

Factor Inputs of Agricultural Production in TRÀ VINH

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Trà Vinh, with an area of 222,567 hectares, is divided into eight districts: Trà Vinh Town, Càng Long, Cầu Kè, Tiểu Cần, Châu Thành, Trà Cú, Cầu Ngang and Duyên Hải. The National Route 1 A doesn't go by Trà Vinh. The Cổ Chiên River isn't favorable for transport by ships. Such a condition makes it difficult to supply agricultural materials to Trà Vinh and distribution of farm products.

1. Respondents of the survey

In Trà Vinh, the Khmer people and the Vietnamese live side by side (there are groups of Chinese origin living mainly in Trà Vinh Town). I gathered information by taking random samples: 634 Vietnamese respondents representing 68.3% and 294 Khmer ones representing 31.7% of people included in my survey. I issued 928 questionnaires to all districts and the following was the result.

2. Supply of agricultural materials

a. Fertilizers and crop protection chemicals: With a wide range of fertilizers and chemical available on the market, peasants have to acquire full knowledge of their use if they want to improve the output and productivity, and limit damage to the environment.

28.2% of them bought from bigger stores in district towns because they were more demanding. The latter felt that they could get their favorite or high-quality materials. There were 15.8% of buyers who bought materials at random or their convenience.

b. Animal feed: Realities show that peasants used a wide range of animal feed. Broken grain and bran are the most common because they are by-products of rice. The survey shows that 70.5% of peasants used the bran as

suitable doses and in a limited period of time in order to get better quality and quantity. Only 22.1% of peasants used stimulants and 13.4% used fish powder because of their high prices. Other food, such as vegetable and leftover, accounted for 12.9% of the animal feed.

c. Young plants and animals: Survey results show that 60.1% of peasants used grains from the previous harvest to prepare new crops; 25.1% bought young plants from their neighbors; 17.9% bought from other villages and communes; and 14.5% bought plants from other provinces although there was no evidence of their superior quality. This means that the product quality of young plants is not under well control, which in its turn will affect badly the agricultural production.

Direct conversations with peasants show that 51.9% of them bought young animals from neighbors because they thought these animals were good enough. Most of them raised animals for meat and their represented 21.5% of peasants who did animal husbandry at small scale in order to improve their personal income. Some of them were content with young animal bought from the market where no information about their animals was available. Buying young animals

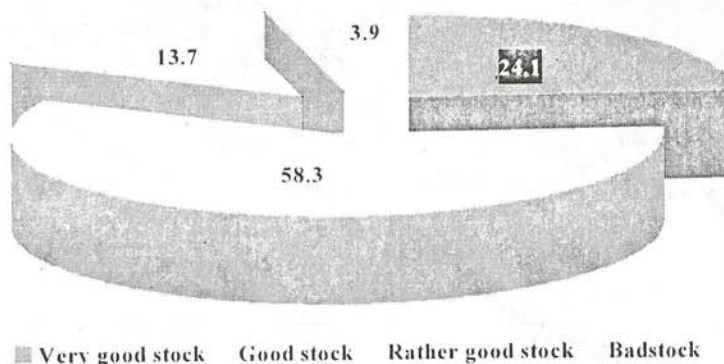
Table 1: Distribution of questionnaires

District	Questionnaire	As %
Cầu Ngang	266	28.7
Châu Thành	245	26.4
Tiểu Cần	93	10.0
Trà Cú	84	9.1
Cầu Kè	79	8.5
Duyên Hải	77	8.3
Càng Long	49	5.3
Trà Vinh Town	35	3.8
Total	928	100.0

Fertilizers and chemicals are sold in various outlets in all hamlets and communes. My survey shows that 56% of peasants bought materials from the most convenient outlets, which saved them from transport cost and sometimes allowed them to defer payments; while

animal feed and 32.9% used broken grains. Ready-mixed feed supplied by local and foreign companies was also used broadly. In fact, 63.2% of peasants used the ready-made feed, mainly in large farms. In addition, stimulants and fish powder were used at

Figure 1: Ability to supply materials by outlets



from specialized animal farms is very rare.

Trà Vinh has favorable conditions for raising cattle, especially cow, so the provincial government has adopted policies to encourage this business. In recent years, many peasants have received new strains of cows supplied by provincial authorities. The program should be maintained and promoted in order to develop the animal husbandry business more steadily.

d. Factors affect the supply of factor inputs:

- Payment terms and conditions: The market competition and shortage of capital common among peasants make sellers of agricultural materials agree to sell on credit. This practice, however, forces peasants to pay higher prices. The survey shows that 55.3% of peasants paid for agricultural materials after sale of their farm products. And 42.3% of peasants could pay for these materials in cash, or sometimes by installment. This fact reveals the widespread shortage of fund among peasants.

When buying animal feed, 61.3% of peasants paid in cash because this item is not dear and they didn't buy large quantities when they could use other sources of food for their animals. As for poorer peasants, they usually paid 66.7% when taking the animal feed home and paid the rest after they sold their products.

The same thing happened to peasants who bought young plants and animals: 86.4% of them paid in cash and the rest paid by installment of after the sale of their products.

As for fertilizers and chemicals, 55.3% of peasants had to buy on credit and pay an interest that varies from 2% (for young animals and feed) to 3.5% (for chemicals). This situation reflects difficulties suffered by peasants,

which led to lower income and higher production cost. To escape from this vicious circle without help is no easy task.

- Reason for buying on credit:

Table 2: Reasons for buying on credit

Reason	Fertilizer and chemical (%)	Animal feed (%)	Young plants and animals (%)
Having no cash	71.5	70.2	50.0
Using fund for other investment	22.8	17.3	15.6
Bad habit	20.7	11.5	4.2
Others	4.4	1.4	1.0

Table 3: Reasons for choosing stores (%)

Reasons	Fertilizer and chemicals	Animal feed	Young plants and animals
Acquaintance	77.5	65.3	36.4
Reliable goods	-	-	47.2
Low prices	10.9	11.3	14.4
Exact measurement	8.4	12.9	-
Convenient place	30.6	23.2	19.0
Credit	45.3	26.3	5.9
Good conversation	9.3	8.7	3.6
High-quality goods	9.8	12.4	-
Free delivery	14.2	4.2	-
Others	1.7	0.8	4.9

- Means of transport: When the network of rural road is developed, the transport by car and motorbike becomes more popular: 69.3% of peasant used motorbike to transport fertilizer and chemicals; 58.7% for animal feed and 51.9% for young plants and animals. The rest transport materials by boat.

- Reasons for choosing stores:

The data show that the main reasons for buying fertilizer and chemical are acquaintance, convenience and credit policy; while the reasons for buying young plants and animal are reliable goods and acquaintance.

3. Some suggestions

- It's necessary to make plan to help peasants

mechanize their production processes and industrialize their agricultural production by providing them with soft loans needed for machines and large-scale production.

- Encouraging the supply of young plants and animals of new strain from research centers is the cheapest measure that could improve the output.

- Local governments

should encourage and help peasants to specialize their business in order to change into the commercial farming.

- Free training courses must be supplied to peasants in order to help them apply new techniques. In addition, financial incentives could be used for attracting young technicians from big cities and encouraging the youth in rural areas to take training courses or keep learning.

- Local governments should make master plans to develop the network of marketplace and roads with a view to expanding the network of distribution of agricultural materials. ■

