

For a Sustainable Development of the Sea Farming in the Mekong Delta

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The Mekong Delta comprises 13 provinces with a total area of 3.96 million hectare equaling 5% of the Mekong basin area or 12% of the Vietnam's area. Of this area, 3.81 million hectares are farming land equaling 50.95% of the national farming land. The Mekong Delta has a 780- km coastal line favorable for the sea farming that could produce a wide range of sea products for both the domestic and foreign markets.

Favorable climatic and natural conditions create great potentials for the fishing and sea farming development. In the past decade, the sea farming in the Delta has made great progress in terms of output and export value contributing a lot to the modernization and industrialization in this region. The Delta accounts for some 65% of the national sea-farming output and 40% of the national fishing output. That is why the Delta is considered as the pivotal region of the fishing and sea-farming industry of the whole country.

The sea-farming development has contributed a lot to the socioeconomic development of the Delta. Statistics show that this industry will keep playing an important role in the gross product and changes in the structure of industry in this region. Moreover, it helps increase the gross product, employ the natural re-



source reasonably, raise the export earnings, reduce the poverty and create more jobs. In the years 2005-2010, the sea-farming is considered as a key industry that could help develop the Delta and improve the living standard of local residents.

Although aquatic resources are sustainable, they are also sensitive to changes in the natural conditions and industrial production with the result that the sea-farming is risky in terms of diseases and bad environment. The aquatic product processing industry itself also produces bad effects on the environment and the eco-system.

At present, the aquatic resources are exploited too much while the environment for the sea-farming business is changeable and sensitive. The development of this business without planning and caring about the eco-system and food safety has led to bad consequences on the environment, society and the market as well.

To prevent the sea-farming development from causing harm to the sustainable development of communities and the whole country and making the aquatic resources long lasting, there must be a sustainable development plan. When the production and consumption of aquatic products in the world experience frequent fluctuations and the living standard in the Delta is still low, conditions for the sustainable development of the sea -farming are: fast and stable economic growth, changes

in production and distribution of aquatic products in an eco-friendly manner, safety for social well being and eco-system.

From this viewpoint, we can identify basic principles for the sustainable development of the sea-farming industry:

- Employing all aquatic resources according to a master plan instead of using them for different purposes set by local governments, and ensuring that it is suitable to ecological and socioeconomic conditions of each province in the Delta.

- Applying technical advances to all stages of production, and preserving the aquatic resources by changing from fishing to sea-farming with eco-friendly methods.

- Ensuring all environmental requirements in all stages of production and adding the environment protecting measures to the socioeconomic development plan.

- Taking a democratic approach by encouraging local communities to take part in preserving the aquatic resources.

- Harmonizing scientific calculations with requirements from the public, and working out tracks and steps of the development plan based on local socioeconomic conditions and intellectual level of local residents.

- Beefing up regulations and policies on the development of the fishing and sea-farming at both central and local levels. ■

