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News from A4NH

FOCUS: Vietnam

A Note from the Director

Through 2020 and into 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for continued emphasis on food and nutrition security, food system resilience, food safety, and One Health – all integral pieces of the A4NH research portfolio. Also made clear are the importance of equity and deliberate actions for supporting inclusive food systems transformation. A4NH researchers and their many partners in Vietnam and around the world have been working hard to address these development challenges, with an eye toward determining how to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are pleased to bring you recent highlights of that work.

John McDermott, Director, A4NH

Update: A4NH Project on Efforts to Contribute to the Zero Hunger National Program for SDG 2 in Vietnam

Tuyen Huynh, A4NH Country Coordinator for Vietnam and Research Associate at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, continues to be an active member of the Appraisal Committee for training materials for the Zero Hunger National Action Program, which enables A4NH and its food systems research products to inform the policy making process on nutrition-sensitive work in Vietnam. *Learn more*: https://a4nh.cgiar.org/files/2020/05/FSHD-in-Vietnam-May-2020-update.pdf

Continued Engagement with National Stakeholders and Partners

The A4NH Country Coordination and Engagement Unit (CCE) has actively and proactively engaged in country dialogue with different partners and stakeholders through platforms linked to agriculture, food safety, nutrition, and health to create an enabling environment for A4NH research in Vietnam.

Regionally, A4NH's country coordinator in Vietnam has disseminated A4NH food systems profiles along the rural-urban transect in a virtual conference, on transforming food systems in Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines and Cambodia, held in July 2020. Nationally, continued engagement in the Nutrition Technical Working Group enables A4NH to contribute to the Nutrition Action Plan with nutrition-sensitive components and collaborations with other NGOs.

A4NH also collaborated with the Zero Hunger Office, the National Institute of Nutrition, and the Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Science to share multi-stakeholder participatory and science-based process for food systems solutions in Vietnam at a partner event titled Food Systems Fit for Purpose. *Learn more:* http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Events/October_Event/PE5-Summary.pdf

Food Systems Profiles at A4NH Benchmark Sites Along Rural-Urban Transect

Following a successful implementation of the Partial Food Systems Baseline Assessment at the Vietnam Benchmark Sites under A4NH in 2018, the food systems profile is a visualized product developed in collaboration with local authorities to provide a synopsis of the food systems. The final profiles of three benchmark sites, Moc Chau, Dong Anh, Cau Giay, a comparison profile a comparison profile, and its full report have been completed. Building on them, the policy engagement process was conducted from August to October 2020 with local authorities at the three sites, to prioritize local food systems issues and identify possible demand-based actions and interventions. The final report will be published in 2021.

Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Intake of Low-income Populations through Food Systems Innovations

In 2020, the prototype co-creation process with more than fifty fruit and vegetable retailers in Hanoi was finalized, while the retail-level prototypes in four wards

of Hanoi were also launched. The market-level assessment (MLA) survey analysis and report of selected fruit and vegetable retailers were completed, as well. In 2021, there will be an implementation of the retail-level prototypes and the food flows maps from MLA and other research products.

Agroecology and Safe Food Systems Transitions (ASSET)
Launched in July 2020, ASSET is a five-year project aiming to transform the Agro-ecology Learning alliance in South East Asia (ALiSEA) platform into a knowledge hub that synergizes stakeholder engagement and initiatives to achieve ASSET up to the regional level. The project was officially kicked off in November 2020, with implementation beginning in January 2021.

Update from the Field
The data collection for the Missing Middle project: Food system transformation pathways to link action at multiple levels to SDGs 2, 12, 13 and 15 in Tanzania and Vietnam has been completed in December 2020. The data analysis and data collection on intermediary activities and lock-ins will be finalized in 2021.

Project Tackling Parasitic Diseases in Pigs Ends with Agreement with Local Partners to Continue Behavior Change Interventions
In late 2020, animal and human health experts gathered in Hoa Binh Province to discuss dissemination of the findings and recommendations of the recently-concluded 'Safer indigenous pork and healthier ethnic minorities in Vietnam through better management of parasitic pig-borne diseases' project.

These findings were from a survey of 352 pigs in 131 surveyed pig farms and 300 community members. Only six pigs tested positive for cysticercosis and only two volunteers tested positive for cysticercosis and/or trichinellosis. However, the study revealed that certain risky practices, such as raising pigs in free-range systems and consuming raw or undercooked pork, still occurred and could spread these diseases. The project team recommended improved pork production and changes in pork consumption practices to further reduce disease risk. Promoting these changes was the focus of the project's interventions.

The project raised awareness among farmers and consumers about the nature and risks of food-borne zoonotic pathogens, to better prevent and control diseases in pigs. The team used targeted behavior change communication materials with messages promoting hand washing with soap when handling and before eating pork and educated farmers and households members on proper cooking techniques to prevent parasite spread. Regular mass deworming for people in the province was also carried out.

A major co-output of this and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)-funded SafePORK project was the registration of a Ban pig breed by Hoa Binh authorities. Local partners are now promoting the local Ban pigs and training butchers affiliated with province's the Ban Pig Cooperative on good hygiene practices at slaughter, parasite detection, and food safety practices.

Planning Workshop for SafePORK Project
In November 2020, the 'Market-based approach to improving the safety of pork in Vietnam,' or SafePORK, project team and partners held a planning workshop, hosted by the International Livestock Research Institute to discuss key accomplishments and set goals for 2021 and beyond.

Though facing delays due to COVID-19, the project saw several achievements in 2020, the third year of implementation. Interventions have been implemented and scaled up in a participatory approach starting with one medium-scale slaughterhouse and two traditional markets in Tien Lu District, Hung Yen Province.

Participants agreed to continue low-cost food safety interventions at key points of the pork value chain and risk communication in 2021. Food safety interventions receiving support at policy level such as the intervention package at slaughterhouses will be scaled up in collaboration with the private sector.

Risk communication activities on food safety began in mid-2020 in Hung Yen and Nghe An provinces, targeting local food safety authorities, key members of communal unions and consumers. Risk communication will be further rolled out using a hands-on food safety training led by the trained community members with gradually declining support of project researchers. Responding to increased community demands, training will expand in 2021 to food handlers and managers in school canteens.