16.	Decision No. 36/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 24 April, 2007 issuing Regulations on fertilizer production, trading, and utilization.	5 chapters and 19 articles in the field of fertilizer production, trading, and utilization; list of fertilizers, and state management arrangement in this field.
17.	Decision No. 37/2007/QĐ-BNN dated 24 April, 2007 regulating on testing, recognizing and naming new fertilizers.	4 chapters, 21 articles regulating process, procedures of testing, recognizing, and naming new fertilizers; identify state management role in this field
18.	Directive No. 38/2007/TT-BNN dated 25th April, 2007 guiding process, procedures of forest transfer, leasing, and withdrawing for organizations, households, individuals, and rural communities.	7 parts guiding process, procedures of forest transfer, leasing, and withdrawing for organizations, households, individuals, and communities of hamlets and villages, ect.

Source: ISG