

Fishery in Cần Giỏi 1991 2003

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Fishery has been recognized as the key business in Cần Giỏi, a coastal district of HCMC, for some decades, especially since the workshop on Cần Giỏi economy held by HCMC government in 19981. And since then a lot of resolutions by the VCP Unit and decisions by district authorities in the past 20 years have reaffirmed this.

1. Natural conditions and population

Cần Giỏi is to the south of HCMC with an area of 71,361 hectares equaling one third of the HCMC area. It is bordered by many rivers (Lồng Tàu, Cái Mép, Gò Gia, Soài Rạp and Đồng, Châu thành and Nhơn Trạch Districts (Đồng Nai Province) to the east; Cần Giuộc (Long An) and Gò Công Đông (Tiền Giang) to the west, Nhà Bè District (HCMC) to the north and the East Sea to the south.

With such a geographical position, Cần Giỏi becomes the only coastal district of HCMC, the biggest city of the country. It has great potentials for fishery, sea farming, tourism and port services. Its northern communes, adjacent to the Nhà Bè District, have been attracted strongly to the city. Up to now, this tendency has spread over the whole district but its relations with surrounding districts are still maintained.

Cần Giỏi could cooperate with Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu in developing tourism, supply of services to offshore oil rigs, and fishing business; or with Long An and Tiền Giang in forestry and fishing in inland waters.

In the first census after the Liberation Day in 1977, the population of the Duyên Hải District (including the present Cần Giỏi) was only 33,060 persons. In 1985, the Cần Giỏi population was 39,698 and it rose steadily over years, partly by the flow of migrant from the inner city.

In 2000, the population rose to 60,302 persons: 38.92% of them lived in Cần Thạnh, Long Hòa and Thạnh An Communes and the rest in Tam Thôn Hiệp, Lý Nhơn, An Thới Đông and Bình Khánh Communes. The fishery output from the whole district in 2000 was worth VND173,124 billion, three times higher than value of the rice output.

2. Cần Giỏi fishery in 1991-95

In this period, local authorities started to encourage shrimp farming of larger scale and provided farmers with technical assistance, younglings, and

disease control and helped them find buyers. Many private persons made big investments in turning rice or vacant fields into shrimp ponds. In the years 1991-95, the shrimp area rose to 780 hectares making a great change to the farming structure.

Besides shrimp, peasants also raised other mollusks on marshy land along the beach or river mouths. Some 3,000 hectares of marshy land along the beach were turned into breeding fields producing some 20,000 tons of clams every year. These mollusks accounted for some 50% of the fishery output.

Coastal and inland waters fishing also developed. Deep-water fishing started to make progress due to financial and technical support from the Government. From 18 fishing boats formerly belonging to the state-owned fishing company, the number of fishing boats rose to 90 in 1994 marking

a great effort by Cần Giỏi fisherpersons after the economic reform because they had no experience of deep-water fishing before.

With developments in both fishing and sea farming businesses, the Cần Giỏi fishery output increased fast in this period, by some 10.1% a year, helping improve the local standard of living: 60% of poor families in Cần Thạnh and Long Hòa Communes were better off by breeding clams on coastal land; thousands of laborers living on rice farming made more money by raising grass shrimps.

In the 1990 gross output, the agricultural sector accounted for 34%, manufacturing 36.4% and service 29.6%. These figures reflected an important change in the structure of industry and the production and processing aquatic products became the leading industry in Cần Giỏi.



Photo by Hoàng Tuấn

The fishery output in 1990 was worth VND13,027 billion (in 1989 price). Value of manufactured goods (mainly processed aquatic products) rose from VND2,400 billion in 1985 to 4,475 billion in 1990 and 24,485 billion in 1995.

Increases in the fishery output allowed more processed aquatic products for export. The export value rose from US\$2.7 million in 1985 to 5.2 million in 1990 and fell to 3.4 million in 1995.

3. Cần Giờ fishery in 1996-2003

In the years 1996-2000,

salt fields) making the shrimp area rise to 780 hectares out of 2,600 hectares used for sea farming. Most shrimp farming models, especially raising shrimp in rice fields, generated high incomes. Its profitability ratio varied from 0.5 to 1.5 within a season from three to four months.

In the years 2001-2003, local authorities have tried their best to supply low-interest loans and other incentives to the deep-water fishing fleet, encourage all classes to engage in the fishing business, diversify fishing equipment needed for each season,

pursuit of the self-sufficiency was abandoned, so peasants could use their land as they wish. Many policies and measures were taken to tap potentials for fishery, develop supporting services, and encourage the private sector to expand the market for aquatic products.

The target set for the next period is a growth rate of 13% a year for the fishery business.

Ten years after the economic reform was launched is an important step in the Vietnamese economy: the market mechanism came into being, growth rates were

slow down. Local fisherperson, based on their own resources and efforts, have adjusted themselves quickly to the new mechanism and made their business gain the growth rate of 11%. This achievement originated from internal resources rather than support from the HCMC government except for public investment in the infrastructure projects.

Progress made by the Cần Giờ fishery, in both farming and fishing, supply of raw materials and processing of finished goods, has helped it play well the role of a key industry in the economic re-



Photo by Hoàng Tuấn

the fishery rose by 8.2% a year allowing fisherpersons to increase the number of deep-water fishing boats to 104. Their total installed capacity doubled in comparison with 1995. The clam breeding business increased its area to some 3,000 hectares and accounted for 50% of the fishery output.

By the end of the century, programs to reclaim land and change the agricultural structure helped develop the grass shrimp raising business with more advanced methods (such as intensive farming or rotational farming on rice or

struggle against overexploitation of marine resources, and link the fishing business with coastal defense. The mollusk raising in coastal communes and grass shrimp farming on low-yield rice fields were also encouraged on condition that they didn't go against the master planning.

Besides low-interest loans, local authorities also supplied technical assistance and even made direct investment in the shrimp raising business. During this period, the policy to maintain certain area for rice planting in

high, the living standard was improved. Each district and province, based on its potentials, has taken part actively in the transition to the market economy.

The fishery has been recognized as the key industry since the 1980s. In 1985 this industry made a great step forward due to support by the central government to the most backward and the only coastal district in HCMC. In the first five years of the 10-year period after the economic reform, bad weather and shortage of capital made the development

form in 1986-1995 and keep on playing well its role in the HCMC development plan for the years 2005-2020.

Why Cần Giờ, as a high-ranking official of the HCMC government put it, couldn't develop its own fleet of deep-water fishing boats that could operate outside the Vietnam territorial waters when HCMC has potentials for scientific research and advances and reliable source of capital? It may well be a right direction for the future development of Cần Giờ. ■