

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

STRENGTHENING THE FRAMEWORK FOR PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN NORTHERN VIETNAM 2016 - 2019



Ha Noi, June 2019



PROJECT

STRENGTHENING THE FRAMEWORK FOR PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN NORTHERN VIETNAM 2016 -2019

Implemented by
Agricultural Development Denmark Asia (ADDA)
and Viet Nam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA)

This final evaluation was conducted by
Consultative Institute for Socio-Economic Development of
Rural and Mountainous Areas (CISDOMA)



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ACRONYMS

ADDA	Agricultural Development Denmark Asia
CC	Climate change
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
EM	Ethnic Minorities
FGD	Focus group discussion
HHs	Households
IDIs	In-Depth Interviews
KII	Key informant interview
OA	Organic Agriculture
OCOP	One commune one product
OPs	Organic Products
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PGS	Participatory Guaranty System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
VOAA	Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association

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- Staffs of Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA) for making suggestions and providing information relating to organizing, implementing of the project; compilation of information on the activities and results of the project; coordinating with partners to collect information and implement field activities.
- Field staffs, Coordination board PGS and implementing partners in Luong Son, Tan Lac (Hoa Binh), Ham Yen, Son Duong, Yen Son (Tuyen Quang) for coordinating the field assessments, collecting information, and sharing on the project activities.
- Representatives of local authorities in Tan Lac, Luong Son district of Hoa Binh, Tuyen Quang Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for supporting with necessary administrative support during the field works, and for participating to working sessions with the evaluation team.

Evaluation team especially appreciates the collaboration and support of farmer groups, clubs, cooperatives at project sites, who provided essential information and comments, without which, this assessment could not have been completed.

The evaluation team

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SUMMARY

ADDA Vietnam, in collaboration with Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA) and local partners collaborated on the project “Strengthening the Framework for Production and Marketing of Organic Agricultural Products in Northern Vietnam” since April 2016. The project was funded by Danish Civil Society in Development (CISU). The project locations were were 6 districts in Hoa Binh and Tuyen Quang provinces. This project aimed at supporting poor farmer groups in improving income by developing Organic Agricultural Products and connect with the market. The final evaluation was conducted by external consultant group led by Consultative Institute for Socio-Economic Development of Rural and Mountainous Areas – CISDOMA from May to June 2019. The assessment was conducted through interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires survey with 192 people representing partners, local authorities, farmer producer groups, enterprises and consumers. The results show that:

Project relevance:

The project appropriately prioritized strategic interventions when focusing on solving the “bottlenecks” in agricultural production, specifically organic agriculture, including technology, organization of production and market connection.

The project also addressed a problem that have been attracting public attention during the last years on food safety. Finding the appropriate solutions to ensure producers and consumers' health was a challenge for producers, businesses, and policymakers. With the choice of organic production orientation, the project has contributed to solving the urgent problems in food production and consumption in Vietnam.

The project targeted to the very right group, who were the poor farmers, ethnic minorities, who were still behind the development progress and need more long-term attention and investment.

The project objective was in strong alignment with Policy orientation of the Government as well as the local authorities in Vietnam, the contents of the project were also priorities of the Government in different programs such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) realisation plan of Vietnam, New Countryside Program, the development orientation of agricultural products market assuring food safety and quality; development orientation of co-operatives and other forms of cooperation of famers, One commune one product program, etc.

The project designed was highly consistent with strong alignment between activities and the objectives and the set targets. In addition, the activities also closely connect and

supplement each other, along the production process and supply chain of each product from theoretical training – practice – preliminary processing – market access.

The selection of partners and project implementation modality were also suitable to local conditions and the strength of partners. The project implementation system through local line agencies of government was an advantage for coordinating different functional agencies for implementation of project activities. Besides, this implementation modality was also advantageous for integrating state program and mobilizing the participation of local authorities.

Project effectiveness:

Overall, the project achieved all targets set for the overall development objective as well as immediate objectives. Some indicators reached beyond the expected targets, such as on group development, distribution network connection, participation in policy-making at the national level, supporting provinces to develop strategies for developing organic production areas, etc.

All of project activities attained or exceeded set targets, among which 11 outputs exceeded the targeted results. For example, the achievement of activity “Training of trainers (TOT) for local facilitators” exceeded targeted results up to 420% (63 facilitators compared to the set target of 15 facilitators), achievement of “Training of wider group of PGS inspectors/certifiers at provincial and district levels” exceeded targets 400% (100 people were training compared to the set indicator was 25 people).

Key results:

- Compiled a handbook for organic agricultural production with 6 topics/contents.
- Organized 41 Farmer Field School (FFS) to 1189 farmers
- Supported to establish 62 new farmer groups, 38 of which have attained PGS certificate or transitional period with of 513 farmer members (294 were women).
- Conducted 45 training on group organization, financial management, inspection, supervision to more than 100 people.
- Conducted TOT for 63 trainers.
- Supported expansion of organic production to 5 other districts/cities in Tuyen Quang and Hoa Binh with total area of 172 ha.
- Supported market connection to a retail network of 102 stores.
- Participated in policy-building activities such as decree on organic agriculture, the organic agriculture forums at the national and international levels, advise on strategy

formulation for organic agricultural development in Hoa Binh, Tuyen Quang and many other provinces and cities.

Efficiency:

The Project showed high efficiency in terms of using funding sources. This was reflected in the following aspects:

- The proportion between actual expenditures for program cost and non-program cost was reasonable with 68% expenditures for activities, 14% for personnel costs and administrative costs 9%.
- The disbursement schedule was relatively appropriate with capacity building at the beginning and facilitate group formation, market promotion at the later stages.
- The project has successfully mobilized resources from the community and local authorities to jointly invest in to the production sites, thereby enhancing the efficiency of using the project's resources. The strengths of local natural resources have been promoted effectively. Several project areas were well combining capacity building activities and organization of production of the project with human and financial resources from state programs and other projects.
- The arrangement of human resources and working mechanism was suitable to the project's specific characteristics and relatively effective; Local technical resources were maximized for FFS training and field technical support.

Impacts:

The project produced positive impacts on the community level, beneficiaries, partners as well as to changes at national level.

Improved beneficiaries' knowledge on OA, on environmental protection was the most significant achievement of the project. Participating to the project has also helped improve their health, strengthen production planning, association and cooperation in production and business. Farmers also benefited from better information and market access, easier product sales and increased income.

Changing of farmers thinking, production and business modality. The new methods which introduced by the project has helped local people change production practices from self-sufficiency to planned production follow the market orientation. Households were trained

to monitor market signals, production with better plan, following strict quality requirements of each commodity.

Strengthened roles and position of women in the family and in community. Majority of project beneficiaries were women. They have become more active, have stronger voices and become more influential in decision making both at family and community level.

Contributed to achievements of other government programs' targets such as the New Countryside program, the One commune one product program, restructuring of agriculture program etc. The project also helped laying the foundation for the government in formulating strategic and long-term plans for the organic agriculture development in the provinces.

Improved capacity and reputation of VOAA and PGS in terms of technical skills, networking and advocacy. In particular, VOAA has made important contributions to the policy making processes on Vietnam's organic agriculture with important contribution to the development of Decree 109/2019 on Organic agriculture and other policy development processes; co-organizing number of workshops, forums at national and international level.

In addition, the project also contributed to **raise consumer's awareness of organic products**, increasing the proportion of consumers, especially increase in the percentage of consumers buying organic products in big cities in Northern Vietnam.

Sustainability

High potential of maintaining results after the project ends. The majority of participating Households (HHs) have acquired a thorough understanding of the basic organic production techniques; organic production groups structure have been set up, a number of groups have developed mechanism to mobilize funds to maintain the group's activities and to operate the PGS coordination board; local technical staff has become capable of support farmers with organic agriculture production techniques.

There were positive signals of the ability to replicate the project results. At HH level, 100% participated HHs plan to maintain organic production, in which 70% of HHs intend to expand production scale or number of products. In all project sites, local authorities plan to expand organic agriculture, both in terms of production scale and number of commodities.

Lessons learnt

- More proactive role of local partners in planning and budgeting would help to improve project efficiency and better integration of project activities into local development agendas;

- Stronger women's participation and leadership role into project implementation, mainstreaming gender issues into project interventions would bring about more meaningful impacts on promoting gender equality in project location.
- In some locations, limited involvement of local authorities and functional agencies weakened the potential of the project in mobilizing farmers into OA production and expansion of project's results.

Recommendations:

To local authorities:

- Further concretizing policy orientations, ensuring that organic agriculture development plan was suitable to the conditions, potentials of the localities; and at the same time meets market demand. There was a need to have more in-depth analysis to identify detailed and specific roadmaps, investment requirements, technical and financial resources.
- Promoting communication on the benefits of organic agriculture and environmental friendly production solutions; increasing information supply, raising awareness of consumers about organic products, safe products to encourage consumption.
- Improving technical capacity of technical team in functional agencies (DARD, agriculture extension) to transfer environmental friendly solutions to farmers.
- Strengthening the political direction to and mobilization of professional agencies and mass organizations in mobilizing and supporting farmers, and farmers' groups/cooperatives to participate in OA production. Integrating resources from existing programs and mobilizing resources from businesses and society to invest in OA production.
- Investing in initiatives to build models, to contextualize and apply production procedures and business modalities that were suitable to local conditions; support the techniques in processing, packaging, markets promoting to enhance product consumption, creating a stable output for organic production.

To ADDA and VOAA

- Coordinate with local partners to review the project results, the status of the groups, based on that identifying a suitable transition direction with specific roadmaps for the next steps. Developing a clear handover plan with necessary coaching, follow up to ensure that the project results will be maintained and replicated.
- Continue further technical support and strategic advice to local government to develop programs and projects on OA production in a practical, feasible and effective way.

- Develop new project proposals for fund raising, focusing on the following areas: 1) solution for technical problems in production and preliminary processing of OA product, 2) Strengthening capacity and skills for groups and cooperatives, 3) Network development and capacity building of PGS coordination boards, 4) Markets connection and sharing of experiences in local and international context.
- Actively advocate for policies to promote OA, especially production methods that suitable for small-scale farmers, women and ethnic minorities.



1. BACKGROUND

1.BACKGROUND

ADDA was a Danish NGO founded in March 1994 in order to meet the need for rural development through agricultural education in Southeast Asia.

ADDA has been working in Vietnam since 1998 assisting the poor and ethnic minorities in the Northern Provinces. The project “Strengthening the Framework for Production and Marketing of Organic Agricultural Products in Northern Vietnam” started 1/4/2016 and will be finished by the end of June 2019. The project was implemented in two provinces of Hoa Binh and Tuyen Quang. ADDA's lead partner organization was Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA). The project aims to support farmer groups in remote and mountainous areas of the two provinces to increase their income by developing organic production and access to the market. The objectives of the project include improved awareness of society on safe food and organic products by building capacity for the partners and advocacy.

The project final evaluation was conducted during May – June 2019, by a national advisory team from Consultative Institute for Socio-Economic Development of Rural and Mountainous Areas – CISDOMA.

The evaluation aims at:

- Assessing the outcomes and impact of the objectives of the project.
- Evaluating the impact of the project among the target groups and beneficiaries
- Assessing the level of community and other stakeholder participation.
- Identifying the intended and unintended changes, best practices, lessons learned as well as challenges met.
- Coming up with conclusions and recommendations for learning and future intervention.

The evaluation assesses the following thematic areas: 1) Relevance, 2) Efficiency, 3) Effectiveness, 4) Impacts, 5) Sustainability, 6) Lesson learned and recommendation.



2. METHODOLOGY

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Desk study

The evaluation team reviewed following documents including:

- Logical framework of the project (project LFA)
- Baseline report
- Annual monitoring report 2018, which accumulated information from previous reporting periods.
- Report on survey of agricultural production situation in Hoa Binh
- Cooperation agreement
- Project guidelines
- Operation regulations of local Associations and groups
- Some research reports of other projects and information on organizations' websites.

2.2. Field assessment

For the purpose of collecting evidences and stakeholder feedback on project activities, this assessment focused on consulting with stakeholders involved with the project. Information and data collected in this assessment also focused on topics related to the scope of the project's intervention, which was to raise awareness, support production, farmers' organization and consumption of OA products and community livelihood improvement. Table 1 shows the detailed composition of actors consulted during evaluation of the project.

Qualitative data was collected via focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews with project stakeholders, in-depth interview with households, and field observation. Questionnaires and semi-structured interview for focus group discussion were designed in conformity with the objectives and results listed in the project's result frameworks.

Participatory approaches were applied during the review. The final evaluation participants included ADDA project management staff, VOAA Project Management Board, technical experts, and project partners and stakeholders at district, commune and community levels, PGS coordination board, inter-group, HHs involved in the Organic production in 5 districts of Hoa Binh and Tuyen Quang.

Table 1: Summary of actors consulted during project assessment

	TOOLS AND INFORMANTS	Number of participants				
		Tân Lạc	Lương Sơn	Tuyên Quang	Hà Nội	Total
1	FGD with Project management (ADDA and VOAA)				3	3
2	KII representatives of local authorities and functional agencies	2	1	3	0	5
3	FDG with PGS coordinators and local implementing partners	2	4	4	0	10
4	FDG with Inter-group's leaders, cooperatives	9	10	2	0	21
5	FDG with farmers	11	10	20	0	41
6	Survey questionnaires with famers	31	34	33	0	98
7	IDI with farmers	2	2	2	0	6
8	KII with consumers	1	1	0	3	5
9	KII with small traders, enterprises	2	0	0	1	3
	Total					192

Quantitative data: was collected via two main sources: 1) Project Secondary data from project's reports and documents provided by ADDA and local partners; and 2) Questionnaire survey targeting project beneficiaries using structured questionnaires.

Survey questionnaires were conducted across 5 project districts targeting community members who directly involved in project activities. As the number of households in project areas was unidentified, systematic random sampling was used to select households to partake in the survey. The sampling size was calculated on the basis of minimum sample size of an undetermined population and rounded.

The sample capacity which was calculated on the basis of minimum sample was 30 people. Based on the specific partners, modality of PGS coordination board's organization and the time of implementation, the project sites were divided into 3 cluster: Luong Son (Hoa Binh), Tan Lac (Hoa Binh), Tuyen Quang. During the assessment process, due to working conditions of communities, the number of farmers which mobilized to participate in the questionnaire was different from the original calculated number. In total 98 questionnaires were collected from all project sites were.

Data processing: data collected from the questionnaires were synthesized and analyzed using SPSS software.

The final evaluation's field assessment sites:

Survey questionnaires were distributed to project beneficiaries across 5 provinces: Tan Lac, Luong Son (Hoa Binh), Ham Yen, Yen Son, Son Duong (Tuyen Quang).



3. RESULTS

3. RESULTS

3.1. Summary of project information and key results

Key information

- Implementation period: 39 months starting from 01/4/2016 to 30/6/2019
- Total approved budget: 3,829,697 DKK (including 3,783,197 DKK from CISU and 46,500 DKK raised by ADDA Danish)
- Disbursement (as of March 31,2019): 2,992,436 DKK, reaching 78.16%.
- Project areas: Tân Lạc and Lương Sơn districts of Hòa Bình; Hàm Yên, Yên Sơn, Sơn Dương and Tuyên Quang city of Tuyên Quang province.

Key results:

- Compiled handbook for Production of organic agricultural production with 6 topics/contents.
- Organized 41 Farmer Field School (FFS) to 1189 farmers
- Supported to establish and operation of 64 farmer groups, 38 of which have attained PGS certificate or transitional period with of 513 farmer members (294 were women).
- Conducted 45 training on group organization, financial management, inspection, supervision to more than 100 people.
- Conducted TOT training for 63 trainers.
- Supported expansion of organic production to 5 other districts/cities in Tuyen Quang and Hoa Binh with total area of 172 ha.
- Supported market connection to a retail network of 102 stores.
- Participated in policy-building activities such as decree on organic agriculture, the organic agriculture forums at the national and international levels, advises on strategy formulation for organic agricultural development in Hoa Binh, Tuyen Quang and many other provinces and cities.

3.2. Partners and project implementing modality

Considering the local context, partners' capacity and execution conditions in different regions, the project established different modalities of partnerships and forms of operation according to specific characteristics of each locality.

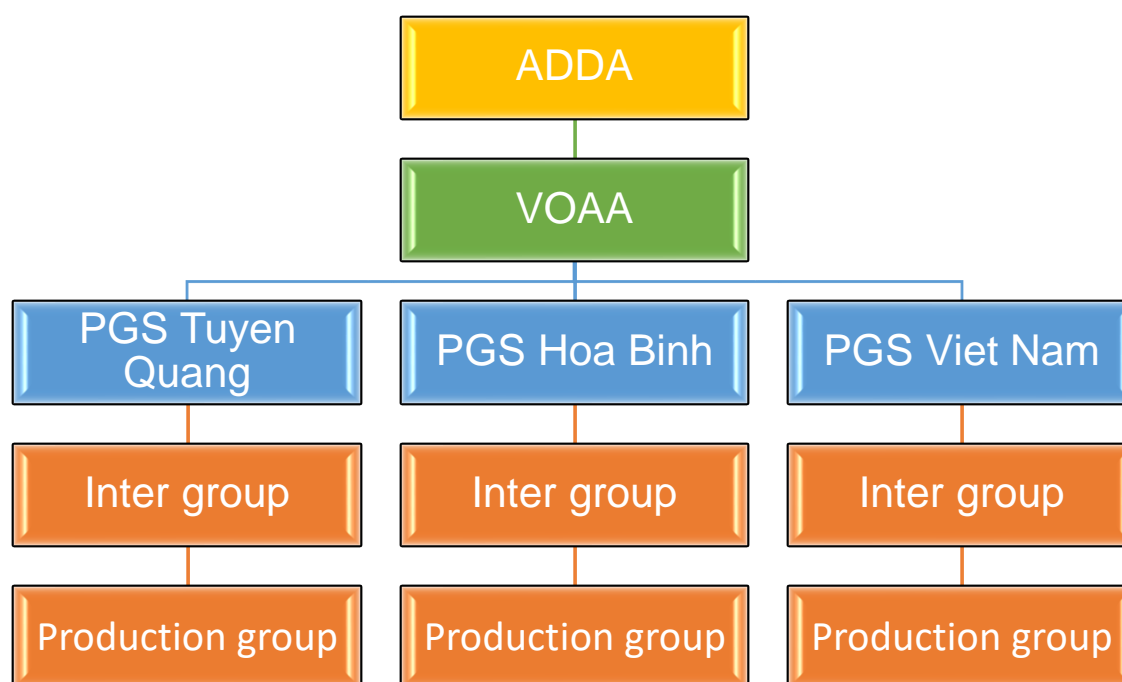


Figure 1: Project implementation structure

Project implementation was carried out through memoranda of cooperation between VOAA and local partners, who were functional agencies or mass associations of local governments. Besides, the structure of PGS was also formed according to the line management structure of the project implementation partner. In Hoa Binh, for example, the PGS coordination board was formed on the basis of the Farmer's Union network; in Tan Lac and Tuyen Quang PGS were structured according to the network of Division of Crop production and plant protection of DARD.

3.3. Relevance

3.3.1 Relevance to the needs of beneficiaries

All farmers who participated in the interviews said that they felt worried about the harmful effects of cultivation in the “old way” – conventional farming -using pesticides, herbicides, chemicals, inorganic fertilizers for the environment and health of producers as well as consumers. Many of them wanted to change their production methods towards a more sustainable way, using less toxic chemicals. However, they do not know how to change this mode of production. Besides, they were also worried about economic losses if they do not use inputs according to the old farming techniques. This project has met the urgent need of the farmers by showing them a method of farming that helps ensure the health of producers, consumers, as well as environmental protection and social safety.

“We were aware that it was harmful to the health, but didn’t know how to do in other ways. We were worried of no harvest without (pesticide and herbicides) spraying, or chemical fertilizing. Thanks to FFS technical trainings, the project showed me how to cultivate safely and effectively”.
FGD with farmers – Tan Lac

Difficulties in product consumption market access were also a main concern mentioned by all respondents. In this project, training activities on marketing, preliminary processing, exposure visits, and connect with dealers, distributors met the very urgent needs and expectations of beneficiaries. Through these activities, the Project helped them become more confident in production, having more quality products and getting better access to market and the distribution systems.

“As long as there was market for the products, the farmers will learn and invest by themselves.”

FGD with farmers – Ham Yen

According to the farmers who answered the questionnaire, all the groups of activities that the Project implemented were necessary or very necessary for the people. The average score ranged from 4.8 to 5.0 (on a scale of 5 points; 1 was absolutely unnecessary, 5 was very essential).

Table 2: Assessing the necessity of activities

<i>1 point = absolutely unnecessary, 5 point = was very essential</i>				
Activities	Tan Lac	Luong Son	Tuyen Quang	Average
Training of Trainers (based on Season Long Learning/FFS principles) for local facilitators	5	5.0	4.8	4.9
Technical guidance in the production process	4.9	5.0	4.8	4.9
Support documents, processes, instructions	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.9
Support packaging, wrapping, labelling, trademark registration		5.0	5.0	5.0
Support materials and equipment		5.0	5.0	5.0
Visiting, sharing, learning	4.9	4.9	4.6	4.9
Support establishment of teams and group	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9
Connecting to traders, consumers	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.9
Participation seminars and forums	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
Providing seed		5.0		5.0

The specific topics of the project were also consistent with the desires and needs of the people. This was reflected in the following aspects:

- Training courses and capacity building activities met the needs of the farmers, the method of trainings (FFS) following the production cycle has proved to be very suitable and effective. With this method, after going through a practical process of knowledge in practice, the learners could apply immediately to production.

"The method for FFS was very easy to learn. After the compost training, we already get the manure. At the end of training on vegetable growing, we could harvest vegetables. Thus we could apply knowledge to practice immediately".

FGD with farmers – Luong Son

- **The project appropriately prioritized strategic interventions** when focusing on solving the "bottlenecks" in agricultural production, specifically organic agriculture, including technology, organization of production and market connection.

3.3.2 Relevance of project design and objective

The project was designed toward the overall objective of *"livelihood and food safety has improved for both producers and consumers in Northern Vietnam through the expansion of organic and safe food production amongst the rural poor, especially ethnic minorities"*, which was a very relevant one.

Food safety was an issue that has attracted the attention of the whole society during the past few years. Finding the right solution to ensure health safety for the producers and consumers was a big challenge for producers, businesses and policy makers. With the choice of organic production and business orientation, the project has contributed to solving urgent problems in production and consumption of agricultural commodities in Vietnam.

Livelihoods for poor and ethnic minority farmers were also issues that require strong commitment with long-term attention and investment. In the context that enterprises were concentrating a lot of resources for developing large-scale production models that require high investment, the poor and small-scale farmers were at risk of being excluded from the market. The project targeted at small farmers was an appropriate priority to strengthen the provision of environmentally friendly techniques, increase production capacity and market access for the most needed people in the sector.

The project design was consistent, with the strong alignment of activities to the set objectives of the project. All project activities contributed to achieving the set indicators. In addition, the activities were closely linked and complement each other, in connection with the production

process and supply chain of each product from theoretical training - practice - production organization, preliminary processing and market promotion. The project also has a harmonious combination between the mobilization of local knowledge, introducing new techniques and exposure to other successful places. The link between field interventions and policy advocacy at the national level contributed to more amplify results of the project.

3.3.3. Relevance to the government policy orientation

This project was completely in line with the policy orientation of Vietnamese government at all levels. The Vietnamese government has expressed strong political priorities for sustainable development in general and towards environmentally friendly technologies in agriculture. In Decision No. 1393 / QD-TTg dated September 25, 2012 of the Prime Minister approving the national green growth strategy, two of the three objectives were set to 1) to research and apply more advanced technology to achieve greater efficiency of natural resource use, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to an effective response to climate change; 2) improving people's living standards, building environmentally friendly lifestyles through creating jobs from green industries, green agriculture and green services, investing in natural capital, developing facilities green infrastructure. In the Action Plan on Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs (Decision No. 622 / QD-TTg, May 10, 2017), Vietnam set the target of 15.3, affirming that the Government was committed to strengthening the measures to prevent desertification of soil, restore soil quality, etc. by promoting the application of sustainable agricultural techniques, reducing the use of chemical inputs and mineral fertilizers in agricultural production. National Target Program on New Rural Development (Decision No. 1600 / QD-TTg, August 16, 2016); other policies such as Development orientation of agricultural products market to ensure quality and food safety; promoting cooperative development and other forms of farmers cooperation. The Project activities were among these priority orientations.

Similarly, at the local level, The Project's activities were also in the priority directions of local socio-economic development policies. Such as the National Program on New Countryside, One commune one Product (OCOP) program...

3.3.4 Relevant partners and execution modalities

The system of project implementation along the state's specialized agencies was considered to be favourable for the management of work and coordination in the process of project implementation. Besides, there were also advantages in integrating with the state program and mobilizing the participation of local authorities. However, the degree of integration depends on the dynamism and initiative of the focal agencies.

Consultations in all project areas show that the partnership and cooperation between VOAA and local partners was very close with high level of understanding and trust. This was the key factor to decide the success of the project. The strengths of this partnership and cooperation were expressed in the following aspects:

- The close relationship and the shared vision between VOAA and the leaders of the localities where the project was implemented.
- There was regular and close exchange and timely support among the parties in the process of planning, implementing and monitoring project activities; VOAA focal points provided instructions and timely response when necessary.
- Having close cooperation and smooth coordination between field staff and experts, coordination boards and organic production groups in the community; The field staff were very close to the field, so it was possible to timely catch up with the requirements of the people, answer their questions and provide technical advice to farmers during the production process.

Besides the positive points, the results of discussions with local partners also pointed out some areas for improvements.

- Project's overall activity were designed at the national level, each location was allocated a certain number of activities in certain period of time; based on this allocation, the regions planned to execute the activities. Because planning was based on top-down allocation, local partners have less ownership on the initiative; they do not have a broader view of the direction and overall objectives of the project. This also limits the ability to integrate Project activities with the agenda of local government.
- VOAA assigned focal officers in charge of each segment separately. Sometimes the coordination between the focal points was not always well, for example, between the training activities and group establishment activities, this makes it difficult for the local partners to follow up, and difficult to ensure the organic linkages between activities.
- The change of local field officers also affected the progress of the project, because the new staff could not fully catch up with the progress, s/he could hardly support the partners in a timely manner, causing the confusion to groups sometimes. In addition, there were cases where activities had been planned and agreed with the VOAA but then changed or cancelled, this make it difficult for the partners to explain to the local community (Hoa Binh).

3.4. Effectiveness

3.4.1. Achievement of the set objectives

Overall the project achieved most of the targets set for the overall development objective of the project as well as immediate objectives. Some indicators reached far beyond the expected targets, such as the indicators on group development, distribution network connection, participation in policy-making activities at the national level, support and assist provinces to develop organic production development strategies. Below is a summary of the results achieved according to the corresponding targets in the goals set out:

The overall development objective: *By 2020 livelihood and food safety has improved for both producers and consumers in Northern Vietnam through the expansion of organic and safe food production amongst the rural poor, especially ethnic minorities.*

Indicators	Results
<i>Poor ethnic minority households have increasing income and living standards through involvement in organic agriculture;</i>	63.3% of surveyed HHs gained increased income compared to that in 2016, the average increase rate was 25,9%. 51% of Organic Production HHs gained increased income compared to the percentage in 2016, The percentage of average increased income of the HHs was 20.8%; especially the HHs in Ham Yen, Tuyen Quang gained 83,8% increment of the Organic production.
<i>Improved knowledge among ethnic minority farmers on sustainable agro-ecological systems and environment;</i>	100% surveyed famers gained improved awareness on Organic production The rate of applying basic techniques of the organic production was from 75.8% to 100%; 58% applying Organic production techniques to other productions.

<p><i>Number of cases of serious illness amongst ethnic minority farmers from misuse of chemical pesticide reduced;</i></p>	<p>The average number of times a person was sick per year declined from 5.1 in 2016 to 4.3 times in 2018.</p> <p>The number of times a person that needed treatment for the illness dropped from 2.1 to 1.7 times.</p>
<p><i>Percentage of consumer households choosing to purchase organically produced food in major urban areas of Northern Vietnam increased.</i></p>	<p>A safe product store in Hanoi said that the consumption of organic products increased about 15% per year</p>

The immediate objective 1: *By 2018 the system for organic and safe foods has been widened especially among ethnic minorities in Northern Vietnam*

Indicators	Results
<i>Three new locations of certified organic agriculture production established</i>	16 groups get PGS organic certification 22 groups get the certificate for transition in 2018
<i>Number of farmers engaged in organic agriculture increased</i>	In 2016: 105 farmers By 2019: 513 farmers
<i>Production of organic produce through increased productivity in existing systems increased</i>	in 2016: only 15 ha in Lương Sơn district of Hòa Bình province in 2019: 203 ha in 6 district of Hòa Bình and Tuyên Quang provinces
<i>Range of commodities being produced in organic agriculture systems increased</i>	There were mainly short-day vegetables in the past Nowadays, there are new products such as orange, pomelo, grapefruit, chicken-breeding.

The immediate objective 2: *By 2018 VOAA has broadened and strengthen its capacity to engage in strategic partnerships/network with organic agriculture stakeholders in Vietnam to act as a key civil society actor in relation to organic agriculture.*

Indicators	Results
<i>A strategic partnership between VOAA and at least two organic agricultural stakeholders established</i>	<p>VOAA established strategic partnership with various stakeholders including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 partners which were policy development state agencies - 2 partners which were market development state agencies - Many enterprises delivering the Organic productions: Bac Tom, Tam Dat, Soi Bien, etc - 4 partners working on training of organic production's
<i>Increasing number of organic supply chains in major urban areas of north Vietnam</i>	Increased the number of stores selling the PGS organic products from 20 in 2016 to 102 in 2019
<i>Proportion of organic produce being sold in 'modern market systems' (specialized stores and supermarkets) in urban centers in northern Vietnam increased</i>	<p>In 2016, only in Luong Son dist. of Hoa Binh province, about 20-30% sold in safe/organic stores</p> <p>By 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of organic products in Lương Sơn sold at organic products store; - 90% of organic products in Tuyen Quang sold organic products stores - 10% of organic products in Tan Lac selling in Organic products store (due to high demand of local consumers).

The immediate objective 3. *By 2018 the framework for production and marketing of organic and safe foods has been improved through advocacy measures to ensure its long-term sustainability and acceptance by consumers and policy makers*

Indicators	Results
<i>Increased attention by local authorities on organic and safe food production</i>	Gov't in all 3 project sites' authorities were interested in organic production, assigning leaders and functional agencies to collaborate in implementation.
<i>Organic and safe food production principles incorporated into local development plans</i>	Government in project location supported the organic production, integrated in local development plans such as New Countryside, OCOP...
<i>Local authorities develop action plans for organic and safe food production</i>	Tuyen Quang established Organic Agriculture association, develop the program of action of DARD on OA, OA production areas expected to be 80ha in 2020. Hoa Binh developed OA project, Luong Son district planned to expand OA areas up to 50ha in 2020, Tan Lac planned to expand Organic production areas up to 80ha in 2020.

The expected output 1.1 *Expansion of production systems of organic and safe foods.500 new ethnic minority farm households engaged in organic production of vegetables and other new commodities (organic chickens and pigs, mushrooms etc.)*

Indicators	Results
<i>The number of Organic Production groups in ADDA project sites increase at least 50%</i>	In 2016, only 15 groups with 105 members in Luong Son district of Hoa Binh province By 2019, 64 groups with 513 members (increased by 427%)
<i>There were 3 New Organic production sites established in the ethnic minorities which live in Ha Noi, Hoa Binh and neighbouring provinces.</i>	5 sites in Tan Lac (Hoa Binh); Ham Yen, Yen Son, Son Duong, Tuyen Quang
<i>There were at least 2 pilot-sites producing organic products which combined cultivation and livestock</i>	2 sites including: 01 cultivation + livestock sites in Luong Son, Hoa Binh and 01 chicken-breeding in Doi Can, Tuyen Quang

Output 1.2. *Further support to at least 40 producer groups and development of the organic and safe food producer groups, making them capable of accessing modern markets and qualified for PGS certification*

Indicators	Results
<i>Increasing the number of PGS Organic Production group</i>	Increased from 15 groups in 2016 (only in Luong Son) to 74 groups in 2019
<i>The number of Organic production group which have regular contracts with Organic specialized stores/ supermarkets interrelate the quantity and variety of certified PGS products.</i>	In 2016: 15 groups had regular contracts In 2018:42 groups have regular contracts (11 Tan Lac, 28 Luong Son, 3 Tuyen Quang)
<i>The number of farmers, retail outlets/companies which regular accessing market information and selling organic products in Hanoi and neighbouring cities increase</i>	In 2016: 105 farmers in Luong Son/ 30 companies (20 retail outlets) In 2019: 456 farmers/25 companies (120 retail outlets)

Output 2: *Strengthening the capacity of VOAA and the development of its PGS system as the key agency for the development of organic agriculture in Vietnam.*

Indicators	Results
<i>VOAA accepted by all main stakeholders and operating in a self-sustaining manner</i>	VOAA invited by different government ministries to engage to policy development activities such as Decree on OA, collaborated with government to co-organize several policy forums on OA. VOAA become well-known and recognized by both gov't, business and farmers on OA sectors. PGS certification was accepted in branches which selling Organic product.
<i>VOAA able to support local initiatives for the development of organic agriculture</i>	VOAA has capable staff and collaborators who could deliver technical trainings, coaching and supervision to farmers and other actors for development of OA. Provided advice to DARD of Tuyen Quang for OA dev't plan; provided support for PGS organic agriculture development to other localities such as Cao Bang, Quang Ninh, Tay Ninh, Da Nang, Hue, etc.
<i>PGS system embedded in VOAA, operating efficiently for farmer groups and individual farms with well-trained inspectors at local (provincial and district) levels</i>	All of the project sites appreciate the capacity and technical support of PGS Vietnam and VOAA
<i>VOAA engages in dialogue with Government of Vietnam to accept the PGS system in certification of organic products.</i>	PGS was recognized and promoted in Decree 109/2018 on Organic Agriculture

Output 3: *By the end of the project VOAA has organised three major events with policy makers at national and provincial levels, influential scientific organizations and consumer organisations to enhance advocacy for organic agriculture.*

Indicators	Results
<i>A number of events and meetings with consumers held to clarify challenges and gaps in existing framework/policies and identify new potential guidelines and recommendations</i>	7 Workshops with consumers including 01 workshop in Tuyen Quang, 1 workshops in Tan Lac, 5 workshop in Ha Noi
<i>Increased awareness and attention to organic products by consumers and the awareness of differences between organ-ic and safe production technologies is increased by 200 %</i>	<p>According to the research conducted by Asian Development Bank – ADB in 2018 in Vietnam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 82% of consumers recognized organic products logos - 63% of consumers know about organic food's benefits for their health and life - 43% of consumers said that they knew where can buy organic foods.
<i>Pre-meetings on framework for organic agricultural production with policy makers at national and provincial levels and with influential scientific organizations</i>	Holding 1 international Organic Agriculture forum, 3 national workshops and provincial workshops.

3.4.2 Achievement of results indicators

All activities of the Project met or exceeded the set targets, in which 11 activities exceeded the initial target. Particularly activity "Training for local trainers" attained 420% of the target (63 volunteers compared to the target of 15 trainers), the activity "Training to expand PGS monitoring/certification group at provincial and district levels" attained 400% of set target (100 people were trained compared to the target of 25 people).

Summary of results attached to the appendix.

3.5. Efficiency

3.5.1. Efficiency of budget

The financial statements of the project updated to March 31, 2019 show that the project resources have been used with high efficiency. This was reflected in the following aspects:

The proportion of actual expenditures between program cost and non-program cost was reasonable with the percentage of 68% and 32%, respectively. Non-program expenditures includes 14% of personnel costs and 9% of administrative costs, the rest was for monitoring and evaluation. With the wide coverage of the project sites, monitoring and administrative costs were carried out at both international and national levels, this share of cost was relatively consistent with the total indirect costs (administrative, international personnel) was about 13.8%.

In terms of budget allocation among partners, all VOAA related costs were included in operating costs, non-operating costs were allocated between ADDA Denmark and ADDA office in Vietnam. Of the total non-program costs, Denmark accounted for 68.3% and ADDA office in Vietnam was 31.7%. With a specific project that operates primarily at the field level, and requires mainly domestic technical assistance, the no-program expenditure ratio at the national level was relatively low.

With regards to the spending of activities, the project mainly provided capacity building for farmers and local group leaders. The expenditures were at the most modest level and efficiently utilised. Cost norms of the project was relatively lower than that of similar projects. For-example allowance for farmers attending training was 10000 vnd/day while other project is 30,000 – 50,000 vnd/day; the trainers also mentioned that the rate for technical experts in this project is as 60-70% of the rate for the same works in other project. Some activities such as exposure visit, participants contributed their own money to supplement to the allocated budget of the project.

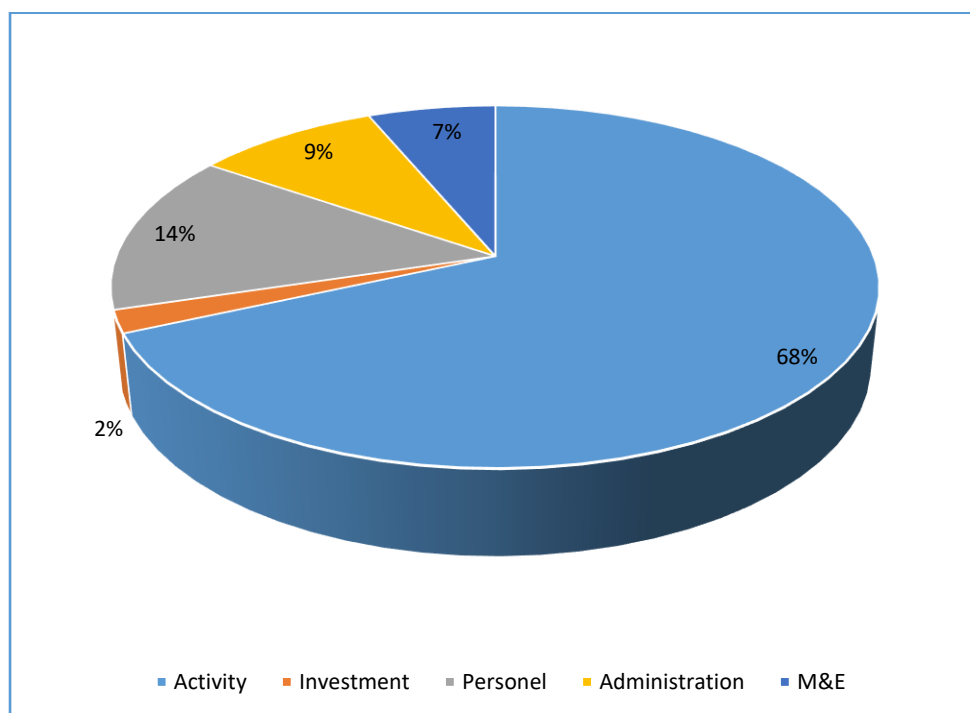


Figure 1: Expenditures proportion

The disbursement schedule was relatively appropriate

Overall project cycle, the disbursement progress of the Project was relatively similar between different quarterly reporting periods, except for the third and fourth quarters of 2018 with high disbursement levels due to increased expenses for exposure visits and market connection activities. The process of implementing activities also shows intensive spending for capacity building activities at the beginning of the project and market connection and product consumption promotion at the later stage. This was an appropriate roadmap to ensure capacity building activities were applied in practice, thereby enhancing the efficiency of using the project's funds. However, the financial report also shows that in the last year of the project there were still many ongoing FFS. Considering that FFSs take a long time, and there was a need to have follow up activities in promoting the application of techniques in practice, forming groups ... this should be noted during the project transfer period to ensure efficiency of training cost.

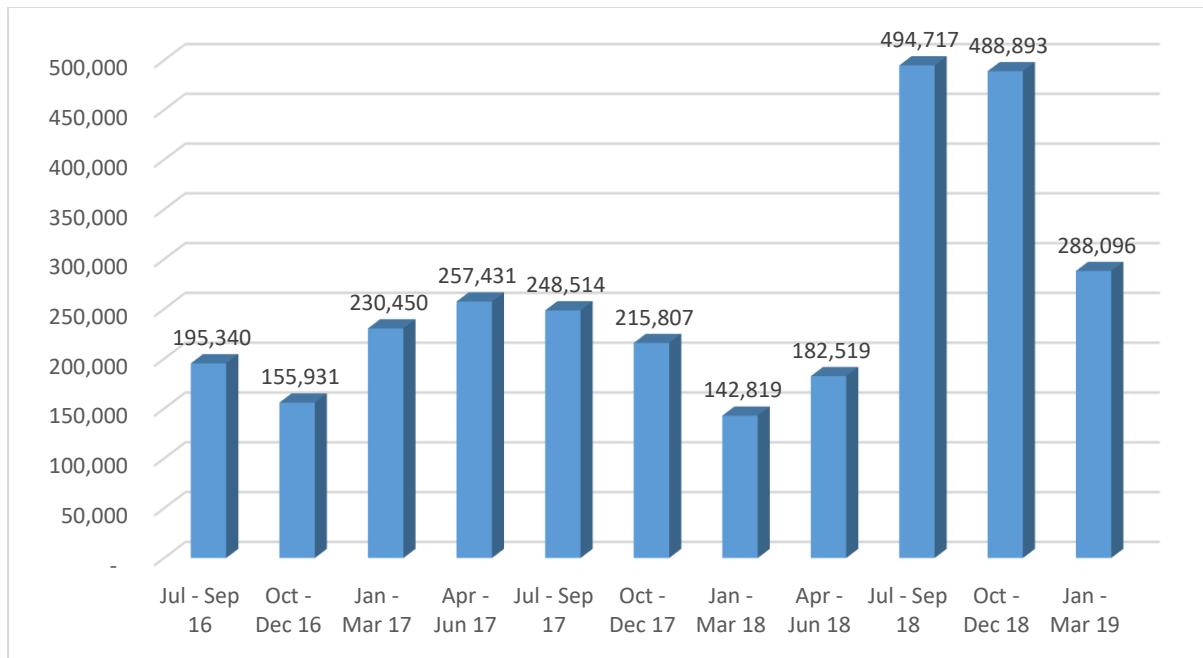


Figure 2: Fund disbursement progress

The feedbacks from consulted partners also indicated that the project's financial resources were used appropriately and effectively. However, the partners also said that the project budget and cost norms are quite limited, this considered as a difficulty for field staff and partners when implementing the activities.

3.5.2 Successfully mobilise resources from other actors

The project successfully mobilized resources from the community and local authorities to jointly invest, thereby enhancing the efficiency of using the project's resources.

The strengths of local natural resources were fully explored; for example favourable conditions for vegetable growing groups in Luong Son, Hoa Binh, orange and pomelo production groups in Tan Lac, Ham Yen were all strong local products.

Some project areas, there was very good integration between capacity building activities and production organization supported by the Project with human

"In Luong Son, we considered ADDA project as the primer for building up foundation of organic production development as a strength of Luong Son district. Annually, the district spend from 2 to 5 billion to support creating centralized production areas. The combination of gov't investment with technical resources and new approaches introduced by the project was effective"

IDI with Luong Son authority.

and financial resources from farmers, from local government and from other projects. FFS classes attracted many farmers outside the project areas to apply for study and cover the fee by themselves (Trac Van Ha Nam, Soc Son HN, Tuyen Quang); Some localities sent officials to participate in exposure visits and training on cost share basis. The integration of project results with the government programs was evident in different location; such as the development of organic vegetable production areas in Luong Son (Hoa Binh). Luong Son District People's Committee directed many investments towards developing areas of organic vegetables production including roads, electricity, processing houses, sprinkler systems, net houses etc. However, in some other localities, although the project activities have been carried out for quite a long time, there was limited resources mobilized other than the project's support and farmers' investment.

3.5.3 Staffing and technical resources

Project implementation personnel were distributed in both ADDA and VOAA, each on assigned with specific responsibilities.

For ADDA staff including the project management team at the Hanoi office and from the head office in Denmark, it was mainly responsible for managing, monitoring the overall operation and budget of the project; providing support strategic support of the project, making reports to donors.

VOAA was mainly responsible for the implementation of Project activities through a project management board with 5 persons, including the top leader of VOAA as Project Director and

4 members with specific tasks. The technical staff of VOAA were directly in charge of the main components of the Project, including 1) Office Administration, 2) Advocacy and Marketing, 3) Training and 4) PGS development. In addition, in each region, there was 01 field staff who directly engage with local partners to deploy and organize field activities.

ADDA monitoring activities were carried out through three main mechanisms: 1) Activity reports, quarterly and annually updates, 2) Monitoring of field staff and 3) Technical assistance/monitoring of VOAA officials. In addition, ADDA also conducts independent mid-term and final evaluations to ensure objectivity.

Technical assistance from staff in charge of VOAA was carried out through direct participation in field activities, consultations or field visits by coordinators. According to the local implementing partners, they received timely support from the staff in charge when there were problems. Besides, the technical support from the project supported technical experts was also highly appreciated.

“When I heard about the technical difficulties raised by farmers, I conducted many free trainings, even though not included in the project plan”

Interview with Field staff, Luong Son

Local technical resources were also maximized for FFS trainings and on-the-spot technical support. Regular monitoring of activities was carried out by field staff and local partners. These were the people who directly facilitate the formation and operation of production groups, and also directly supervise the activities of the Project. Most of the field staff, technical experts

mobilized by the project were very passionate about organic production and committed to the community, this was an important foundation to ensure the quality of work, contributing to the success of the Project.

In general, the arrangement of human resources and working mechanism were effective. However, at the beginning of the project, some incidents of diffidence in fund transfer modalities and coordination among partners were observed.

3.6. Impacts

Survey results reported that 100% of the interviewed households indicated that they had changes after participating in the project. The most significant change was about getting general knowledge and understanding about OA and about environmental protection. Besides, the participation in the Project also helped them improve their health, improved financial skills and planning skills, association skills; strengthened cooperation in production and business; At the same time, they could get better access to information and market, easier product sales and increased income from organic production.

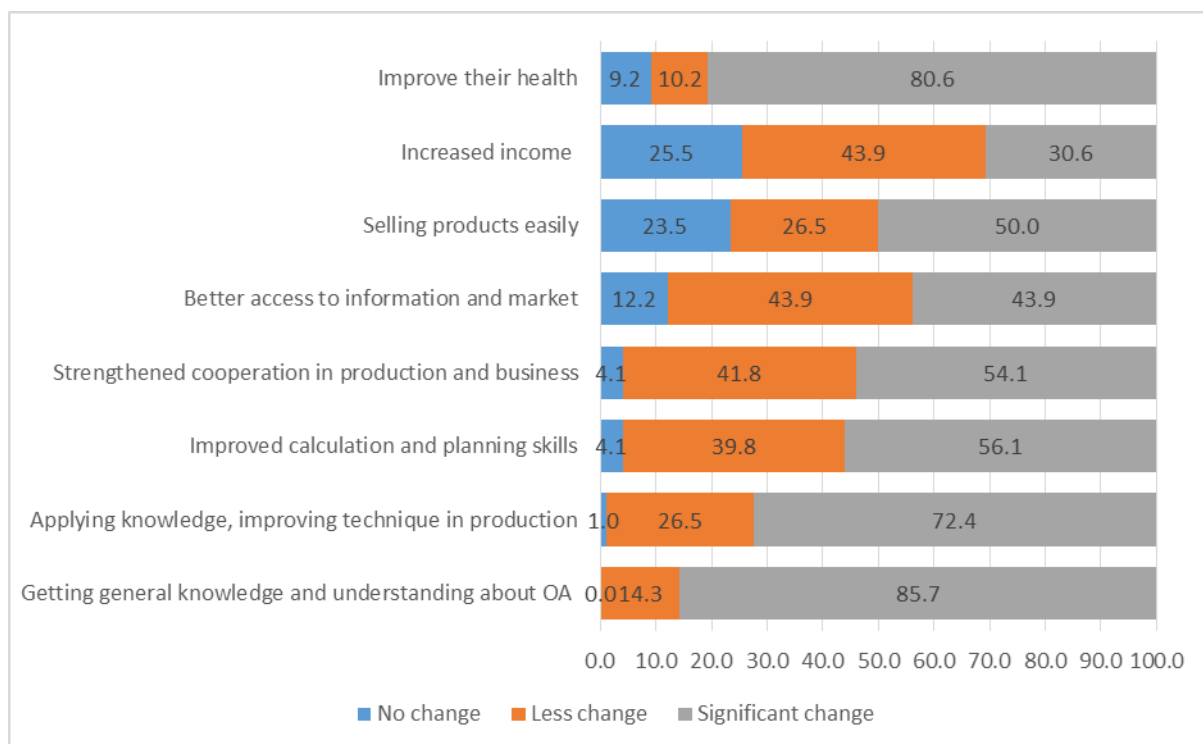


Figure 3: Change after participating in the project

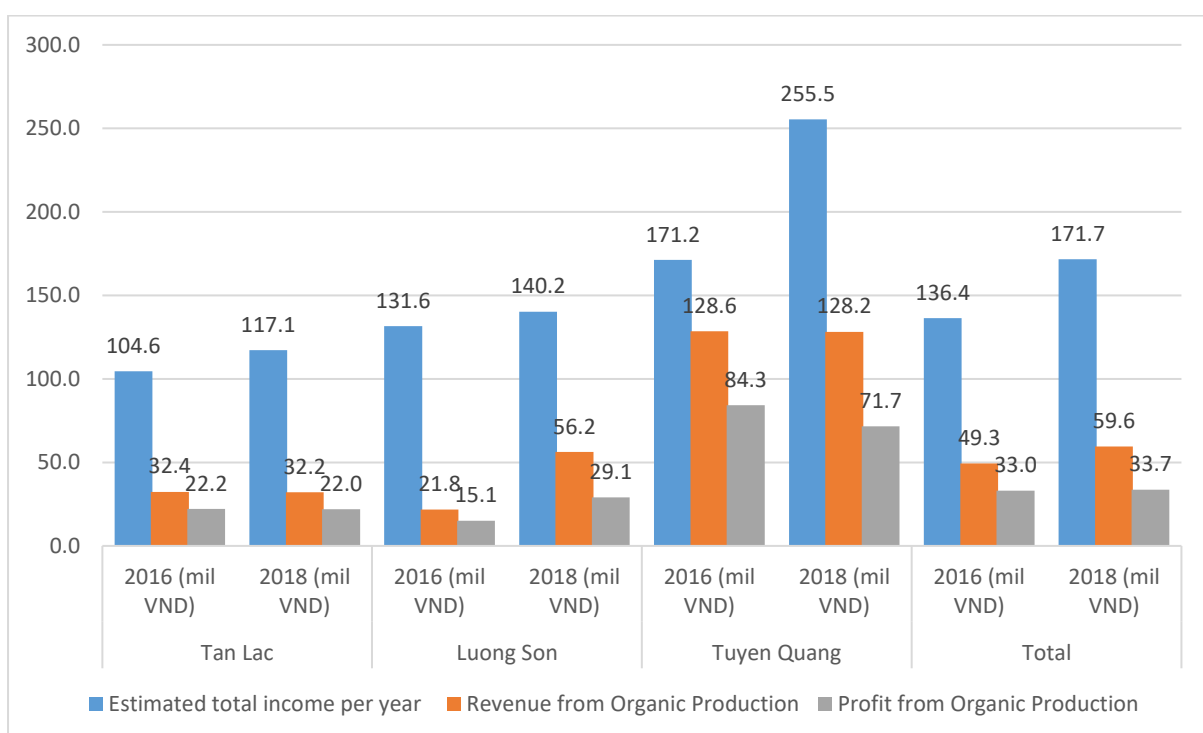


Figure 4: Change in HHs income

3.6.1. Improved income and lives of poor households involved in organic production.

The overall income statistic of all households participating in the survey showed that the average income of these households increased from 136.4 million in 2016 to 171.7 million in 2018 (increased up 25.9%); Income from organic production also increased from 49.3 million in 2016 to 59.6 million in 2018 (increase up 20.8%) However, the average profit from organic production only increased slightly by 2% compared to 2016; survey results also show that the level of income increase was uneven between location.

There were 63.3% of the surveyed households have increased their income compared to 2016, of which 51% of households with organic production have increased incomes compared to 2016. The level of income increment among these HHs was 20.8%. In the case of those growing orange in Ham Yen (Tuyen Quang) their income from organic production increased up to 83.8%. In contrast, there were 37.7% of the surveyed households reported that their income in 2018 does not increase or even decrease compared to that of 2016. This decrement attributed to the fact that these households have just changed to organic production, the plants were undergone the "shock" stage, productivity was not stable yet, so production organic products were lower than conventional production.

3.6.2. Improved understanding of ethnic minority farmers on agroecological production systems and environmental protection

100% of the farmers interviewed indicated that the project helped them to understand on the production techniques in the direction of bio-safety and environmental protection. They also consider that this was the most significant impact that the project brought about. During FGDs, villagers also said that although they previously knew that the conventional production that used many chemical fertilizers, pesticides were not good, harmful to their health. But they do not know how to do it differently. The project, in the very right time, helped them know how to do their farming in a safer and more effective way.

After participating in FFS trainings on OA, farmers quickly applied bio-secure farming solutions such as using organic fertilizers, organic pesticides, etc. Survey result shows that the rate of applying basic techniques of organic production reached 75.8% -100%. Among them, the most applied were the techniques for processing animal feed from natural agricultural products (100%), techniques for producing organic fertilizers and pesticides from local materials (91.8%).

Table 3: Change on applying new techniques

Techniques	2016		2019	
	# of respondent	%	# of respondent	%
Cultivation				
Crop rotation, intercropping	61	62.2	86	87.8
Isolation belt	26	26.5	87	88.8
Growing legumes for soil improvement	41	41.8	77	78.6
Applying IPM/GAP techniques	22	22.4	66	67.3
Crop-livestock diversification	56	57.1	74	75.5
Production of bio-pesticides, herd-pesticides, organic fertilizers	22	22.4	90	91.8
Using pesticides, herbicides	73	74.5	14	14.3
Using chemical fertilizers	80	81.6	15	15.3
Husbandry				
Organic breeds			1.0	10.0
Processing food from natural agriculture products	9	90	10	100.0
Using herbal medicines	4	40	9	90.0
Isolation and biosafety measures	3	30	8	80.0

3.6.3. Improved health of ethnic minority farmers due to reduced use of chemical pesticides.

The use of organic production techniques contributed to significant improvement in the health of participating households. The survey results in the house holds showed that the average

number of times a person was sick per year decreased from 5.1 in 2016 to 4.3 times in 2018; The number of times an illness required treatment from commune health station or the hospital was reduced from 2.1 in 2016 to 1.7 times in 2018.

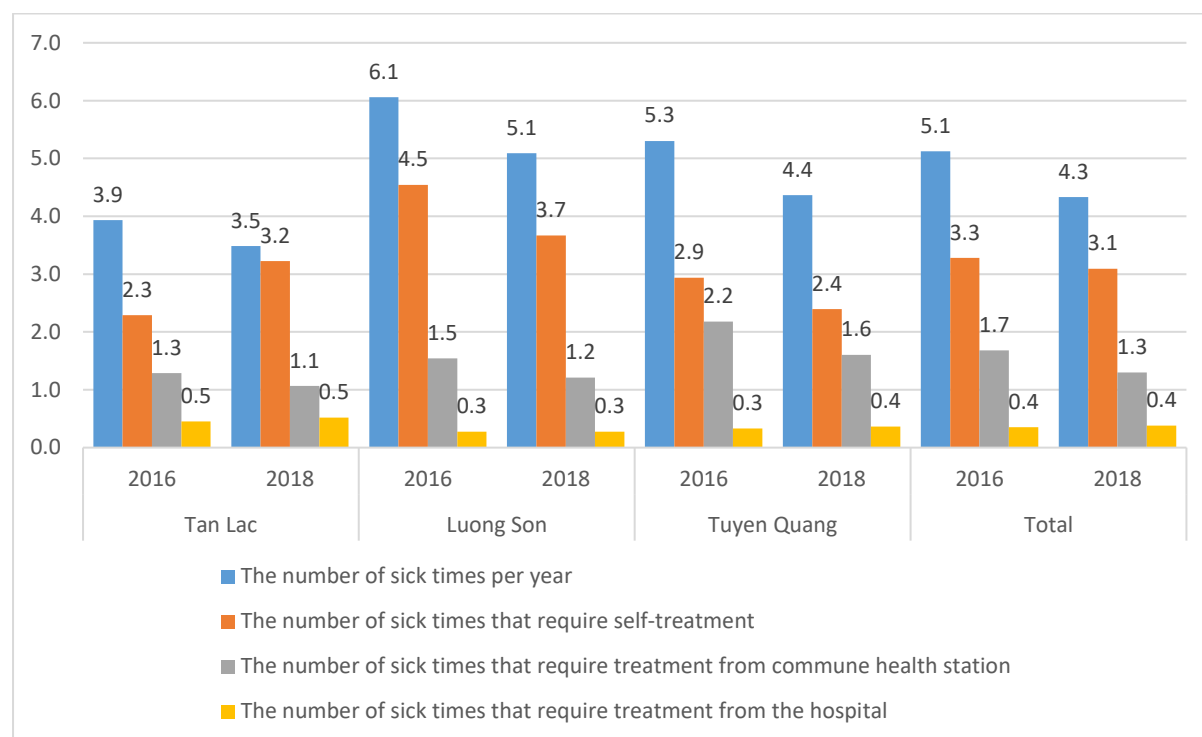


Figure 5: Illness records of farmers involved in OA

The positive impacts of not spraying chemical pesticides were recorded in all interviews and FGDs with farmers. According to the evaluation of the farmers participating in the interview, ensuring health for the producers and consumers was also the most meaningful impacts that OA brought about. This was also the most important reason for households to choose following the organic production procedures.

3.6.4. Increased percentage of consumers choosing organic products

"Previously, every time I spray the pesticide, I was tired and lose appetite in a few days. But now when I use herbal pesticides, I don't feel tired at all".

FDG with farmers – Ham Yen, Tuyen Quang

In the past, every time spraying, I have to keep children far away, sending them to my mother-in-law for 2 to 3 days. Now they can play in the garden when I work there.

IDI with farmers – Tan Lac

I has had a sock when I was spraying in a hot day. At that time, Doctor examined that I had heart failure, the rhythm was only 52 bpm. I got so scared and stopped spray pesticides from then on.

IDI with farmers – Ham

Although this assessment did not collect any official statistics on the proportion of consumers who choose to buy organic products, a study named “City Consumer Research” conducted by CIRAD, MALICA with ADB funding in 2018 shows that consumers’ awareness on organic products has changed markedly. There was 82% of consumers said they could identify organic product logos; 63% of consumers know about organic food benefits for health and 43% of consumers said they know where to buy organic food. A random customer (out of 3 customers) at Bac Tom store in 111 Lang Ha gave a clear explanation about the characteristics and benefits of organic products, and also about PGS.

At the localities of with organic production supported by the project, local consumers' awareness of organic products was very positive. With this positive information and awareness, many consumers affirmed their choice on the use of organic products. A quick survey with a shop keeper at a safe food store in Hanoi revealed that the consumption of organic product at the store increased by about 15% a year.

“Many people buy my organic vegetables even though the price of conventional vegetables of the next store was cheaper, from 10,000 to 15,000 VND per kg. The number of consumers who buy organic foods will increase”.

Interview with farmers – Dich Giao, Tan Lac, Hoa Binh

“Although my sisters’ income was not very high, 4 out of 5 my sisters buy organic vegetables. We have a sister selling vegetable, but we choose to buy products from the organic production group.”.

Interview with consumers – Dich Giao, Tan Lac, Hoa Binh

“Although the Organic products cost 20% to 30% more than conventional food, I will still buy it”.

Interview with consumer – Ha Noi

3.6.5. Change in production and business mindset

The new methods in production, planning and marketing that was introduced by the project helped people change production practices from self-sufficiency to market orientation production. Farmers know how to monitor market signals, follow strict requirements for quality controls of each product.

“Previously, my husband didn’t support organic production. He told me off when I quitted my job to produce organic crops. But now because of gaining knowledge in Organic agriculture, he has helped me to put down fertilizer”.

Interview with Phuong So village’s leader – Tan Thanh, Luong Son

Previously, we often spray whenever seeing the vegetables and fruits do not look good. But now, I know how to use pesticides appropriately, saving costs, ensuring productivity, health and environmental protection.

SDG with farmers – Ham Yen

There was also improvement in farmers’ organization of production and business handling. Through organic production groups, farmers participating in the project also have a better cooperation and coordination. From the time that each household only care about their own business, the farmers have come together for better access to market better. Farmers were also more aware on branding of their organic products, producing environmentally friendly products instead of producing them in the old way.

Besides applying organic techniques in the organic production areas, farmers in the project sites also applied environmentally friendly techniques in other family production activities. The survey results showed that 58% of households applied organic techniques to production of other products.

3.6.6. Improved role and position of women in family and community

Participation in organic production also helps to strengthen the capacity, role, and position of farmers, especially women in families and society. With the success in organic production activities, they become more confidence in their decision making and gained respect and support from other family members and from the community. Not only that, they were able to persuade other family members and neighbors to support and participate to OA production. Through the activities of the project, many women could develop leadership skills, thereby

become pioneers and leaders in the community. In Luong Son, Hoa Binh, most of the group leaders were women; among 6 cooperatives working on organic production, 3 directors were women.

The level of participation and role of women varied with location, especially in leadership positions. In some survey sites, although the vegetable production was mainly undertaken by women, the heads of the groups were all men. Among the groups of orange and pomelo growers, although both husband and wife were involved in production, the representatives participating in the group were usually husbands, the group leaders were also men.

“Initially, all of members in my family didn’t agree on Organic production because they think it’s so difficult to do. But now I have done it. The benefits of Organic production was increased income and health protection that make my family changing their mind and involving in Organic production.”

IDI with farmers – Luong Son

At first many people complained that how can we grow without using herbicides, then they have understood organic agriculture and engaged in production of organic vegetable.

Interview with Phuong So village’s leader – Tan Thanh, Luong Son

3.6.7. Improved capacity and credibility of VOAA and PGS

The capacity and reputation of VOAA and PGS has been significantly enhanced in many aspects

Technical capacity:

VOAA, with a technical team and a network of collaborators, has been very active on providing technical support related to organic production, training on group operation, inspection and supervision for many provinces and cities. With that capacity, VOAA has advised many provinces, provinces and cities on OA development strategies as among others Tuyen Quang, Hoa Binh, Cao Bang, Quang Ninh, Tay Ninh, Da Nang, Hue.

Networking:

VOAA has established a network with many strategic partners in policy making, market development, research and training. To name a few: Agricultural Product Market Development and Processing Department – MARD; the General Department of Standards, Metrology and

Quality - Ministry of Science and Technology; Trade Promotion Center - Ministry of Industry and Trade; Hanoi Investment, Trade and Tourism Promotion Center - Hanoi People's Committee; Enterprises distributing organic products: Bac Tom chain, Tam Dat, Soi Bien, Ba Lanh ...; Northern College of Agriculture and Rural Development; Forestry University; Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry; Hung Vuong University.

On policy influencing

VOAA has been invited to engage and has made important contributions to the process of developing policies related to OA in Vietnam, particular to develop Decree 109/2019 on OA, co-organizing several workshops and forums at national and international level such as "International OA Forum - Integration and Development" in December 2017 (Coordinated with MARD) with attendance of Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc. Workshop on solutions for OA development in Vietnam in April 2017 (in collaboration with MARD); Workshop on Standardization of Vietnam Organic Agriculture (Coordinating with the Quality Standards Institute under the General Department of Standards, Metrology and Quality - Ministry of Science and Technology) and many other national and provincial forums.

3.6.8. Contribute to achieving development targets of the government

In addition to the positive impacts on the awareness, production and life of poor farmers, the project also contributed significantly to local development. For example, in Luong Son district, the communes located in the project area meet New Countryside standards, well implement criteria 10 and 11 on poor households, contributing to creating a good ecological environment landscape to meet criteria 17 of the program In the project targeted communes, people have income of 30 millions or more per year such as Thanh Lap, Nhan Trach and Cu Yen.

Local authorities considered the project as a primer, kick off for OA development activities in the district. Based on this foundation, the district has developed a scheme to restructure agricultural sector in the direction of expanding the area of safe vegetables and striving to become a New Countryside district. Hoa Binh province has also developed a project on development of OA in the province with the consultation of VOAA.

In some areas among the project locations, involvement of local authorities was not as strong as expected. This attributed either to lacking information and understanding on the potential technical requirements and benefits of OA or lacking political direction and guidance of local government. In these localities it was difficult to mobilize the participation of related parties in promoting OA production.

3.7. Sustainability

3.7.1. Continuation of project results

The Project laid very essential foundation for the continuation of its initiatives and results after the Project ends. All interviewed representatives of the OA production groups established in this project confirmed that they would continue to maintain the group's activities after the project ended. A number of organic production groups have developed plan to mobilize funds to maintain the operation of local PGS coordination boards, this plan was supported by the members of the group.

It was critical to note that maintaining the operation of PGS will depend very much on the number of members participating in PGS and how the market will operate for each product. For those groups that started to have collective buying of materials and processing, selling of products through the inter-group/PGS coordination board (such as in Luong Son, Hoa Binh) will have more potential to maintain very well. On other hand, those groups that have small volume of products, with limited collective activities, buying and selling were mainly done individually by each member in the local market, these groups were unlikely to able to maintain in a meaningful operation of the PGS.

The commune's leaders have known nothing about Organic agriculture, so they didn't direct the implementation of Organic production. I had to do it by myself without support from the commune authority.

SDG with farmers – Tan Lac

In 2017, after participating in Organic Agriculture Training, I wanted to establish Organic Production co-operative in Yen Son but an agriculture extension officer told me that it's so difficult to do it. But then, some people who take part in that training also wanted to establish the co-operative. Currently, the co-operative has established. Because no one was the authority's staff who have knowledge on Organic Agriculture take part in there. The local famers worry that they don't have enough knowledge to produce Organic production

In terms of organization and structure of production groups and inter-groups, for those established and operated for a long time, such as in Luong Son and Hoa Binh, there were stable regulations and mechanism for benefits sharing. Members of these groups were familiar with the group's operating rules and were more engaged in the group's activities. Therefore, they can easily maintain group's operation. For the newly established groups, due to unstable personnel and regulations, the group leaders have not been equipped with adequate skills

and experience for running the group as well as performing the monitoring and supervision tasks to ensure compliance. These groups need time to strengthen their structure, coordination mechanism, improve regulations; and they need further technical assistant and guidance to be able to operate effectively.

3.7.2. Maintenance and expansion

There were very positive signals on the potential to maintain and replicate the results achieved from the Project. At the community level, farmer group discussions at the sites that have successfully produced organic products showed that there were many other community members want to participate into the organic production groups. For example, in Gua vegetable group, 5 farmers who previously did not want to do OA, they rented their land to others; when seeing the success of OA, they registered to join the groups. At the orange planting group in Ham Yen, at least 5 more farmers registered to join the organic production group, after the first season.

Households participating in organic production themselves also intend to maintain and expand production and business. 100% of the households surveyed answered that they will maintain the organic production, of which more than 70% of households said they would expand their production to other products or increase the area of OA of the current commodity.

Knowing Organic Production, realizing Organic Agriculture effectiveness and benefits for health make me to continue produce Organic products.

If The project don't be implement, I will maintain Organic Production because of my health.

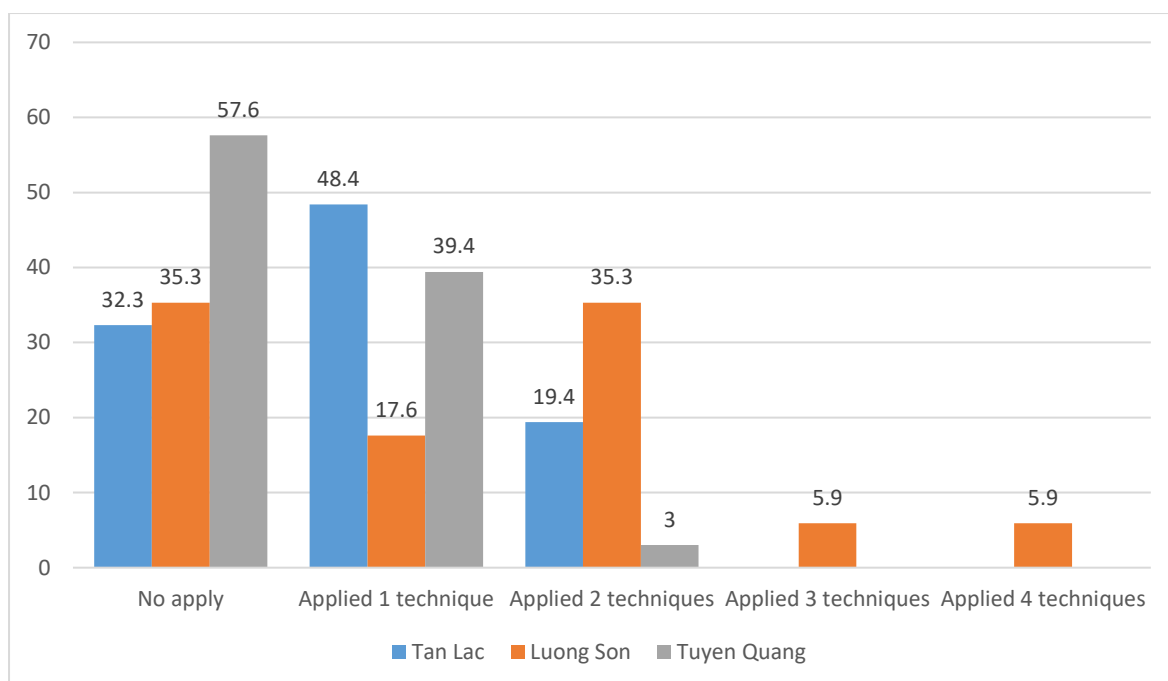


Figure 6: Applied organic techniques in other products

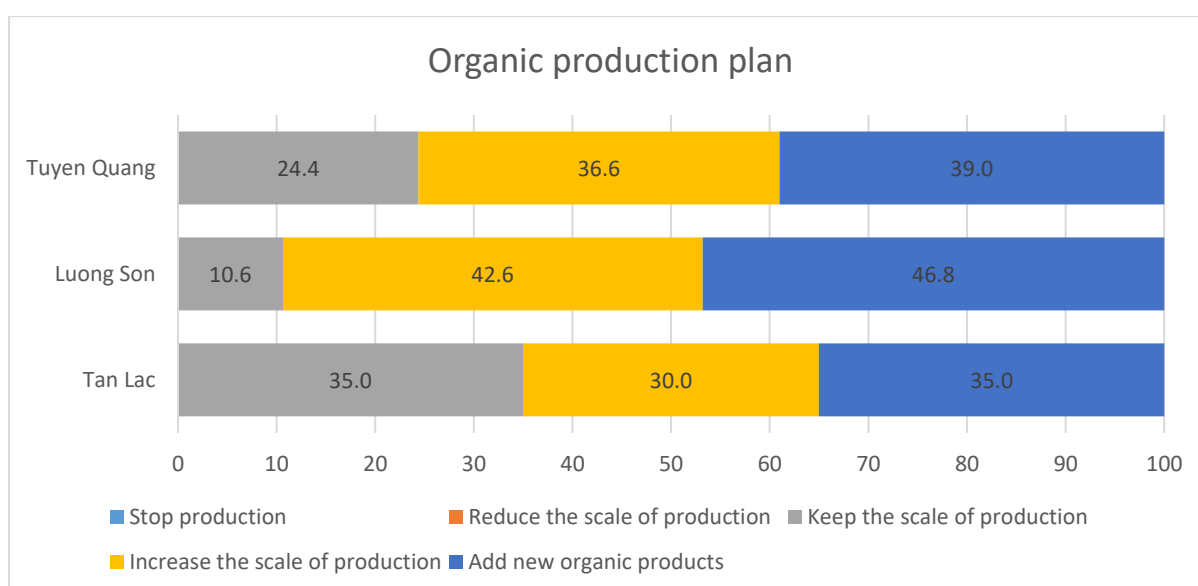


Figure 7: Organic production plan

On the technical issues:

There was a strong technical foundation for the sustainability of the Project results. Questionnaires survey results showed that 100% of households participating in the OA production indicated said that when participating in the project, they could improve their knowledge and techniques on OA production. This was the most important factor to ensure the maintenance of OA production activities. The group leaders were equipped with necessary

skills for group operation, inspection and supervision, they were capable to maintain the structure.

For local trainers, partners and technical staff of functional agencies in the localities (Crop Production and Plant Protection, Agricultural Extension, Farmers Union), they were trained and gone through practical experience with OA, they will be able to provide technical assistant and advices to farmers on specific techniques for each type of OA products. Especially, these officials will feel more confident and convinced about sustainable farming techniques such as using organic fertilizers and herbicides. Consequently, they also introduce and promote these techniques to farmers when conducting other training with farmers, to replace the use of chemical fertilizers and toxic substances.

One of the biggest difficulties in technical issues mentioned in all FGDs with farmers was about the sources of inputs for fertilizer production for OA production. In the market, fertilizer products that meet OA standards were very rare and expensive. People mainly produce fertilizers for their family's farming needs from available materials such as cattle, pig, poultry dung.... This source of material was in short supply and may become even more severe shortage in the future when many people expand their production. Moreover, the materials for OA fertilizer production come from many different types of materials, the nutrient content was unstable; this makes it difficult for the farmers to calculate accurate amount of fertilizer for the plants. In addition, OA farmers also face difficulties when handling some pests and diseases on vegetables and fruit trees, because herbal medicines were not effective for these pests.

3.7.3. Expansion in Government programs

In all project areas, with the successful achievements of this Project, local authorities made string orientation and plan to expand OA to larger scale and productivity of local products in their localities. For example, Hoa Binh has developed a project on developing OA of the province; Luong Son district plans to increase the area of OA to 50 ha, Tan Lac plans to expand 80 ha of OA production by 2020. In Tuyen Quang, the Organic Agriculture Association was established in 2018, OA was also included in the action plan of DARD. Some districts such as Son Duong and Ham Yen, local government developed proposal to develop OA in the districts. It was expected OA production in Tuyen Quang will reach 80 ha in 2020.

Although government of all localities have very strong orientations and direct the expansion of industrial production with clear target, the proposals and plans presented little solution and actions for realizing the political orientation, lack specification of resource and requirements for implementation. Especially, the financial investment plan has not been calculated but mainly seen as potential integration into existing programs such as New Countryside, OCOP.



4. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

4.1.1. Relevance

The project appropriately prioritizes strategic interventions when focusing on solving the “bottlenecks” in agricultural production, specifically in organic agriculture, including technology, organization of production and market connection.

The project also addresses a problem that have been attracting public attention during the last years on food safety. Finding the appropriate solutions to ensure producers and consumers' health was a challenge for producers, businesses, and policymakers. With the choice of organic production orientation, the project has contributed to solving the urgent problems in food production and consumption in Vietnam.

The project targets to the very right group, who were the poor farmers, ethnic minorities, who were still behind the development progress and need more long-term attention and investment.

The project objective was in strong alignment with Policy orientation of the Government as well as the local authorities in Vietnam, the contents of the project were also priorities of the Government in different programs such as the SDGs realisation plan of Vietnam, New Countryside Program, the development orientation of agricultural products market assuring food safety and quality; development orientation of co-operatives and other forms of cooperation of famers, one commune one product program, etc.

The project designed was highly consistent with strong alignment between activities and the objectives and the set targets. In addition, the activities also closely connect and supplement each other, along the production process and supply chain of each product from theoretical training – practice – preliminary processing – market access.

The selection of partners and project implementation modality were also suitable to local conditions and the strength of partners. The project implementation system through local line agencies of government was an advantage for coordinating different functional agencies for implementation of project activities. Besides, this implementation modality was also advantageous for integrating state program and mobilizing the participation of local authorities.

4.1.2. Effectiveness

Overall, the project has achieved all targets set for general development objectives as well as immediate objectives. Some indicators have reached beyond the expected targets,

such as on group development, distribution network connection, participation in policy-making at the national level, supporting provinces to develop strategies for developing organic production areas, etc.

All of project activities attain or exceed set targets, among which 11 indicators exceeded the targeted results. For example, the achievement of activity “Training of trainers (TOT) for local facilitators” exceeds targeted results up to 420% (63 facilitators compared to the set target of 5 facilitators), achievement of “Training of wider group of PGS inspectors/certifiers at provincial and district levels” exceed targets 400% (100 people were training compared to the set indicator of 25 people).

Bellows are key results of the project:

- Compilation of handbook for Production of organic agricultural production with 6 topics/contents.
- Organized 41 Farmer Field School (FFS) to 1189 farmers
- Supported to establish and operate 64 farmer groups, 38 of which have attained PGS certificate or transitional period with of 513 farmer members (294 were women).
- Conducted 45 training on group organization, financial management, inspection, supervision to more than 100 people.
- conducted TOT trainings for 63 trainers.
- Supported expansion of organic production to 5 other districts/cities in Tuyen Quang and Hoa Binh with total area of 172 ha.
- Supported market connection to a retail network of 102 stores.
- Participated in policy-building activities such as decree on organic agriculture, the organic agriculture forums at the national and international levels, advise on strategy formulation for organic agricultural development in Hoa Binh, Tuyen Quang and many other provinces and cities.

4.1.3. Project efficiency

The project showed high efficiency in terms of using funding sources. This was reflected in the following aspects:

- The proportion between actual expenditures for program cost and non-program cost was reasonable with 68% expenditures for activities, 14% for personnel costs and administrative costs 9%.
- The disbursement schedule was relatively appropriate with capacity building at the beginning and facilitate group formation, market promotion at the later stages.

- The project has successfully mobilized resources from the community and local authorities to jointly invest in to the production sites, thereby enhancing the efficiency of using the project's resources. The strengths of local natural resources have been promoted effectively. Several project areas were well combining capacity building activities and organization of production of the project with human and financial resources from state programs and other projects.
- The arrangement of human resources and working mechanism was suitable to the project's specific characteristics and relatively effective; Local technical resources were maximized for FFS training and field technical support.

4.1.4. Project impacts

The project produced positive impacts on the community level, beneficiaries, partners as well as to changes at national level.

Improved beneficiaries' knowledge on OA, on environmental protection was the most significant achievement of the project. Participating to the project has also helped improve their health, strengthen production planning, association and cooperation in production and business. Farmers also benefited from better information and market access, easier product sales and increased income.

Changing of farmers thinking, production and business modality. The new methods which introduced by the project has helped local people change production practices from self-sufficiency to planned production follow the market orientation. Households were trained to monitor market signals, production with better plan, following strict quality requirements of each commodity.

Strengthened roles and position of women in the family and in community. Majority of project beneficiaries were women. They have become more active, have stronger voices and become more influential in decision making both at family and community level.

Contributed to achievements of other government programs' targets such as the New Countryside program, the One commune one product program, restructuring of agriculture program etc. The project also helped laying the foundation for the government in formulating strategic and long-term plans for the organic agriculture development in the provinces.

Improved capacity and reputation VOAA and PGS in term of technology, networking and advocacy. In particular, VOAA has made important contributions to the policy making process on Vietnam's organic agriculture with important contribution to the development of Decree

109/2019 on Organic agriculture and other policy development processes; co-organizing number of workshops, forums at national and international level.

In addition, the project also contributed to raising consumer's awareness of organic products, increasing the proportion of consumers, especially increase in the percentage of consumers buying organic products in big cities in Northern Vietnam

4.1.5. Sustainability

High potential of maintaining results after the project ends. Most of participating HHs have a thorough understanding of the basic organic production techniques, organic production groups structure have been set up, several of them have developed mechanism to mobilize funds to maintain the group's activities and to operate the PGS coordination board; local technical staff has become capable to support farmers with organic agriculture production techniques.

There were positive signals of the ability to replicate the project results. At HH level, 100% participated HHs plan to maintain organic production, in which 70% of HHs intend to expand production scale or number of products. In all project sites, local authorities plan to expand organic agriculture, both in terms of production scale and number of commodities.

4.1.6. Lesson learnt

More proactive role of local partners in planning and budgeting would help to improve project efficiency and better integration of project activities into local development agendas;

Stronger women's participation and leadership role into project implementation, mainstreaming gender issues into project interventions would bring about more meaningful impacts on promoting gender equality in project location.

In some locations, limited involvement of local authorities and functional agencies weakened the potential of the project in mobilizing farmers into OA production and expansion of project's results.

4.2. Recommendations:

4.2.1. To local authorities:

- Further concretizing policy orientations, ensuring that organic agriculture development plan was suitable to the conditions, potentials of the localities; and at the same time meets market demand. There was a need to have more in-depth analysis to identify

detailed and specific roadmaps, investment requirements, technical and financial resources.

- Promoting communication on the benefits of organic agriculture and environmental friendly production solutions; increasing information supply, raising awareness of consumers about organic products, safe products to encourage consumption.
- Improving technical capacity of technical team in functional agencies (DARD, agriculture extension) to transfer environmental friendly solutions to farmers.
- Strengthening the political direction to and mobilization of professional agencies and mass organizations in mobilizing and supporting farmers, and farmers' groups/cooperatives to participate in OA production. Integrating resources from existing programs and mobilizing resources from businesses and society to invest in OA production.
- Investing in initiatives to build models, to contextualize and apply production procedures and business modalities that were suitable to local conditions; support the techniques in processing, packaging, markets promoting to enhance product consumption, creating a stable output for organic production.

4.2.2. To ADDA and VOAA

- Coordinate with local partners to review the project results, the status of the groups, based on that identifying a suitable transition direction with specific roadmaps for the next steps. Developing a clear handover plan with necessary coaching, follow up to ensure that the project results will be maintained and replicated.
- Continue further technical support and strategic advice to local government to develop programs and projects on OA production in a practical, feasible and effective way.
- Develop new project proposals for fund raising, focusing on the following areas: 1) solution for technical problems in production and preliminary processing of OA product, 2) Strengthening capacity and skills for groups and cooperatives, 3) Network development and capacity building of PGS coordination boards, 4) Markets connection and sharing of experiences in local and international context.
- Actively advocate for policies to promote OA, especially production methods that suitable for small-scale farmers, women and ethnic minorities.



5. ANNEXES

5. ANNEXES

5.1 Appendix 1: Change stories

Change story 1:



Many households in Ham Yen District, Tuyen Quang province have generated lucrative income from organic production since one year of MOAP project. *“Although more efforts and time have been devoted to organic production compared to the traditional one, organic oranges have been sold at 10.000 - 15.000 VND/kg higher than non-organic counterparts. In the previous season, I got 200 million VND net profit from 2 hectares of organic oranges”* shared by Mr.Dang Van Thanh, 49 years old, Dao ethnic minority, Thuoc Thuong village, Tan Thanh, Ham Yen, Tuyen Quang.

Mr. Thanh said: *“I have participated in FFS training class about organic production since 2017. The number of class members reduced significantly from 60 people in 2017 to 9 people at the moment. Despite family and neighborhood pressure, all the group’s members were mutually encouraged by each other’s faith to pursuit organic production”*.

Besides technical support, the project has provided updated market information and connected farmers with distributors and consumers. This comprehensively provided farmers with technical know-how and stable market connection. In addition, it was the motivation for farmers participating in organic production. *“Thanks to the great success of the previous season, our members won’t return to traditional production. At least 5 households around my village want to join my group to grow an additional 5 hectares of organic oranges”*. Mr. Thanh added.

“The story of Mr. Dang Van Thanh, Mrs. Tran Thi Cuong, Thuoc Thuong village, Tan Thanh, Ham Yen, Tuyen Quang”

Change story 2:

After participating in FFS training class about organic production in 2017, Mr. Nguyen Khac Diep, 48 years old, Dong Bang Village, Ham Yen, Tuyen Quang decided to invest in 1 hectare of organic orange. He said *“I have completely given up chemical fertilizers and pesticides since I took part in FFS class. My family always raises from 6 to 8 buffaloes. Therefore, manure was always available. I don't need to buy it from other households. I also utilize banana in my garden to make Kali compost.”*

He shared *“What I like the most about organic production was better health. In the old days, I must use up to ten kilograms of pesticides and herbicides every time I sprayed which made me sick for several days. My health condition has been improved a lot since I grew organic oranges. I am also interested in visiting my garden because I can relax, enjoy fresh air, live closer to nature.”*

Organic production requires a lot of attention, closely monitor and supervise from group's members. As a result, the relationship between members was built up and strengthened. Mr. Diep shared *“In the past people didn't care about their neighbors. Since we took part in the group, we have closely collaborated with other members which make us stand together, feel responsible and trust other group's members.”*

Mr. Diep's family was one of many families in this hometown who receives benefit from ADDA projects. The project has contributed to improve income, spiritual life as well as strengthen village relationship.



(The story of Mr. Nguyen Khac Diep, Mrs. Ngo Thi Oanh, Dong Bang Village, Ham Yen, Tuyen Quang)

Change story 3:

After participating in FFS training class about pomelo production in 2018, Mr. Bui Van Hien, 33 years old, Bai Trang group, Bai Trang, Dong Lai decided to convert 1.2 hectares of traditional pomelo to organic pomelo production.



He said *"At first, I didn't know anything about organic production. All I know was organic production was a better method to improve my health compared to the traditional one. In the past, I used completely chemical fertilizers and pesticides. I once sprayed pesticides on my pomelo next to my pigsty. Unfortunately, piglets died at the stage of gestation. I always feel sick, dizzy even vomit after spraying"*. He added *"My health condition has been improved a lot since I took part in organic production. At the moment, I freely allow my daughters to play with me when I spray pesticide unlike in the past when*

I wanted to spray pesticide, I must send all my daughters to my mother houses for 3 days."

Famer's faith in the success of organic production has strengthened since they studied and practiced organic production, learned experiences from visiting successful models, were provided technical support. Mr. Hien hoped *"I expect to harvest 9000 to 10000 pomelo this year, estimated income was 150 million VND. If I succeeded, my family would convert 2 more hectares of "Dien" pomelo to organic production"*

(The story of Mr. Bui Van Hien, Bai Trang group, Bai Trang, Dong Lai)

Change story 4:

“Despite a bachelor degree in Education, I decided to work as a farmer because of my passion for agriculture. I have participated in FFS class about organic production in 2017. With my sister - Mrs. Thuan, I also participated in mobilizing my neighbors for organic farming”, said M”rs. Nguyen Thi Sen, 54 years old, Muong ethnic group, Phuong So village, Thanh Hoi, Tan Lac, Hoa Binh

She shared about her motivation to actively participate in the MOAP project. “People abuse chemical fertilizers and pesticides too much. Just like in my family, my nephew died young because his work was spraying pesticides. I also hope other women in my village have a stable job. In the past, I found they struggled to water vegetables, I decided to invest an irrigation system. Now, my money was recovered after selling vegetables.”

Although ADDA project has not been implemented for a long time, organic farming has developed rapidly. The project helped people, especially ethnic minority women, improve their living standard, material, and spiritual life, increase their income in a stable and sustainable manner. Mrs. Sen shared, *“I stopped selling animal feed since I took part in organic farming. I have a store at home which was a place both for other women in my village selling vegetables and for teaching people how to grow organic vegetables. Last year, I earned 4 million VND from selling vegetables. Although the money from organic vegetable was less, I felt very excited,*



especially when customers come to my store to buy vegetables. I felt sick at the time of selling animal feed but now my health was much better. The vegetable garden was also the places where all residents in my village take exercises and enjoy fresh air in the morning”.

(The story of Mrs. Nguyen Thi Sen, Phuong So village, Thanh Hoi, Tan Lac, Hoa Binh)

Change story 5:

Mrs. Thuy family has 3600 sq. meter of land in Xom Gua, Cu Yen commune, Luong Son district of Hoa Binh province, including her own land and those she rents from other households, which she uses to grow organic vegetable completely. Before starting organic production, she had attended training courses organized by Luong Son Farmers' Union, in collaboration with District Department of Agriculture and experts from Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association in 2013.

Mrs. Thuy has extended the area of organic farming to other products such as rice and livestock raising. She hired an additional 5000 meter squares of 5%



land of the commune to grow rice, vegetables, chicken, pigs, and fish. Not only Mrs. Thuy but also her whole family has participated in organic production. She shared *"My family members completely support organic farming because it creates a source of stable income and makes our health better. My husband was now helping me transport vegetables for sales at Bac Tom shop instead of working as a building worker. I also ask my son to participate in organic production after joining military service. My second daughter knows how to take care of the vegetable garden and pack the vegetables."*

She shared with a smile: *"In my opinion, organic agriculture was sustainable. My son wants to work as a worker. I tried to persuade him to join in organic farming while he said farming was a hard job. Now, his decision was changed. He wants to work with me in the field."*

Mrs. Thuy not only achieves success in persuading her family members to participate in agriculture production but also her neighbors. The number of organic vegetable group members increased from 13 people in 2013 to 20 members at present. According to Mrs. Thuy, there were still potential areas to expand organic production in the commune. People were interested but they were still hesitant. According to her, the most important factors contributing to the success of her own in organic vegetable was persistence, patience and hard - working because *"organic agriculture was very labour consuming and requires lots of caring and attention"*.

(The story of Mrs. Hoang Bich Thuy, Xom Gua, Cu Yen, Luong Son, Hoa Binh

5.2. Appendix 2: References

1. Logical framework of the project
2. Report the base line survey
3. Report on the results of the project in 2018
4. Report on survey of agricultural production situation in Hoa Binh
5. Document of cooperation agreement
6. Instructions for implementing the program
7. Operation regulations of local Associations and groups
8. Consumers' preference study in regards to organic, clean and safe (agroecological) agri-food products in the Greater Mekong Subregion, AliSEA, 2018

5.3 Appendix 3. List of interviewees:

Excel file attached.

5.4 Appendix 4. Evaluation forms and tools

- Guideline on group discussion (attached)
- Guideline on interviewing household (attached)
- Guideline on interviewing case study (attached)
- Guideline on interviewing group's leader (attached)
- Guideline on group discussion of district management unit (attached)
- Guideline on group discussion of local partner groups (attached)
- Summary table of project's activities (attached)