

Dồng Tháp is in the Mekong Delta with an area of 3,390 km² and one of the main supplier of rice of the country. It is in the west of Vietnam and is bordered by Kampuchea to the west with a borderline of 52km long, by Long An, Tiền Giang and Vĩnh Long to the southeast and An Giang, Cần Thơ to the southwest. Đồng Tháp includes 9 districts and two towns. Its provincial town is Cao Lãnh. Its population is over 1.5 million people with the population density of 438 persons per km². There is a distance of 160 km between Cao Lãnh and HCMC with good communications. In Cao Lãnh, there is a river port allowing 5,000-tonne liners to anchor.

Being in the Mekong Delta, Đồng Tháp could produce rice and many other agricultural products which could be exported. Every year, thick alluvial deposits are left to Đồng Tháp by Tiền and Hậu rivers. Rice is the principal crop which is grown on 180,000 hectares. By application of modern farming techniques and implementation of new management mechanism, the rice output of Đồng Tháp increased from 641,000 tonnes in 1985 to 1,850,000 tonnes in 1995, over 1 tonnes of which were for sale. At present, new seeds of high yield are being introduced with a view to improving the competitiveness of Đồng Tháp export rice.

In recent years, the structure of crops in Đồng Tháp has been changed profoundly, many zones with different specialties have come into being: longan in Châu Thành (over 1,200 ha), mandarine orange in Lai Vung (over 1,500 ha), soybean in Lai Vung, Thanh Hưng, Cao Lãnh (8,000 ha), flower (Sadec), fish kept in cages in Hồng Ngự, Tân Hồng, Thanh Bình, duck in Tháp Mười... All these products could be mass-produced and exported but they require appropriate investment.

In agricultural production, the second largest source of income (after rice production) comes from animal husbandry. With the temperate climate and an abundant source of animal food, this business has developed well. In 1994, there were nearly 140,000 pigs being kept in Đồng Tháp (that is, a supply of 14,000 tonnes of pig meat), along with 1.2 million ducks, tens of millions of duck eggs have been supplied to domestic and foreign markets.

Manufacturing and handicraft industry in Đồng Tháp have started to develop although it represents only 26% of provincial gross product now. Hundreds of manufacturing and handicraft concerns of different eco-



ĐỒNG THÁP POTENTIALS WAITING TO BE TAPPED

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nomic sectors have come into being, especially in the rice-processing-for-export business. Hundreds of millions đồng were mobilized from the people, tens of thousands of jobs were created. There are two food processing factories in Đồng Tháp: Bích Chi and Sa Giang, which produce *bánh phồng tôm* (rice paper made from rice flour and ground shrimp), chinese noodle, nourishing powder, etc. Other developing businesses are engineering, pharmaceuticals, garment, building materials...

In recent years, many products from Đồng Tháp have been exported in order to import machines, equipment, raw materials and essential goods. Đồng Tháp exports agricul-

tural and maricultural products, clothing... The staple product is rice.

In Đồng Tháp, there are 12 concerns authorized to export rice, 4 of them are specialized export-import companies and 8 are general export-import ones.

In 1994, Đồng Tháp exported US\$ 45,469 million worth of goods and imported US\$56.538 million.

In general, the foreign trade business developed fast. However, it developed unstably and many potentials weren't exploited fully. The main exports are rice (150,000 tonnes), frozen shrimp (143 tonnes), *bánh phồng tôm* (187 tonnes). Đồng Tháp exports are less competitive because their designs, packages and quality did not meet requirements of foreign markets. So Đồng Tháp foreign trade business is badly in need of new technology and experts specialized in marketing and management.

There are many tourist attractions in Đồng Tháp: Đồng Tháp Mười with its romantic rivers and canals; Tam Nông, a paradise for many species of bird on the edge of extinction; Gò Tháp, an archaeological site where remains of Óc Eo civilization were found; numerous ancient buildings in Kiến An, Xẻo Quýt, Cung Chùa Ông Quách... incorporating into a basis for the development of tourism business.

Based on existing potentials, and in order to carry out the plans for development from now until 2000, Đồng Tháp authorities set up different projects to attract both domestic and foreign investment to the agricultural production. Some important projects are: forming zones producing rice for export, growing hybrid maize, keeping fish in cages and shrimp; forming fruit tree orchards in Châu Thành, Lai Vung; raising pig, chicken, duck...

In manufacturing industry, there are projects to produce frozen food for export; process rice for export; upgrade Sa Giang and Bích Chi factories; produce beer, animal food, building materials; upgrade the garment factory...

In addition, local authorities have made plans to improve the infrastructure and build some hotels and tourist resorts. With its abundant potentials, the local economy can develop well if the problems of capital and technology are solved properly.

Đồng Tháp authorities and people welcome all intentions of private persons, organizations or Vietnamese expatriates to carry out researches into the local economy or cooperate in doing business on the mutual beneficial basis ■