

## I. MAIN TRENDS OF CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF CROPS IN 2001-2003

### 1. Changes in the structure of grain crops

The most apparent is the change from rice of low yield to maize and rice of higher yield. This trend led to increases in the area of winter-spring rice crop

In districts where the rice growing wasn't favorable and profitable enough, vegetables have gradually replaced the rice. Areas of non-rice crops increased fast over past three years: fruit by 11%, annual plant by 7.6%, root crops by 6.9% and vegetables by 5.8%. As for perennial plants, fast increases were found in planting of tea, black pepper, rubber and cashew.

litchi, longan and plum, are saleable on both local and foreign markets. In 2002, the gross output of five main groups of fruit (orange and mandarin, banana, mango, longan and litchi, pineapple and rambutan) reached 2,643,000 tons, increasing by 8.6% compared with 2000.

### 3. Seafarming on old rice fields

santly in 2003: 41% in Kiên Giang and 38% in Sóc Trăng for example. In other provinces, even in HCMC, this movement is still continuing.

## II. ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM THE CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF CROPS

### 1. Increases in income and export value from a hectare

When the area of rice of bad yield decreased and new strains were introduced, the quality and output of good rice became more stable, and a bigger percentage of the rice output reached the standards for export. In 2001, the rice yield was 4.29 tons per

# Better Use of Land During Changes in The Structure of Crops

by Ass. Prof. Dr. NGUYỄN SINH CÚC

because the weather is very favorable for rice during this time. In other seasons other crop will replace the rice. In the total area of rice in a year, the share of area of this rice crop rose from 39.7% in 2000 to 40.4% in 2002 and 40.6% in 2003.

Although the grain output, and the rice in particular, increased slowly in the past three years, the food safety was still secured. Vietnam suffered no shortage of food even after serious natural disasters. Moreover, it kept on exporting rice: 3.55 million tons in 2001, 3.2 million tons in 2002 and 4 million tons in 2003.

Another fact was the rise in area and output of maize. The share of maize in the grain output rose from 6.2% in 2001 to 6.8% in 2002 and 7.6% in 2003. The maize area increased to 894,000 hectares in 2003 rising by 9.6% over 2002 while its output was 2,848,600 tons, increasing by 13.4%. These increases allowed animal feed factories to stop importing maize.

### 2. Vegetables and perennial plants as replacements for rice

Table 1: Benefit from changes in the use of old rice fields

	Unit	2000	2001	2002	2003 (est.)
Rice area	1,000 ha	4,268	4,148	4,062	4,031
Yield	Ton/ha/year	7.62	7.70	8.46	8.58
Output	1,000 ton	32,529.5	32,108.4	34,447.2	34,597.0
Average selling price	VND1,000/ton	2,086.6	2,024.0	2,115.0	2,201.0
Value of rice output	VND bil.	65,487	64,986	72,855	76,113
Income from a hectare	VND mil.	15.9	15.66	17.93	18.91
Rice for export	1,000 ton	3,476	3,560	3,241	4,000
Price of exported rice (per ton)	US\$/ton	192	185	224	191
Rice export value	US\$mil.	668	568	726	760
Value of exported rice per hectare	US\$/ha	156	137	179	188

Annual plants were also developed remarkably. Their area rose from 845,800 hectares in 2002 to some 900,000 hectares in 2003. This increase came from the demand for raw materials by factories producing clothing, sugar and soya sauce.

The area of fruits increased fast in Eastern South, the Hồng Delta and mountainous provinces in the North. The fruit area rose from 609,600 hectares in 2001 to 677,000 in 2002 and 708,000 in 2003. Many fruits, such as grape, mango, pineapple, orange,

In coastal marshland where rice couldn't be grown, peasants have turned it into ponds for raising shrimp and fish. This practice became a movement in the past three years in southern provinces, especially in Cà Mau, Sóc Trăng, Bạc Liêu and Kiên Giang; and some 200,000 hectares of such land were converted this way. The area of winter-spring rice kept contracting. It reduced by 24,200 hectares in 2002 and 10,200 hectares in 2003 while the area of seafarming land increased inces-

hectare, but the output reduced by 600,000 tons in comparison with 2000. In 2002, the average yield was 4.59 tons and output increased by 2.3 million tons. These figures in 2003 were 4.64 tons and 224,000 tons. Decreases in the rice area and output helped keep the supply and demand in balance. The average price of rice in 2003 rose by 20% in comparison with 2001, which made rice planters happier because of higher income. According to a survey of the summer-fall rice crop conducted by the An Giang

Statistics Service, the production cost was VND1,203 per kilo while the wholesale price was VND2,100 per kilo. This means that the peasant could earn from VND3 to 3.5 million from a hectare. This was the most encouraging improvement for peasants. Benefits from changes in the structure of crops are on the increase.

In comparison with 2000, the rice area in 2003 decreased by 215,000 hectares but its output rose by 2,068,000 tons and its value rose by VND8,225

grape with an average yield of 7 tons a hectare. The average sale from a hectare varied from VND70 to 100 million that brought in a profit of some VND45 million.

Besides increases in the area, yield and output, the quality of fruits was also improved and local fruits could compete against foreign ones. Earnings from export of fruits started to rise: US\$200 million in 2001, 220 million in 2002 and 140 million in 2003. Many districts got rich by selling

years 2001-03. Export value from this business rose from US\$1.8 billion in 2001 to over 2 billion in 2002 and 2.3 billion in 2003.

In Cà Mau, after the Government allowed peasants to use bad rice fields for seafarming, this business developed very well creating a lot of new jobs and brought in high income. Fish and shrimp were staple products. In the value of seafarming output, the share of shrimp rose from 22% to 23% in 2002-03, the share of fish

gained the highest growth rate (about 18.5% a year).

#### 4. Current shortcomings

Although changes in the structure of crops have led to higher efficiency in the use of land, the process revealed some shortcomings. The biggest one is the low stability. The changes are unruly and not well planned. This feature is very apparent in the shrimp farming in coastal areas in southern provinces. There can't be a common solution to the problem for all provinces



billion due to higher prices on the world market. In 2003, a hectare of rice brought in VND18.9 million on average, VND2 million higher than in 2000. Similarly, a hectare of rice in 2003 brought in US\$188 by exporting rice, US\$32 higher than in 2000 due to better quality and higher prices.

#### 2. Higher income and value from a hectare of fruit

In the years 2001-03, the fruit area in Vietnam rose 137,000 hectares with the highest increases found in the Mekong and Hồng Deltas. In this period, Ninh Thuận peasants grew 1,576 hectares of

fruits in the past three years, such as Lục Ngạn (Bắc Giang) Đông Triều (Quảng Ninh), Bắc Hà (Lào Cai), Trấn Yên (Yên Bái), Ninh Phước (Ninh Thuận), Hàm Tân (Bình Thuận), Thống Nhất (Đồng Nai), Long Hồ (Vĩnh Long), Cái Bè and Cai Lậy (Tiền Giang), Lai Vung (Đồng Tháp) and Châu Thành (Bến Tre).

#### 3. Higher income and export value from a hectare of seafarming

The seafarming area rose from 798,000 hectares in 2002 to 885,000 hectares in 2003. In the primary sector, the seafarming gained the highest growth rate, 10.8%, in the

from 57% to 59% in the same period. Many new techniques were introduced to the remotest villages, which helped improve the quality of products. In Bạc Liêu and Sóc Trăng alone, the area used for raising shrimp with industrial and semi-industrial techniques made a threefold increase in 2002. Peasants in many provinces also kept fish in rice fields, that is, they grew a rice crop in the field and kept fish after harvesting rice. This practice provided them with higher income.

Of the products from the seafarming business, the shrimp was the most saleable and profitable, which explained why it

from north to south but local governments have failed to work out a plan suitable to conditions in their home province. In addition, shortage of capital, new techniques and information is widespread among peasants. Most of them do business by learning from others' experience because local governments fail to provide them with technical assistance and planning. Policies and regulations, including the Land Law, fail to encourage and direct the changes in the structure of farm products. In the coming years, these problems must be dealt with properly in order to ensure a sustainable development. ■