

# What I Learned about Agriculture in Vietnam

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## Introduction

I joined the ELCAS program to visit Vietnam. One of the purposes of this trip was to experience its culture. Agriculture varies from place to place so I was interested in what Vietnamese agriculture was like. We visited three farmers and often saw large paddy fields out of the window of the bus in Hue. Rice is the most important product in Vietnam (Fig. 1). I will write about where we visited and what I learned through lectures and interviews.

## Findings

1. Pepper farm: The pepper farm (Fig. 2) is on upland near the sea. The climate and the red soil suits pepper well. Pepper

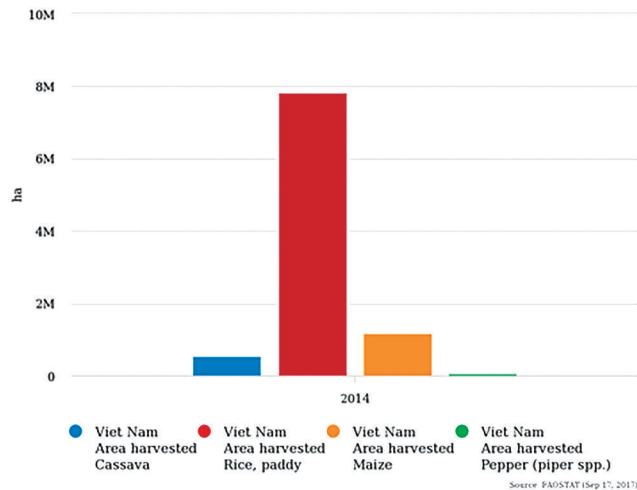


Fig. 1. Production quantity of cassava, rice, maize, and pepper (2014) <sup>(1)</sup>



Fig. 2. Peppers

requires a considerable investment of time, more than three years, and much money to grow well. However, pepper can be sold at higher prices than other products such as cassava. They do not use weed killer. They are busy during the harvest season, so they employ temporary staff for that. They also have banana trees near the pepper and paddy fields in another place.

2. Honey bee farm: The farmer showed us his beehives (Fig. 3). He works with eight other members and they do many types of farming on 0.5 hectares of land. They have rubber trees, chicken, and geese (Fig. 4). After the visit, a Vietnamese student told me that goose eggs are more expensive but less popular than hen's eggs in Vietnam now.

3. Home garden: We are allowed to walk into the ethnic minority's village where they have introduced an ecotourism system. They have many fruit trees, such as Jack fruit (Fig. 5) and star fruit, and small domestic animals around their houses. The families eat the fruits. If the fruits are too many, they sell the extra. These days, they have some vanilla trees that they



Fig. 3. A beehive

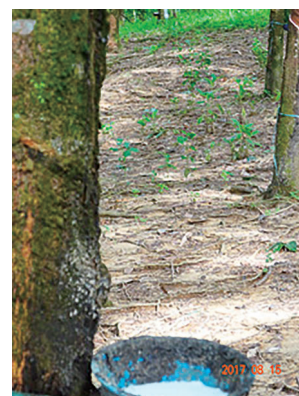


Fig. 4. A rubber tree



Fig. 5. A Jack fruit tree



Fig. 6. A view from the bus

imported from Indonesia to grow vanilla beans and sell them at high prices. They also have acacia woods or cassava fields. Their main job is to grow those products. Their staple food is not cassava but rice, so they sell acacia or cassava to buy rice.

4. Domestic animal: I saw cattle (they might be buffalo) (Fig. 6) and ducks in the fields from the bus window. I heard Vietnamese people have buffaloes, cattle, chickens, ducks, and pigs as domestic animals. People eat eggs and meat and get buffaloes and cattle to plow the field. Animal excrement is good manure in the fields.

I was impressed that they have many ideas for agriculture. First, they sometimes choose commercial products to get high income. One example of this is pepper. Its small grain has a strong flavor so it is sold at a high price. Vanilla also has the same advantage. Second, they started to grow products that originally came from foreign countries. Vanilla is from Central and South America. Cassava is also from there, but the production quantity is increasing (Fig. 7) because it is so strong that it can grow easily everywhere. People have taken crops originally from other places since ancient times. I see a wide range of crops as a part of globalization. Third, they usually grow more than one type of crop. The pepper farm grows rice, too. The honeybee farm grows domestic animals and rubber trees, and the ethnic groups have their home gardens. Vietnam

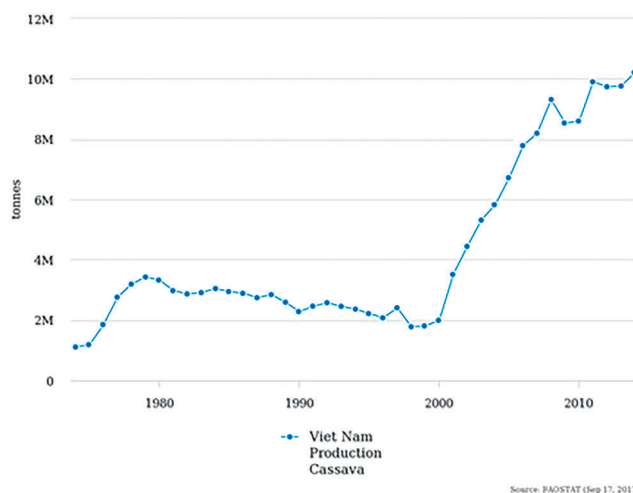


Fig. 7. Production quantity of cassava (1974–2014) <sup>(1)</sup>

has a system of combining products and animals, such as the garden–pond–animal (VAC) systems, the crop–buffalo/cattle production systems, and the rice–ducks system. They can recycle waste products and reduce agricultural chemicals. <sup>(2)</sup>

## Conclusion

I noticed that I had not fully understood the importance of agriculture. The number of farmers has been decreasing in Japan, but agriculture is what supports our daily lives. They challenge many things to grow value-added products and make their lives better. Also, they use the green method of agriculture. I think we have to consider about which kind of agriculture is good for the environment as well as for humans.

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