



AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS IN THE INDUSTRIALIZATION PROCESS

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With an area of 46,188 hectares and a population of 177,067 people, Cao Lãnh district is of medium size in the Mekong Delta.

The local economic structure is arranged in order of importance as: agriculture-service and trading-manufacturing industry. The district is on the eastern gate of the Đồng Tháp province by the national route 80, therefore Cao Lãnh-HCM communication is very convenient. This geographical location facilitates the development of trading and tourism businesses.

Knowing advantages of the district, local authorities, just after the Liberation Day, have decided to invest in agriculture. Achievements in economic development in the past, especially from 1990 until now, justifi-

fied this decision. Positive changes in agriculture policies of the government and the Party have had profound effects on district agriculture and society.

The national power grid has spreaded over all 18 villages of the district. 30% of local households have been supplied with electricity. The road network is developed and cars could go to almost villages. In the district, 23,900 households (78%) earn their living from farming, 183 ones (0.6%) from handicrafts, 1,606 (5%) from trading and service and 4,930 ones (16%) from other occupations.

Rice is the main production of the district. local authorities have invested money and energy to increase rice farming area from 44,960 hectares in 1990 to 54,516 hectares

in 1995. In this period, rice yield and output have increased year after year: the yield per hectare in one crop rose from 4.5 tonnes in 1990 to 4.95 tonnes in 1995; the output from 202,800 to 270,260 tonnes in the same period. The per capita output increased from 1,200kg in 1990 to 1,500 kg in 1995.

In order to get these results, local authorities have spent money on digging 2,774,000 cubic meters of earth to make many irrigation canals, so 90% of farming area could be watered at any time. New rice seeds are introduced to all farmers and IPM method of protecting rice crops is applied. Over 80% of farmers are given certificate of land use right. 50% of farmer households are supplied with productive credit totalling VNĐ46 billion. There are 2,300 hectares of fruit orchard in the district,

1,520 hectares of specialized orchard, 5,000 hectares of annuals and other crops. The problems with these crops (excluding rice) are: low yield, bad product quality, fluctuations in prices, etc.

Thus, the agricultural production of the district is still the monocultural one, rice is the staple product, the technique of rotating crops isn't introduced, thus the potential of land and labor wasn't exploited fully.

Industrialization and modernization is considered as a way to get away from the monocultural production of low yield in rural areas. The report of the VCP Central Committee in mid-term conference said that "this is the most important task in the coming years" and "To develop manufacturing industry and industrialize rural areas is central to the alteration of economic structure and development of rural economy".

In order to develop the agricultural production, we have to change the structure of crops and domestic animals, increase forest area and exploit area used for maricultural production. Local authorities should concentrate their efforts on developing market gardening with a view to modernizing the production.

In developing market gardening, that is, to produce agricultural products for sale, they should be mass-produced and reach the standard and quality required by the market. So in the district, its 24,000 hectares of rice should be farmed intensively, the area for farming other crops should be expanded, the technique of rotating crops should be introduced to farmers. In animal husbandry business, by 2000 the number of pig kept in the district should be at least 30,000. Existing area of 500 hectares used for sea farming should be exploited fully.

Irrigation, drainage, struggle against flood and inundation are also problems we should pay attention to and invest enough money and labor in making system of canals and dykes.

Introduction of new seeds, especially high-yield seeds of rice; application of IPM method of protecting crops; reduction of usage of chemical fertilizers are also necessary to the development of local agricultural production.

As for the administrative machinery, it should complete the task of issuing certificate of land-use rights to farmers in order to help them feel assured about their investment in farming. Moreover, local authorities should try their best to supply enough credits and all kinds of

SADEC: ITS POTENTIALS AND PROSPECTS

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Sadec town has been an economic and cultural center of Đồng Tháp and surrounding provinces for a long time. Being in the south of Tiền River, by the national route 80 and convenient waterways, Sadec has had close economic and cultural relations with HCMC and other provinces in the Mekong Delta.

Of 48.4 km² of Sadec's area, 69% are of alluvial soil of high fertility which is appropriate to fruit trees, rice and perennials needed for agro-industries. The climate there is temperate, stable, storm-free and thus, appropriate to agricultural development.

Its population of 100,000 people (58% of which are working population) is free from illiteracy. Therefore, Sadec has a reliable labor force for the development of manufacturing and service industries.

Based on its potentials, Sadec has achieved many results in socio-economic and cultural development.

Many long-lasting handicrafts have been developed: bánh phồng tôm (rice paper made from rice flour and ground shrimp) output is 100 tonnes per day. Tapioca and Chinese noodle output is some 45 tonnes per day. Small industries and handicrafts in Sadec comprising over 1,200 concerns have supplied 5,000 jobs and VNĐ84 billion worth of products. Rice exporting business has developed recently and 74 rice mills with total output of 5,000 tonnes of rice for export have made their appearance in Sadec.

The service industry represents an increasingly high percentage in Sadec structure of industry (62% of provincial gross product) because of Sadec's various attractions (the environment, landscape, geographical conditions, etc.)

Bonsai and flower is also one staples of Sadec. There are 882 households specializing in producing bonsai and flower on 77 ha (representing 27% in local agricultural structure). Sadec bonsai and flower are sold in both domestic and foreign markets. Sadec flower gardens are also tourist attractions.

A new occupation in Sadec is to keep fish in cages put under waters. Although it is newly developed but could bring fish-keepers remarkable income.

Sport and cultural activities are also developed in Sadec, many athletes such as Đào Thiện Hải, Khương Thị Hồng Nhung, Nguyễn Thị Tường Vân... are trained in Sadec.

However, on its way to development, Sadec meets with the same difficulties as other provinces. They are the poor infrastructure; shortages of capital, technology, skilled workers and market.

Considering both potentials and difficulties, Sadec authorities has set forth the following targets for its course of development from now until the twenty-first century:

- To develop traditional industries, especially the bonsai and flower business, and market gardening with a view to creating more jobs.
- To develop tourism and service businesses, and pay more attention to the development of manufacturing industry, handicrafts and agriculture.

Based on its potentials and right policies, Sadec is willing to cooperate with both domestic and foreign investors in order to develop the local economy■

agricultural materials needed for agricultural production such as fertilizer, insecticide, petrol and fuel, etc.

In the industrialization process, there must be technological unemployment. These unemployed could find jobs in trading and service businesses. Local authorities could give priority to businesses helping with agricultural production such as supplying agricultural materials, processing agricultural products... As for tourism business, fruit orchards and

unpolluted landscape could be made into tourist attractions in the district. This business can supply more jobs and a considerable source income to laborers. This process of labor division, in its turn, will contribute remarkably to the industrialization and modernization.

Only basic changes in the economic structure in the direction of industrialization could help Cao Lãnh survive challenges and difficulties, and keep pace with other localities■