



# NAM ĐỊNH RURAL AREAS ON THEIR WAY TO MODERNIZATION

by NGUYỄN VĂN SINH

**N**am Định is a province in the Hồng Delta with an area of 1,671 sq.km. and a population of 1.9 million people (1999), 87.6% of them live in rural areas and 81% of them live on agriculture. In the past decade, its people and government have tried their best to modernize rural areas and industrialize the agricultural production, and it has been among provinces that produce annually more than one million tonnes of food for the past few years.

As one of the most populous provinces, Nam Định authorities have paid full attention to measures to change the structure of crops: reducing rice growing areas, replacing rice with other crops of higher values, and encouraging market-oriented intensive farming. Technical assistance and agricultural materials have been made available for farmers in an effort to help them increase their produce both quantitatively and qualitatively. Millions of đồngs from the agricultural extension fund are supplied annually to the pro-

grams to introduce new strains of rice and develop zones producing rice of high quality for export.

In 1999, new strains of rice were sowed in 85% of the rice growing area, and hybrid strain Tạp giao was used in 56% of the sowed area. The average rice yield reached 11.77 tonnes per hectare (increasing by 16.2% as compared with 1996) and the rice output was 973.858 tonnes that year (increasing by 16.8%) and 50,195 tonnes of this output are of high quality. This was the third successive year Nam Định came first in rice yield.

Besides developing the intensive farming, Nam Định government also considered the winter crop as an important measure to increase the food output, create more jobs for rural residents and improve their living standard. Many agricultural cooperatives in Nam Định developed the winter crop into a third crop of the year. An additional maize crop in rice fields has helped increase the food output of Nam Định. In 1999, hybrid strains of maize used in 70%

of the maize growing area made the maize yield rise by 18% as compared with 1996 and increased the maize output to 16.500 tonnes. Due to these improvements, the food output in Nam Định in 1999 equaled 1,014,961 tonnes of rice, increasing by 15.5% as compared with 1996.

In producing hybrid rice seed F1, 340 hectares have been used during six crops in the years 1997-99 to produce 580 tonnes of seeds. This production helped encourage the use of new rice strain, save a lot of foreign exchange and reduce dependence on foreign supply. It was planned that Nam Định would ensure its own supply of the rice seed F1 by 2002. Many agricultural cooperatives in Nam Định, such as Hồng Tiến, Nam Ninh, Minh Tân, Cốc Thành, Xuân Kiên, Trúc Thái, Trung Lao, Nghĩa Hồng and Nghĩa Sơn, succeeded greatly in producing rice seeds of this strain.

Besides producing rice, Nam Định also started to change the structure of crops. Mixed farming has been introduced to farmers. At present, most farming land is planted with two rice

crops along with a vegetable crop a year (maize, potato or soybean). This measure helps increase the land use ratio and raises the income per hectare to VND30 million a year. Soybean and peanut are also considered important short season crops and developed in terms of area, output and average yield. A remarkable proportion of the output has been exported (in 1999 for example, Nam Định exported 3,500 tonnes of peanut and 6,000 tonnes of potato).

As for gardening economy, areas of many fruit trees of high value (lon-

Định produced 30,000 tonnes of seafood. With some 1,200 fishing boats and numerous fishery farms, Nam Định could offer for sale in both domestic and foreign markets a wide range of seafood, including shrimp, blue-legged prawn, turtle, catfish, Chinese ide and Indian carp.

Although the agricultural production in Nam Định has made good progress, its government decided that manufacturing and service industries in rural areas should be developed with a view to generating new sources of income for rural resi-

to now, the irrigation system including 279 floodgates and 320 pumping stations equipped with 2,800 pumping machines can supply water to 78,000 hectares and drain water from 94,000 hectares; equaling 70% of the farming area in the province. Many stages of farming business have been mechanized: preparation of soil, threshing and milling.

Due to development of all industries and infrastructure, the living standard in Nam Định has been better: the hunger before harvest time was removed, the proportion of poor



gan, litchi, sugar apple, areca and kaki persimmon) are on the increase. The ornamental gardening has been developed in many districts, especially in Vy Khê (Nam Trực district) where there are thousand gardens that are worth from VND100 to 500 million each.

The animal husbandry business has developed quicker than the crop farming because of the growth of food production. In 1999, the amount of pigs rose by 26%, cattle 7%, and poultry 22% in comparison with 1996. Many new strains of animals were imported and became common among breeders, and as a result, the quality of animal husbandry products was improved remarkably. The animal husbandry in Nam Định has come to the stage of stable development and represented an increasing proportion in the gross agricultural output.

The sea farming and fishing business increased annually by 11% in the past few year. In 1999, Nam

dents. At present, many traditional handicrafts and light industries are developed in Nam Định, they supply thousands of jobs to laborers and billions of đồng worth of products: the most successful in Nam Định are engineering industry in Xuân Trường district, lacquerware in Cát Đằng, wood carving in La Xuyên, bronzes in Tống Xá and Đồng Qũi, textile in Liên Tỉnh and Phương Đẽ, lace in Nam Thái, bicycle spare parts in Đồng Côi and wooden furniture in Trung Lao. The food processing industry is also developed well. In 1999, the industrial output by non-public sectors was worth over VND500 billion (1994 fixed price) with an annual growth rate of 10%.

The service industry started its initial development in recent years, providing some essential consumer and professional services.

After being separated from Hà Nam Ninh, the provincial public fund has supplied hundred billions of đồng to infrastructure projects. Up

family was reduced to 8%. Many families could build new houses, and bought agricultural machinery and domestic appliances. In 1999, all rural households were supplied with power from the national grid; black-topped roads were extended to all villages; middle schools and health centers were found in all villages; the telephone per people ratio was 1.6%; 50% of families owned TV sets, 90% owned radios and 13% owned motor-bikes.

As for the education service, 56 out of 292 primary schools in Nam Định reached national standards and the amount of students and teachers of the A grade is always at the highest level in Nam Định.

Nam Định, in spite of recent developments, is still an agricultural province. Many great efforts are needed in the future to change its structure of industry and help Nam Định keep pace with other cities and provinces. ■