

BALANCING AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM  
IN VIETNAM BY AGRITOURISM  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this Master Thesis entitled “Balancing Agriculture and Tourism in Vietnam by Agritourism and Recommendations” is submitted to the Department of Development and Environmental Studies at the Faculty of Science, Palacký University Olomouc, under the supervision of Professor Maria Sassi, Department of Economics and Management, University of Pavia and Mrs. Deborah Rezzoagli, Director of Geographic Area Eastern Europe and Asia, Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) – as to fulfill the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in International Development Studies (GLODEP). I declare that this thesis is composed on my own, except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. I confirm that this work herein has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified above.

May 29th 2021

Ngoc

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### Zásady pro vypracování

Since Doi moi-1986 with the switch from centrally planned economy to market economy, Vietnam has witnessed great transformations including economic and social aspects. However, the change of economic structure is still an on-going process as it is persistently featured in the national five-year Socio-Economic Development Plans (period 2006-2010, 2011-2015, 2016-2020) which aim to improve the economic performance of the country. Hence, the conversion from traditional agriculture to modern agriculture or industrialization and services is promoted by policymakers. On the other hand, low labor productivity remains a feature of rural Vietnam (L.D, Kinghan, Newman, & Talbot, 2013) which stimulates them to reallocate their available resources to non-agricultural activities in order to generate higher welfare.

In both perspectives of policymakers and citizens, diversification of economic activities is beneficial (L.D, Kinghan, Newman, & Talbot, 2013; Nguyen Ngoc & Tran Tien, 2014) which can be discuss with theoretical framework of household economic model from (Ray, 1998) and (Bardhan & Udry, 1999). However, to sustain such economic surplus, it is the need to find the right tool which is able to balance economic social development and in the meantime mitigating undesirable impacts on the environment; while a number of scholars agreed on agro-tourism (Ammirato et al., 2020, p. 9575). This research would seek to answer the question whether income from non-farm activities and services affect agricultural production in Vietnam in order to develop links between income diversification and sustainable development through agro-tourism. The research expects to provide input on sustainable tourism discussion in Vietnam context. Meanwhile quantitative methods are to be used with the exploration of data from the Result of the Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey which is issued by the General Statistic Office of Vietnam. With the use of the latest available data, the research aims to add more empirical findings as provide inputs for policy recommendation.

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### Seznam doporučené literatury:

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## **Background Information :**

This study was constructed as a thesis for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in International Development Studies (GLODEP). The author was motivated to join this program out of curiosity and desire to tackle development issues in her hometown and also as they apply to her country - Vietnam. As an observation made by the author, Vietnam's landscape has changed rapidly in terms of economic and social development, especially in the rural area in the last few years. The country's economy is growing fast as the living standards of its citizens are raised, there are less people in extreme poverty and more joining the middle class. Economic development in Vietnam is an achievement but it is hindered by the risk of environmental exploitation and loss of traditional values. The government provides initiatives toward socio-economic development but most of them follow a top-down and one-size-fit-all approach.

Therefore, a bottom-up approach to policy recommendation is one of the pursuits of this study. Growing up in Lam Dong - Vietnam, the province that is nationally famous for both agriculture and tourism development, the author is motivated to find a way to harmonize these sectors for sustainable development. The province is favoured with cool, gentle weather that is suitable both for agriculture and tourism activities, both generating income. However, there can be trade-offs in these sectors, for example, agricultural land is used to build facilities for tourism, but irresponsible tourism causes pollution to the environment hence affecting agriculture production. On the other hand, intensifying agriculture with chemicals degrading the environment, in long term changes the favourable condition of the province which can lead to a decrease in tourism. In addition, the attitude of locals toward tourists is something to be considered as well. The story of Lam Dong can be projected in the bigger picture of Vietnam, where agriculture has a long history and remains of significant importance, while tourism is defined by the government as a key economic sector. As a combination of the two, agritourism is suggested and it has been implemented in Vietnam recently. With the aim to develop socio-economic policy recommendation, the study determined firstly to draw a picture about current status of agritourism in Vietnam, and second reference from good practise of sustainable tourism in the world. In order to comprehend the task, the author was assisted by GLODEP Non-Academic partner - CISP.

The International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP) is an NGO that was founded in 1983 with its headquarters in Rome, Italy. The principles and goals of the organization are summarized in the Declaration of Intent “RIGHTS, CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY,” which establishes the organization’s priorities and the 2030 Agenda inspired it. CISP, through its cooperation with many local actors, both at the governmental and private level, has been implementing humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and development projects in over 30 countries across Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Within the European Union member countries, the organization fosters initiatives centered on cultural politics, promotion of international solidarity, and enhancement of the role of diasporas in the development of these countries. CISP Declaration of Intent identifies the following strategic priorities:

1. To Build bridges and Promote dialogue, integration;
2. Social Justice and Inclusion;
3. Access to quality services;
4. To guarantee equal opportunities;
5. To ensure the right to humanitarian protection;
6. Support to vulnerable and marginalized groups;
7. To develop innovation and to find new solutions;
8. Gender equality Migrations and the rights of migrants;
9. To promote peace;
10. To support the development of inclusive policies;
11. Environment and climate change;
12. To safeguard and promote cultural heritage.

In 1997 CISP founded the Cooperation and Development Network (CDN) in Pavia, Italy, in cooperation with the University of Pavia, the University Institute for Secondary Education IUSS, and two more NGOs. CISP formulates and produces publications and audiovisual materials. It also promotes networking and in-depth analysis to disseminate and inform the public on the most significant cooperation initiatives.

CISP provided the author of this research paper an internship opportunity in one of the organization's key focus areas: sustainable social-economic development, which is tackled by inclusive goals of protecting the environment, enhancing natural resources (including agricultural biodiversity) and developing sustainable tourism. CISP facilitated the learning of the writer in international cooperation projects through contact and interview with CISP area directors and project managers in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Middle east and Mediterranean area (Palestine and Lebanon) and Latina America (Guatemala). These interviews favored the inclusion in the analysis of experience in different contexts that can be used as references for Vietnam. The internship complements this paper from a professional point of view as it facilitates discussion and informs the outcomes of the research. Some key activities to be mentioned are desk research, analysis of data; context analysis, needs assessment, and analysis of the “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats” (SWOT

analysis) of local stakeholders; analysis and research of existing projects, methodologies and implementation strategies; surveying, interviewing of key stakeholders. While working on tasks assigned, the author learned about existing projects, challenges, and context which built perspective and approaches toward the research matter.

In justification for the change of title and research question that was proposed in the thesis assignment: The proposed research question in the thesis assignment was “whether income from non-farm activities and services affect agricultural production in Vietnam”, in order to develop links between income diversification and sustainable development through agro-tourism. With the data set of “Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey 2018”, there can be a model built on accessing income from non-farm activities affecting agricultural productivity, however, there is no direct empirical result to agritourism. The data for agritourism in Vietnam is still limited, as only a few provinces collect or record data for the activities. In consideration of data available, the writer changed the methodology to case studies and the new research question “What is the current state of agritourism in Vietnam and what to recommend”. Following the change in research question, the title changed.



**Abstract:**

Agriculture and Tourism both are important to Vietnam's economy, hence the solution to harmonize the two is the motivation of the studies. Agritourism was suggested as the means to combine the aforementioned sector (1). Therefore, this research seeks to answer what is the current state of agritourism in Vietnam and what to recommend through case studies. Although being a country with agricultural advantages, as much potential for agritourism development, what has been implemented is not compatible. Few provinces have systematically integrated agritourism into development policy. In addition, from case studies analysis, the status of agritourism development is not sustainable since only economic development was focused on. Therefore, the introduction of CISP case studies was to give insights and examples of sustainable tourism. Furthermore, SWOT analysis was performed to understand better the context of Vietnam and finally policy recommendation. In the action plan proposed based on policy recommendation, short term actions refer mostly to the response to the pandemic, while in the long term, central government should invest more on education, infrastructure, engaging stakeholders while local authority should strengthen their role in ensuring well communication between central government and community.

*Key word: Agritourism, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism, Vietnam, Tourism, Policy Recommendation*

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## **1. Introduction:**

### **1.1. Overview:**

The sustainable development concept first made its formal appearance in the report “Our Common Future” (2), where both needs of present and future generations are ensured without either compromising the other. Since then the perception of development has also evolved, not only along economic dimensions but also environmental ones with the addition of “sustainability” (3). Over the years the international community has exerted effort into materialising the concept through world summits, namely the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro with Rio Declaration and Agenda 21; adopting reports and indications (e.g. Human Development Report from UNDP with HDI index 1990, 2000, 2010; Millenium Development Goals - MDGs), agreements (e.g. Paris agreement on Climate Change). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recently (September 2015) addressed the aforementioned efforts with a holistic approach compared to the former MDGs. The eight goals of MDGs focused on developing countries, not all while human development, human rights were none of consideration (4). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with its 17 goals, 169 targets (5) have broadened stakeholders to all countries, including engagement of developed countries and emphasizes sustainability for all. SDGs act as guidelines in which the harmonization between 5 pillars of “People”, “Planet”, “Prosperity”, “Peace”, “Partnership” are essential. Hence, to achieve these goals, mobilization and conscious action from all stakeholders, apart from country solidarity, is to be advised (6).

In relation with two sectors forementioned, agriculture and tourism are both mentioned in SDGs. Sustainable agriculture is one of the components of SDGs number 2: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” (7), the targets include supporting farmers, eradicating rural poverty, and mitigating gender inequality (8). While with sustainable tourism, it is exclusively represented by SDGs target 8.9 (Belong to Goal 8 “Decent work and Economic Growth) which aims at “by 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products” (9); and SDG target 12.B. (Belong to Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns): “Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local

culture and products” (7). However, tourism has the potential to influence all other goals (10) for example, Goal 5 (Gender equality): empower women by promoting tourism jobs; Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities): through the tool of community engagement, tourism can stimulate social inclusion; Goal 15 (Life on land): sustainable tourism can assist the protection, preservation of biodiversity; etc.

Five years on, one-third of the way through the path to 2030, SDGs have been under-achieved as it is veering away from the planned trajectory (11). The “Decade of Action” began in the year 2020, but in the context of an unprecedented (12) and challenging (13) global period of novel virus Covid-19. On March 11th 2020, WHO declared a global pandemic (14) which resulted in crises in healthcare systems, followed by economic downfall and social insecurity. According to (15), the pandemic has harmed the progress of SDGs, and has impacted their future prospects. In the same policy brief by UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), besides statistical figures of the impact of Covid-19, there is a call to action to “build back better” (15) and grasp chances from challenges. SDGs, at this point, are still the base that society can construct upon and are strong enough to be sustained and resilient.

## **1.2. Sustainable socio economic development in Vietnam:**

Vietnam is a developing South-East Asia nation with a population of 97.58 million (16). The country is prone to disaster (17) and is greatly affected by climate change (18), impacting the living conditions of thousands of people and, to the extreme, their lives. Therefore, environmental issues and sustainable development have always been a concern of the country as its government actively participates in development agendas by the United Nations (18). From the Rio 1992 Earth Summit to the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development or 2012 (Rio+20), Vietnam representative delegates fully participated (19). Meanwhile, the country has been adapting and incorporating the international sustainable development framework and initiatives into national decisions and action plans. Vietnam Agenda 21- “Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development in Viet Nam” was approved in 2004 by the government. Eight years later, in 2012, the Prime Minister at that time, Nguyen Tan Dung, gave consent to the “Strategy for sustainable development in Viet Nam” outlook toward 2020 (20), as well as the National Action Plan, which was built upon it in 2013. Sustainable development is also a theme featured in national Socio-Economic Development Plans - SEDPs (period 2016-2020 and in future 2021-2025),

Socio-Economic Development Strategy - SEDSs (2011-2020, 2021-2030) (18), along with economic restructuring. In adapting specifically the SDGs to the country's context, a National Action Plan was designed in May 2017 aligned with 17 goals as known but reduced to 115 targets from 169 of SDGs, in response to the country's context (18). The country was one of the Asian-Pacific nations to take the step towards SDGs localization (21). In addition, a number of supporting policies and laws were introduced for example National Green Growth Strategy (22), The National Strategy on Environmental Protection (23), Cleaner Production Strategy (24) etc involving different layers of authority from national ministry to provinces. It can be seen as the prominent determination of the government toward Agenda 2030, which has resulted in ranking in the top quarter among emerging market economies in terms of achievement of major indicators (25). Despite success acquired, a policy review made by (21) pointed out the shortage of interlinkages between natural resources, environment and socio-economic targets, which causes uneven attention as they mutually impact one another. This challenge is to be addressed in the later part of the paper.

In further discussion of the paper's main theme, a glance at agriculture and Vietnam tourism is depicted as follows. Firstly, with agriculture in the economy, since the “Đổi mới” - Renovation-1986, with the switch from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, Vietnam has witnessed great transformations including economic and social aspects (26). For example, within 20 years from 1992-2012 the country's per capita real gross national income (GNI) from \$500/year was tripled to roughly \$1,700; the proportion of labour who work in agriculture decrease from 68% of 1992 to 42% of 2016 (27); the contribution of agriculture sector in GDP shrinks from 38.7% of 1990 to 16.3% of 2016 but with the enhancement of its productivity (28). The most significant social achievement in the period after the renovation can be the dramatic decrease in poverty headcount ratio, from that of 57% in 1990 down to only 3% in 2012 (28). Restructuring the economics sector toward industrial and services is the approach of the government towards achieving a higher value and more efficient economy (20). However, the change of economic structure is still an ongoing process as it is persistently featured in the country's Socio-Economic Development Plans (29,30), aiming to improve the country's economic performance. Despite the restructure, agriculture remains an important sector of the economy. Vietnam, from a country that imports food, transformed to world top exporters of agricultural products. Within the national GDP structure, 13.96% of it comes from the agriculture sector (31). The country ranks among the top five exporters with agricultural products like rice, coffee, and peppercorn (32). Recently, the result of rice exporting for 2020 was good despite the complications of the pandemic. The volume of rice

exported is 3.5 percent less than the year of 2019, at 6.15 millions tons; however, at the 9.3 percent higher price in comparison, due to growing demand (33). The country earned over 3 billion USD from this trade activity. The outlook for 2021 is also promising with the growing demand of markets and agreements like the Vietnam-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) FTA with a 10,000 tons of rice quota for Vietnam for the year (33).

However, there are some additional features of agriculture in Vietnam to be taken into consideration for analysis. *Firstly*, as mentioned, the country is prone to disasters, hence the production of agriculture can be affected. Especially in the coastal areas, which are more vulnerable due to extreme conditions, storms and rising sea level (34). Therefore, it is needed for policies, initiatives and actions toward coping strategies and mitigation of climate change effects, to protect the livelihood of households and also their agricultural production (35). In order to achieve that, technology and a sustainable, innovative model for agricultural productions should be used. Additionally, the environmental degradation due to intensified irrigation, and the use of chemicals which affect productivity and health of people (36) is also driving the need for sustainable, efficient agriculture production. To address the solution for climate adaptation and productivity of agriculture especially in the fourth industrial revolution, technology is advised to be introduced and integrated into production (37). However, despite the availability of supporting policies, it seems that the practice of responsible production and sustainable agriculture in Vietnam is still limited in use (36). In a broader picture, author Duong, 2020 (36) summarized some obstacles to develop sustainable development for agriculture in Vietnam, which also address SDGs number 2 challenges: technical infrastructure for agriculture production is inadequate - supporting mechanical industry is limited; difficulties in access to and adoption of new technologies, new inputs of productions like new crop varieties and breeds; access to credit is challenging due to the lack of mechanism in assess value of agriculture land; despite quantity of labour in the sector, there is lack of training and awareness of industrializing techniques/processes.

*Secondly*, the interaction between agriculture and rural Vietnam. The population living in the rural areas of the country accounted for 70% of total population and for around 60% of the proportion agriculture is their livelihood (28). In 2016 the number was 9.53 million rural households which constitutes 68.2% of the total population (39). However, they often experience agricultural fluctuation of income due to shock shocks that are caused by climate change and availability of markets (40). Moreover, rural households' access to economic opportunity is limited (31), while low labor productivity remains a feature (42). Therefore, diversification out of the farm is often the strategy of rural households (40). Many of them

engage in non-farm activities for example manufacturing, construction, handicraft, mechanic etc. There could be two possible explanations: the first is that in accordance with the transition in economic structure that promotes the industrial and services sector, labour redistribute themselves in sectors with job prospects; the second is that net income from agriculture is perceived to be lower than what can be received in other sectors of the economy (43). From both perspectives of policymakers and citizens, diversification of economic activities is beneficial (42,44). The non-farm sector has been very important in transitioning Vietnam's economy toward higher value activities, as is the agriculture sector which still accounts for one-third of the labour force (31). In rural areas, these two are even more relevant.

Agritourism has been defined as a socio-economic approach to diversify the income of rural households (45). The suggestion of combining agriculture and services sectors is valid in Vietnam's context. Both sectors are important to the economic development of Vietnam, while the agriculture sector was discussed; the government's objective is to steer tourism to become the key economic sector (46). Especially as the Vietnam scene of tourism has been noticed as a growing market recently (47). Solely in 2019, the country accommodated 18 million foreign guests (an increase of 116% in comparison with the previous year) and provided services to 85 million guests domestically (with a rise of 6% to the previous year) (48). In that same year, according to the General Statistical Office, the revenue from tourism activities climbed to its peak of 726 trillion VND, which is approximately 11.5% of GDP (31).

Vietnam is on the right track in reforming the agriculture sector to reduce its share while the service sector increases its share. However, to sustain such an economic surplus, it is necessary to find the right tool which can balance economic and social development and in the meantime mitigating undesirable impacts on the environment (49). A number of scholars have agreed that agritourism may be a useful tool in this regard (50). Sharing this opinion, Dr Tran Van Khoi, the Acting Director of the National Agricultural Extension Centre, expressed the idea that combining sustainable agricultural production and eco-tourism can be the needed innovation to enhance not only production performance but to increase income for farmers and contribute overall to sustainable development (51). However, despite agritourism demands growing 20 to 30 per cent annually, according to the Ho Chi Minh City Tourism Department (52), it is still a new form of tourism in Vietnam (51). Hence, strategies need to be designed as support is needed from the government to local authorities. The pandemic swept through all aspects of socio-economic development, in which tourism was hit badly.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reported in May 2020, the first quarter of the same year alone, under COVID-19, 67 million foreign tourists were lost, worth an estimated \$80 billion of US dollars (53). Meanwhile, in Vietnam, revenue from tourism dropped by 60 per cent compared to the previous year's worth of 312.2 trillion VND ( approximately 13.5 billion in USD) (54). The relaunch of tourism is a concern as different suggestions can be made according to the context in which agritourism and domestic travel can be the match.

In brief, agritourism can link agriculture and tourism in Vietnam, however, more analysis should be done to address challenges and to provide recommendations. To assist policy recommendation development, the literature review part would include non-farm diversification as it is a strategy of rural Vietnam households (40) then assess agritourism as a non-farm diversification activity.

This research seeks to answer what is the current state of agritourism in Vietnam and what to recommend; based on literature review of non-farm diversification, agritourism as a sustainable non-farm diversification; Agritourism case studies in Vietnam; case studies of sustainable tourism of CISP; and SWOT analysis. Furthermore, policy recommendations and an action plan will be formulated. By using a qualitative method of case studies, the study aims to give an overview of the agritourism development in Vietnam, including additional analysis to provide inputs for policy recommendations.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Literature review on non-farm activities diversification :**

Regarding diversification of household portfolio, two factors “demand pull” and “distress push” often are referred to (55–59), both provide incentives (59) for changes.

The “demand pull” depicts the increase in capacity for diversification (55). For example, households or individuals who have better networks, membership etc. will have more possibilities for non-farm activities (60). Other forces of demand to be named come from within the household. Authors from the reference set of (61–63) shared similar findings, highlighting that family size does affect the chances of participating in off-farm activities which is explained by the fact that spare labour can be distributed. While authors from papers (59,64) added that both quantity of labour and quality are of great importance to involve



households in non-farm activities which can generate income. Household head's age is also examined as a factor that affects the decision of the household, as some authors (65,66) argued that young people would participate more in non-farm activities and as one grows older, they prefer farm work instead. Gender is another factor, a household's head status (female or male), depending on the norm of the subject area of research, can have different levels of impact on taking part in diversification (67). In terms of human capital, which can be demonstrated through education, both theoretical (60) and empirical evidence (67) support the link between education and capability to switch or transform low-value activities to high ones. Household's physical capital also plays an important role in enhancing human capital, hence the probability of generating welfare.

The "distress push" depicts external conditions which increase the chance of households to seek for and adopt the strategy of income diversification (55). It can be natural conditions, for instance, the household in an unfavourable climate zone tends to take part in non-farm work to minimize risk which differs from one that lives in a more favourable zone (68). Research has been done on the effect of infrastructure on expansion of non-farm activities. (62,69) reported the positive influence of electricity to off-farm diversification. While with roads, there was a mixed result: on one hand roads shorten the distance to urban areas which broaden the market (62,69); on the other hand, non-farm products from local markets may not compete with one that is imported (58). Regarding access to financial infrastructure, some works (70,71) discuss how access to banks can increase participation in non-farm activities.

Some research has addressed income diversification in Vietnam and can be summarized as follows. L.D et al (42) confirmed that diversification happened on a large scale in Vietnam with some households benefiting. Efforts were made regarding customizing policy rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to the underdevelopment of the rural labour market. The work of Trần Tiến and Nguyễn Ngọc (44) examined determinants of income diversification and matched some to the existing literature as presented: Human capital, regardless of quality or quantity, motivates rural households to diversify their income. A better financial infrastructure including credit accessibility and social capital enables rural households to diversify their portfolio. The work of Nguyen (72) suggested the role of the female head of household in encouraging other members to join the non-farm sector. Other findings were aligned with existing work as characteristics by the household effect on the overall participation in diversification of income such as age, education, family size.

## 2.2. Agritourism as a potential sustainable non-farm activities

### 2.2.1. Agritourism on its typologies:

The subject of research - agritourism has been defined and discussed in various papers, sometimes in different but related terms. Set of references (73–76) define the term “agritourism” as the practice of performing hospitality activities by farm proprietors in agricultural atmospheres. Similarly with the term “agrotourism”, while (77,78) referred the area of touristic activities to take place in non-urban areas as those involved are employed in agriculture. Ilbery et al (79) introduced the term “farm-based tourism” as agricultural enterprise and entrepreneurship. Another label that was used is “farm tourism” (80,81), with a close definition of those actions, services to be provided by participating and learning from farm work. Although the terms used varied, the concept is agreed on where and who take part in the agritourism. The additional income from it (82,83) can possibly motivate diversification as agritourism has become a rising option (45,73).

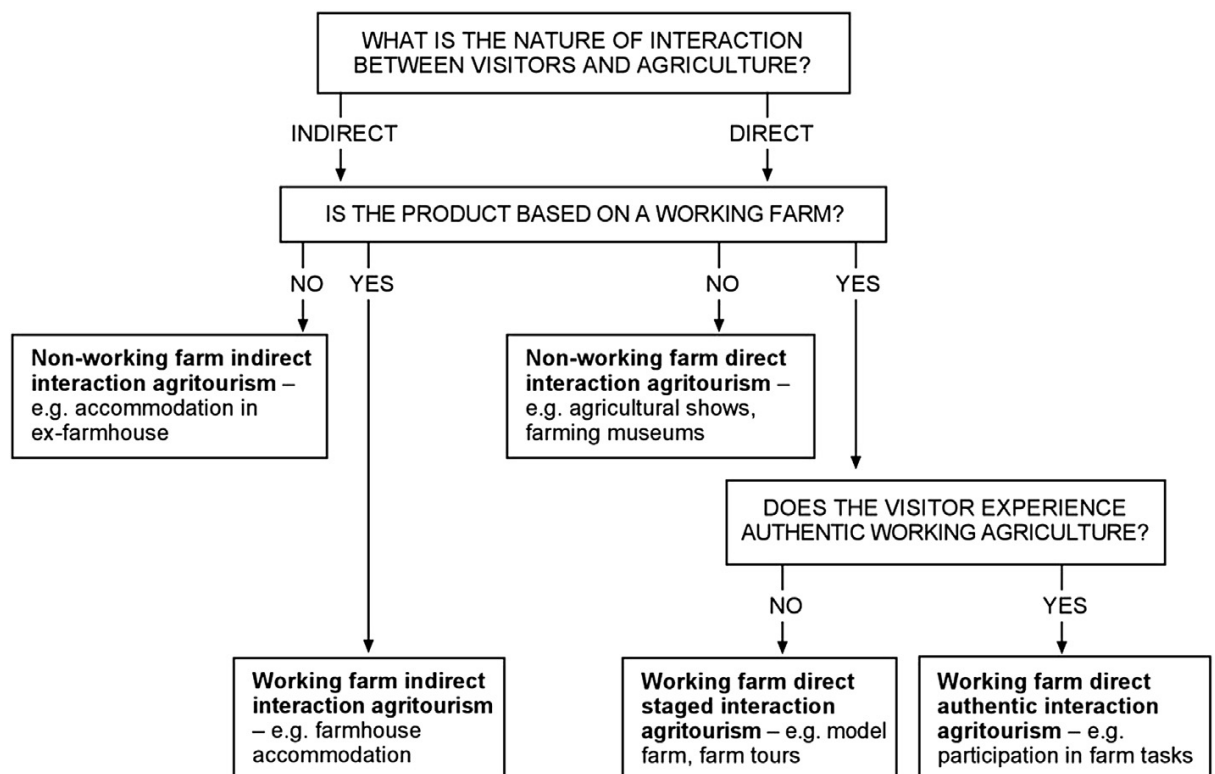


Fig 1. Typologies of Agritourism by Flanigan et al (84)

### 2.2.2. Agritourism and its effects:

In analysing the “smart” sustainable opportunity from agritourism (1), three pillars (Economic, Social, Environmental) and its harmonization should be considered as they align

with SDGs (50). By the assessment of each linkage, a more profound and holistic approach is attempted to be made. However, the interaction of the three will be discussed in the meantime.

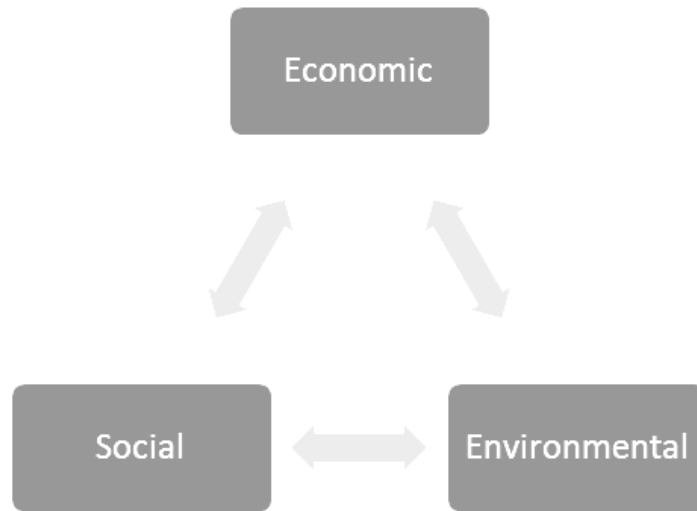


Fig.2 Interaction between aspects, author compiled.

- **Economic and Social Interaction:**

*Firstly*, with the effect from economic to social, much research has addressed economic motives as important drivers of agritourism development (85,86). In some papers, agritourism generates enough revenue to enable farms to survive during periods of poor production or falling prices (87,88). Beside extra income in comparison with traditional agriculture, performing agritourism improves the services provider's quality of life (89); while creating job opportunities for various skill sets which lessen the effect of rural urban migration (79). Additionally these jobs are mostly gender indifferent (91). A number of studies (57–59) suggested the advantages and more important role of females in agritourism and tourism in general. Furthermore, agritourism activities stimulate other related local services, for example, souvenir shops, local farm products, restaurants, etc (80,92,93). These micro developments in economics are believed to strengthen the macro outlook in the meantime (94).

*Secondly*, with the effect from social to economic: there is a view of agritourism that it attracts capitals, investments from outside the area for instant roads leading to the site of services (95). Household identity and characteristics are suggested as determinants for willingness to adopt agri-tourism as a form of income generation. Gender of household heads has been the subject of research, suggesting females perform better than males in the services sector (96–98); whereas some others suggest differently. Research conducted in Turkey (99) shows the limitation of women's participation in agritourism due to culture practices and in

Nepal (100) where male decisions are shown to be more important. Age of household members and education influence the choice to adopt agritourism (89,100–103). Education background determines how one perceives the concept of agritourism and absorb workshop training on related subjects (101,104) while having a higher education level one has a higher chance to create activities that attract more visitors (105).

- **Economic and Environmental Interaction:**

*Firstly*, the direction of economic toward environmental, several research pointed out the positive impact that agritourism can have on the environment of respected areas; the preservation of natural resources was pointed out with (91,106,107) while (108)'s work was on soil protection together with risk minimization related to natural disasters.

*Secondly*, the reverse link of environmental to economic, there are not many papers which address this issue (50). The common perspective can be that well-preserved environments attract more tourists and thus have more economic benefits.

- **Social and Environmental Interaction:**

*Firstly*, to address the link of social to environment, (80,109) found that agritourism activities raise local farmers' awareness on practices related to environmental protection and resources utilization.

*Secondly*, to the link of environmental to social, several studies were done on agritourism development as a form of local identity reinforcement including rural lifestyle (61,96,99) and cultural exchange with tourists, highlighting the importance of agriculture to local life (73,109,110) by reconnecting with mother nature (89).

### ***2.2.3. Agritourism in Vietnam:***

As a country with a long tradition in agricultural production, Vietnam has the foundation and potential to develop agritourism (52,111). This mode of tourism is expected to enhance agricultural value and at the same time strengthen local cultural value (52). As a result, depending on the geographic and provincial competitiveness and strengths, various models were introduced. For example visiting a floating market in Mekong Delta, vineyards in Ninh Thuan, fruit gardens in Binh Duong, milfarms in Son La etc (112). The most successful case is from Lam Dong as it is the role model when it comes to agritourism. The province has 33 sites of agritourism, some of which attract up to 100 visitors per day and up to 700 during the holiday period (113). Agritourism has become an attractiveness for this province as well as creating momentum for creatively increasing agriculture value. The province is also an innovation hub for high technology of hydroponic production (114),

which may generate income in both agricultural value and services value if the farm decides to open for visitors. Despite successful cases, the scale of agritourism in Vietnam is relatively small as it develops unequally between provinces. In addition, there is not yet a unified approach to develop agritourism or sustainable tourism so as to uncover the potential of all provinces. Additionally, bottom-up and top-down approaches should be harmonized to achieve the ultimate goal of sustainable development.

In brief, from the literature review, household characteristics like household size; age, education and gender of the household head can influence the decision to diversify farm income or the decision to take part in agritourism. The consideration of aforementioned factors can assist the policy formulation. In addition, since women were mentioned in encouraging household member Nguyen (72)'s and performing better in the services sector (96–98), it is suggested to give attention to the role of women in analysis and recommendations. It is relevant in the Vietnam context, where women take up 60% of the agriculture workforce, but only 9% of them own a farm and there are still women who work in unsecured, informal, low-paid jobs (18).

### **3. Methodology:**

The study will examine case studies from two sites of Vietnam in agritourism development with material to be used including research papers, conference papers and newspapers in the local language (Vietnamese). As agritourism is not yet widely implemented and recorded. There is a great imbalance between the data that can be acquired for each province. Most research on the theme of agritourism in Vietnam is qualitative in terms of potential for development of agritourism but not the actual projects, processes and results. Lam Dong and Can Tho were chosen as study cases for this research due to the availability of data, however, the references are largely in local language. With Lam Dong, since this is the first province of the country to implement agritourism as a pilot project, there is more research available. In the case of Can Tho, the amount of research is less. Therefore, the author was able to analyse the Lam Dong case with more inputs.

## 4. Case studies: Agritourism in Vietnam:

### 4.1. In Lam Dong province:

#### 4.1.1. Overview:

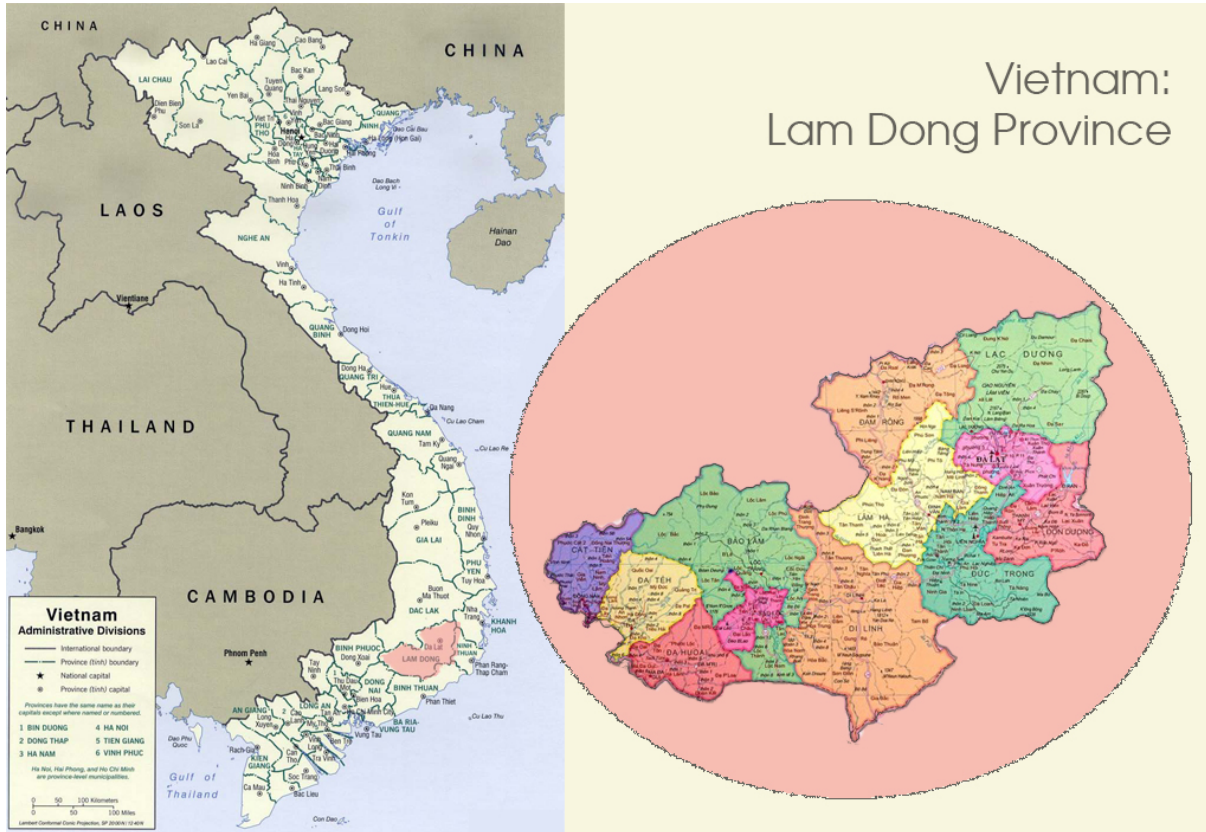


Fig 3. Lam Dong's Map. *Source.* (115)

Lam Dong is a mountainous province in the South Central Highland of Vietnam. Its altitude ranges from 800 m to 1,500 m above sea level with the geographical area of 9,773.54km<sup>2</sup>, as the nation's 7th biggest province (116). The province has pleasant weather that remains cool throughout the year, combined with natural scenic landscapes; which makes it a perfect destination for holidays and vacations. Lang Biang, the 9th World Biosphere Reserve in Viet Nam which is located in the north of the province, is an example of biodiversity and natural resources (117) that the area holds. In addition, Lam Dong is rich in culture with 43 ethnicities and a diverse range of customs, practices and celebrations (116).

As extracted from Lam Dong Statistic Office 2018 (118), the province has a total population of 1,312,926 people in which the share of women is 49.63% and the share of rural population is 60.18%. GRDP at current prices was 78,438 billion VND (approximately 2.7 millions Euro) and GRDP per capita was 59.7 million VND (approximately 2116 Euro). 65.6% of the total employed population are working in the agriculture, forestry and fishery

sector making up 43.81% of GRDP; while 26.3% of the total employed population works in the services sector accounting for 35% of GRDP; while the rest was in the industry and construction sector (118). The province plans to use tourism as the dynamic of economic development. Total visits to the province in the period of 2016 to 2019 is 24,990,477 (with 1,712,977 international visits and 23,277,500 domestic visits) (119).

In the year 2020, the province recorded 4 million visitors, only 51.3% of the planned amount representing a decrease of 44.1% in comparison to 2019 (120), largely due to the complexity of the pandemic. However, the proportion of domestic visits for the province (3.88 millions in 2019 (120)) demonstrates its attractiveness even in such gloomy times for the tourism industry.

#### ***4.1.2. Agritourism in Lam Dong:***

There are 33 agritourism tourist destinations certified by the local authorities in Lam Dong; and according to the Deputy Head of the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, in the last 3 years (2018-2021), there have been nearly 6 millions people participating in the activity (121). The same source claimed that 250 billion VND (approximately 8.8 millions Euro) has been generated for the province providing 25 billion in revenue for the state budget. Agritourism has created 1000 jobs as well as getting 48 tour guides trained for the province of Lam Dong (121).

- **An overview of Agrotourism Products**

Some of agritourism product of the province, according to Vietnam National of Administration of Tourism on 2018 (113):

- Organic tea farm visit held by Long Dinh Joint Stock Company in Lam Ha district. Visitors spend the day in the farm, enjoy drinks and local food, take photos, etc. The farm greets up to 100 visitors per day and can even peak at 700 on some occasions.
- Another big tea production Cau Dat Company in Da Lat city offers the experience to sightsee 220 ha of tea, their plant and vegetable gardens. In a year, the company welcomes more than 400,000 tourists.
- Kien Huy company in Lac Duong district offers farm visits with the attraction of smart technology vegetable growing techniques.
- DL Nature farm tourism complex located in Da Lat city offers visitors a chance to discover local fruit and vegetable production processes while combining with a shop for local specialties. Approximately up to 200 people pay a visit a day.

- Artichoke tea (province's famous product) processing and wine plant visit held by Vinh Tien company in Da Lat city receives up to 500 visitors a day.
- In relation to the application of technology in agriculture production and use it as attraction - Da Lat Vegetable Hydroponic Company takes the lead. Hydroponic technique not only improves productivity but also functions to stimulate the curiosity of prospective visitors, increasing its attractiveness. Up to 3,000 visitors experience the 11 ha-farm visit each day and can even contribute to 90 millions VND (approximately 3,207.5 Euro) revenue of the company a day. The company also provides the service to build the system in the country with a service fee of 8-15 billions VND/unit/ha. There have been 26 units of the system that were established throughout the country.

*In brief*, the statistics of 2018 (113) show that there is interest in Lam Dong agritourism. Although some perform better than others in terms of number of visitors, there can be a lot of factors that influence it such as farm size, satisfaction of the service provided, marketing etc.; that can be the subject of further research. The sum of visitors everyday at agritourism sites above mentioned can go up to 5,000, but it is not the total number for the province. In the context of 2018, the size of the market for agritourism in Lam Dong was relatively big.

- **A glance at the view of service provider:** through the impact of participating in agritourism to the income of households in Lam Dong Province, according to a recent research by Nguyen Thai Dung published in 2021 (119):

The data collection was on July, August, September 2019 on 18 towns of 6 districts where there is presence of agritourism including the head of 189 households that participate in agritourism and 136 that do not. The result is summarized as follows:

A household that participates in agritourism has 84.9 millions VND (approximately 3,026 Euro) more than the household that doesn't, at the significant of 5%.

When other factors are held constant, the addition of one more year in education increases the likelihood of participating in agritourism by 13%;

As the distance to the main road decreases by 1 km, the possibility of participation increases by 13%;

If the household has easy access to credit, the possibility of participation rises to 77%;



A unit increase in income of household will increase participation by 35%;

If the household has more awareness in agritourism, the chance that they will participate increases by 42%;

If the household head believes that agritourism is an opportunity for investment, the probability to join increases by 42%.

The research by Nguyen Thai Dung demonstrated that households participating in non-farm activities, in this case agritourism, have higher income. It also confirmed that education, access to credit, household income, distance to the main road and awareness of agritourism affect the choices of households to participate in agritourism which matched with literature review of this study on non-farm activities diversification and agritourism. In Lam Dong's case and context of research (119), women's role is not empirically significant as same as age which was suggested by literature review of this study earlier. Considering the importance of education, awareness on agritourism and access to credit, more policies should be made addressing these factors.

In the small service provider (household) perspective, those who know about agritourism and believe it is an investment will be more likely to take part. However, household income and access to credit also affect the decision to participate in agritourism, which suggests that households perceive financial issues as the barrier to join the market of service providers. Most of the agritourism products in Lam Dong come from companies, as they have the ability to invest in the activities, as well as employ laborers to run the services. Those companies are also within the city (Da Lat city) proximity, which is more convenient for tourists to reach. These are added observations from the writer in order to understand the choice pattern of household in Lam Dong.

- **A new suggestion to agritourism:**

The study by Pham S - Vice President of People Committee of Lam Dong Province (122) pointed out the potential of high technology agricultural production in the province: The area of land that uses high-technology is 52,000 ha which accounts for 20% of agriculture production land. 19 local agriculture products are certified by trade mark registration, 9 enterprises are certified high-technology agricultural producers (122). In addition, technology of the fourth industrial revolution 4.0 like IoT (Internet of Things) is starting to be used (114). The yield of high-tech agricultural production is higher than traditional methods. In the year 2017 the gross output per unit area of production can be up to 2 billions VND/ha (approximately 71,090 Euro) (122). However, there are even some exceptional cases like hydroponic vegetable production yielding 8 billions VND/ha

(approximately 284,360 Euro) or Orchid with up to 10 billions VND/ha (approximately 355,451 Euro) (122).

This is to suggest the integration of high-tech agriculture production further with tourism, one of the products above suggested. At the same time as improving agricultural productivity, more value is created from tourism activities. This model of agritourism development in high-technology production areas can be a suggestion for product design not only in Lam Dong but in provinces that are applicable. However, thoughtful consideration in planning and implementation is also advised so tourism activity will not affect technicality specification of production.

- **Challenges:**

**From the perspective of local authority:** Agritourism has generated many economic values for the province. However, as the first province to apply agritourism as an pilot project, Lam Dong faced difficulties in organizational and quality assurance, as the legal corridor and instructions from central government on the matter are still to be completed (123). Some complicated issues arose due to the lack of regulations, such as the misuse of land registered (124). There are some businesses registered to develop agritourism but used the agricultural land to construct massive recreation facilities to attract tourists; with little to no farming activities. In other cases, some farms build and run accommodation services without registering them with the authorities. Lam Dong, in response to difficulties in controlling the quality of services, temporarily stopped acceptance of new agritourism business and the ones under construction at the time of 15/09/2020, in order to revise the legal framework (125). Recently, as of 16/04/2021, local authorities announced a re-launch of agritourism development, but with new regulations that investors have to follow, including 28 obligatory criterias and at least 50% recommended criterias (126). For example, agritourism centers must have a minimum space of 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> (apply to Da Lat City) and more than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> (other districts); there is possibility to construct on agricultural land but with the ratio to be pre-agreed upon; the overall area planning must be submitted; the agritourism centre must have greenery space, and be clean and picturesque; etc.

**From the perspective of service providers:** The challenges come from product design and human resources. Agritourim products that were developed are mostly limited to sightseeing, visiting, while some are not engaging tourists in learning about the production process (123). While guides in agritourism centers are not trained properly to deliver services (123). In the writer's observation from above analysis, small farms have several obstacles in joining agritourism, such as capital, knowledge to operate service, administrative process,

etc; or they have to collaborate with other farms to form a cooperative that supports in overcoming those obstacles.

*In brief*, from literature review to realistic achievement of Lam Dong, agritourism proves its benefits in income generation and job creation solely deriving from farms. It can engage service consumers and service providers in value creations in both agriculture and tourism as well as motivate new development (like agritourism in high-tech production as suggested by the writer). However, there are some limitations in current practices of agritourism in Lam Dong

*Firstly*, imbalanced development between urban and rural in the establishment of agritourism service facilities. The ones within urban proximity are the more likely choice for tourists as it is more convenient in terms of transportation. These sites often belong to companies, which are bigger in size with well-trained staff in comparison to the small, spontaneously established facilities in rural areas. Even though having great potential to develop agritourism, rural households seem to achieve less success. The policy implications that arise include the need to raise awareness of agritourism in rural areas, improve connectivities of urban-rural, promo cooperative formation, provide training for rural services providers, and improve advertising.

*Secondly*, a gap exists in policy for community engagement in agritourism. Local authorities have a set of regulations for quality control, but the policies to empower communities to plan and develop projects are vague. Considering the role of the local community in successful and sustainable tourism (127), Lam Dong should address this in their policies. More research on its citizens' attitudes toward agritourism should be done to improve policy design, for example: In Thai Phien Village participation in supporting agritourism development may increase if the local authority provides incentivising policies and offers financial support (128).

*Thirdly*, the agritourism products remain monotonous. There is a lack of linkages between agritourism facilities, within the region and beyond, to co-create a value chain which can also improve tourist experiences.

## 4.2. In Can Tho City:



Fig 4. Can Tho's Map. Source (129)

### 4.2.1. Overview:

Can Tho is one of the five central cities of Vietnam - an urban centre grade 1 of the country - located in Mekong Delta. This region is considered the “rice bowl” of Vietnam (130), while accounting for 50% of national rice gross output, 95% percent volume of rice export; 65% percent national gross output in fishery, 60% percent of seafood export; and 70% in both national fruit output and export (131). The region is an important hub of Vietnam agricultural production. This implies the potential for agritourism development in this region.

Can Tho - with its central position within the Mekong Delta - is the focal point of connection with other provinces in the region as well as the big economic hub - Ho Chi Minh city. In 2018, the service sector accounted for 59.16% of GRDP - Provincial GDP structure, while the industry-construction sector made up 32.77% and the agriculture, fishery and forest sector made up 8.14 % (132). The large proportion of the services sector contribution in the economic structure drives local authorities' motivation to make tourism into a spearhead of economic development in the region (131). In the period of 2015-2018, total tourist arrivals increased by 1.8 times, from 4,702,203 to 8,480,968, with international tourists more than doubling. In 2019, there were 8.8 millions visitors with a 4.6% growth in comparison with

2018. In the year 2020, similar to Lam Dong, Can Tho witnessed the decline of visitors. Total tourist arrivals achieved only 60.9% of expected visitors at the figure of 5,605,865.

Although Can Tho is a river city, it has unique strengths in agritourism development. Up until 2019, the city has more than 25 farm homestays, mostly located in Phong Dien District and Cai Rang District (133). Beside the diversity in local products offered (fruits garden, floating market (134), farm experience etc), the city has been developing models for high-technology agriculture production. Some can be named as: In Binh Thuy flower village in Pho Tho; hydroponic vegetable farm in Long Hoa ward and Long Tuyen ward; In Phong Dien district, ornamental flower cooperative Tan long A; etc.(131)

#### ***4.2.2. Agritourism in Can Tho:***

In Phong Dien district, the first area to develop agritourism in Can Tho, there are 10 fruit gardens that engage in agritourism and 6 of those offer farmstay service.

- **Some agritourism products in Can Tho:** Referenced and summarize from (131)
  - In the Vam Xang fruit garden, visitors are offered a chance to experience trading local products in the Phong Dien float market. Tourists can immerse themselves in trading activity like local merchants on the river. Following the activity is the meal preparation and having food together with the host.
  - Muoi Cuong Homestay provides tourists with experience in the cocoa production process as well as offering tasting of self-made products afterward. The activities of learning to cook local food or sharing the meal with a host family are also available.
  - Organic Farm Bao Gia in Cai Rang District, beside the farm experience, offers educational programs for kindergarten to high school students. There are workshops on traditional handicraft with local craftsmen and games activities to raise awareness of local traditional values .
  - Activities related to local food experience are getting more attention from tourists in Con Son. For example, making traditional sweets, creative techniques to process fishery products etc.
  - Ut Hien garden and Hung Garden in Cai Rang District offer farm experience with role-play and local food cooking classes.

- **Some limitations:**

*Firstly*, the agritourism activities in Can Tho are spontaneous, operating on a small scale (household) (131). It may explain limited investment for agritourism in relation to human resources and developing more related services. Often, farmhouses become overloaded with work in the high season since they don't want to hire extra labour (131). Moreover, the individualism in the agritourism business hinders the co-create value chain between farms within and beyond the city and region. The implication of cooperation is to unify similar products in a cooperative form where one supports another, especially if high-season time and off-season time differ from one farm to another; the redistribution of tourists can take place but all farms in the cooperative still benefit from it.

*Secondly*, there are duplicates in agritourism products, not only within Can Tho but in the Mekong Delta region (135). This can affect tourist decisions to take part in agritourism activities from different service providers, or different provinces since they are similar to each other. There is a need to develop creative products, delivered by trained services providers, that are distinctive.

*Thirdly*, the role of local authority is missing in coordination, promotion, instruction and community engagement in agritourism. Different from Lam Dong, agritourism in Can Tho has recently gained attention. There is not yet unified guidance and regulations in place. Research about the subject matter of service consumer's and service provider's attitude toward agritourism is limited.

- **Some suggestions:**

*Firstly*, the local authority should take active, immediate actions in coordination and instruction for the implementation of agritourism. The postponement of action could cost the province in terms of tourist attention, and the lack of quality assurance in some cases can leave tourists with bad impressions of the province.

*Secondly*, collaboration from within the province in cooperatives, and regionally, both should be promoted. Cooperative in the province as briefly mentioned before can optimise community resources, while a stronger community can positively affect the successfulness of tourism activity as discussed in Lam Dong's case.

In relation to regional co-creation of the value chain, there are two supporting insights. One is the success of past linkages in the country's tourism like "3 provinces, 1 destination" that provide a route to unique destinations of the same region (136). It can also be applied to the Mekong delta area: although sharing some similarities, each of the

provinces have their own unique characteristics (135). A route tour of agritourism practices in different cultures can be a promising product.

Second supporting insight is the availability of agritourism in the region. For example, An Giang, one of the leading provinces in agriculture of the Mekong Delta, with funds from Agriterra (an organization founded by the Netherland agriculture sector) within 3 years, 600 farmers were trained on agritourism, more income was generated, 42,848 tourists participated among which 1,909 were international (133). Some of An Giang agritourism products are visiting mango farms in Cho Moi district, and organic vegetable gardens in Chau Doc district (133). In other provinces, there are more and more initiatives toward implementation of agritourism; like Ben Tre with products about coconut - specialty of the province (137), in Hau Giang, some farmer start their agritourism business as well (133); while fruits festivals are held to enhance Mekong Delta tourism brand awareness.

**In conclusion of two case studies in Vietnam**, agritourism certainly brought attention and engaged participation in the scene of Lam Dong and Can Tho tourism. However, the common patterns are the difficulties in quality assurance from local governments, challenges in creating unique attractive products, missing linkages for co-create value chains between businesses and from province to province. Governments in both the central level and provincial level should take more action in researching, designing policies and assisting the implementation of projects. In addition, there is a gap in community engagement that should also be considered, for which NGOs can be an important support to address this issue.

Agritourism can be the bridge between agriculture and tourism which creates added value in Vietnam. However, agritourism in Vietnam as it is implemented now only considers economic development, but does little to address social and environmental issues. It indicated that the agritourism development in Vietnam is not considered to be sustainable (139). In the next part, case studies about sustainable tourism practise of the NGO CISP in various places of the world, is expected to provide insights to develop more sustainable tourism models for agritourism and sustainable tourism in general.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Case studies from CISP:**

The organization is engaged in the implementation of several projects in socio economic development all around the world in partnership with multiple stakeholders and local civil society organizations to promote partnership in action. Socio-economic development is the overall objective of the projects, focusing on economic development, increasing income for local communities, and enhancing community resilience also through considering culture, environment and identity. Tourism is the most frequent instrument that is used by the organization to achieve this objective in various projects and worldwide.

#### ***5.1.1. From Eastern Europe:***

CISP has worked in Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH) since their war of 1992-1995. During the war, the objectives of the organization were providing relief and emergency aid; linking relief to the rehabilitation of social infrastructure and public services and strengthening grassroot organizations (138). In June 2015, the Stabilization and Association agreement (SAA) was in place, however, the pre-accession process is still ongoing. The country was politically unstable for a long period of time which hampered its socio-economic development. In 2016, in consideration of the process of SDGs, Bosnia & Herzegovina has had stagnant progress in 5 of the goals (namely, goals 2, 5, 7, 15 and 16) (138). Indicators suggest a decreasing score in 4 of the goals (goal numbers 8, 11, 13 and 14), and a moderately increasing score in 1 goal (goal number 3) (138). BiH remains on track with 2 of the goals (numbers 1 and 9) and has missing data indicators to assess the remaining goals (4,6,10,17) (138).

CISP designs their interventions to target economic development; capacity building together with institutional building; children rights; supporting local business; engaging youth towards active citizenship and environmental protection (138). To match these targets against the SDGs, goals 8, 15, 16 and 17 are most relevant.

Since 2016 the commitment of the CISP has been oriented in the field of environmental protection and enhancement of natural resources as the main tool to support sustainable economic growth and greater social inclusion (120).



In this framework, through thorough research and analysis, a project was implemented: “Biodiversity for Local development innovative model of Participatory Governance of Protected Landscape Konjuh in Bosnia & Herzegovina” (BIOSVI) with the purpose of contributing for the harmonious and sustainable development of protected landscapes Konjuh and local communities through an effective and participatory governance system (138). Stakeholders of the project were defined as: Protected Landscape Konjuh management and staff, Civil Society Organisations, Municipalities and villages, Government of Tuzla and Canton Education Institutions (138). The targeted area for the project development is in Protected Landscape Konjuh (PLK), its baseline was defined (138) as follows: the area has 98,000 inhabitants, 70% of which live in rural areas with a largely subsistence-based economy. The area’s naturalistic values are unfamiliar to scientists and locals in terms of income generation. In addition, there is a lack of cooperation between social groups (institution, local authority, local communities, schools etc). Tourism is insufficient in quantity and quality. Last but not least, human resources with high skills and specialization are absent.

Three groups of activities were set up to address konjuh baseline features: contribute to the protection, governance of the Protected Landscape Konjuh (PLK), promote tourism development in the area and improve the skills of the local community.

Some results of BIOSVI (120) are: From absent of collaboration between stakeholders, after the implementation of project: 26 Civil Society Organizations directly established a joint Civic forum for KPL; 8 local authorities financially support the expansion of tourism toward KPL; 9 sustainable tourist offers have been developed through an active involvement of the all community; 2 universities supported the scientific research on biodiversity of the area. The naturalistic value of PLK is recognized, as many types of fauna, flora are added to the system. Approximately, 5,000 people are involved in educational events while 5 high schools, 22 primary and secondary schools and 2 schools for disabled children have integrated the environment into their curriculum as a result of the project. Regarding tourism quality and quantity, 36 women participated in tourism service promotion. Furthermore 10 national and local media began promoting nature protection and responsible behaviour .

The project has well presented the concept of sustainable tourism when three pillars economic, social and environment (139) are satisfied. The three are interlinked and support each other. For example, when the environment is protected, beside the positive ecological impact, the scenery can attract visitors providing economic gain for the local community.

Conversely, when the service provider gains economic benefits, they have higher motivation to preserve the natural landscape. When the community (social pillar) are informed about the value of environmental protection and possible economic gains they are more willing to participate in the project. As can be seen from BIOSVI, the community established a joint Civic forum which indicates the importance of the project to the community as they want to continue it into the future. This is aligned with the notions of community engagement affecting the successful development of tourism (127).

*In brief, it is necessary to consider pillars of sustainable tourism in planning as well as engaging all stakeholders for the optimal resource to be mobilised.*

### ***5.1.2. From Mediterranean and Middle East***

In the Mediterranean and Middle East, sustainable tourism was engaged with partners in Palestine in Lebanon and Jordan, which targeted economic development through valorising and promoting less known tourist destinations. These activities promote the strengthening of culture and identity safeguarding as well as social inclusion (140). While having visitors, locals get a chance to earn from the services they provide and to showcase the uniqueness of the region including culture heritage sites and the local way of life. To meet the demand of the customers, accommodations and guides then have to be arranged, and service providers need to be trained, which increases job opportunities within the community. However, it is not only about economic development, by introducing local culture to tourists, the locals themselves build up profound understanding and also pride of belonging. In turn, the identity of regions and of the countryside would attract visitors to lesser-known areas that have full potential for discovery. Projects in this area include facilitating the development of public services and inclusion of women in all aspects (140).

CISP is implementing the project “Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and Economic Development in Mediterranean” (CROSSDEV) in the framework of the “ENI CBC Med program” (European Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation in the Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme ) funded by the EU (141). Working with 7 partners in 4 countries (Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Italy), the project’s goal is to utilize the speciality of local culture heritage of less-known destinations for socio-economic development, outlooking a more stable, inclusion and equality (142). To realize this goal, the projects focus on enhancing knowledge, skills and participation of stakeholders, from the community to public

authorities and private stakeholders. In facilitating early stage development, the project assists creation of innovative business ideas, opportunities as well as promoting cooperation dialogues to ensure the autonomy of community-based tourism in the future.

Within the CROSSDEV initiative, CISP works with PHTrail - Palestine partner in designing and implementation of local initiatives and activities. The outcome is “Palestinian Heritage Trail”- a 330 km long trail which cross-passed more than 50 cities, villages and 5 regions of Bethlehem, Jenin, Jericho, Nablus, Jericho, Hebron (143). The trail is broken down into days of hiking, approximately 10-20 km per day so many choices can be offered. However, it is not only a trail or excursion. This is a chance to meet the locals, to immerse in their culture as well as exchange one’s culture with locals and fellow hikers from different countries. Along the trail, there are accommodations or homestays set up by locals, small businesses on local productions as well as guides, to ensure hospitality from the community. Certainly, more job opportunities present for locals as they actively participate in the full adoption of this project. 16 new communities signed up to join after one third of project timeline; 16 services providers signed cooperative contract with PHTrail exceed the target of 8 to 11; 3 out of 4 homestay, 4 out of 7 women center, 4 out of 5 SMEs got grant of 3000 EUR each to work on their initiatives (144). PH Trails works with 17 women’s cooperatives along the trail (145), which serve not only as a way to map and mark reference points for visitors but also promote local businesses. Women in this area engage themselves in production of local food products like shadeah, za'atar, jam, yogurt, handcrafted Palestinian embroidery with support from women’s cooperative; or engage their family in homestay planning. As the aim of PH Trails is also empower Palestinian women, the organization support women in their businesses, with training, grants for product development as well as promoting with multimedia products (video, website, graphical material). In addition, discussions are held to get ideas and opinions from the community as they gradually take on leadership roles. One of the remarks from the achievement of the project is how actively the participation of women compared to men, and how they even become the household’s key decision-maker (144). This once again highlights the role of women in income diversification and rural tourism. Another group in the community - youth, has received attention since they are the successors of the projects. PHTrails collaborates with schools and forms sub-project for students to raise their awareness in culture identity and environment protection.

In another partner country of CROSSDEV - Lebanon - similar activities in ecotourism have been carried out – with the Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM), committed in the promotion of Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve area, in Lebanon. It refers to

the site of Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve (JMBR) in Kesrouan District which covers 6500 hectares of land and 7 villages of Aabri, Chouwan, Jouret el Thermos, Ghbale, Nahr el Dahab, Qehmez and Yahchouch (146). Jabal Moussa has participated in the UNESCO Network of Biosphere Reserve since 2009 which strengthened their consciousness in both environment protection and improvement of local livelihood through the integration of socio-economic aspects for development (146). The reservoir nurtures more than 727 species of flora, with 26 specifically found in Lebanon and 6 of which can only found in Jabal Moussa. Considering the vast area of the reservoir, it hosts more than 137 species of birds, as well as some endangered and rare mammals (146). Beside the natural heritage of the area, many cultural heritage sites are located within the reservoir, which date from the Ottoman empire and Roman empire. By protecting the environment and natural habitat, cultural heritage is also preserved and vice versa by protecting and increasing visits to sites raising awareness in preserving the natural surroundings. The Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa facilitates the engagement of stakeholders in the project by promoting community-led decisions together with sub-projects like native tree nurseries, local products or tabsoun tabsoun (147). To locals, the project assists in setting up homestays and training for service providers. University students are also engaged in supporting locals with constructing menus of nutritious meals that suit the needs of visitors. Youth are further engaged as students are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the overall projects with their assistance and research. To visitors, the project provides guidelines and advice since the planning phase, support in booking and arrangements of their stay. The visitor can support the project by engaging in native tree planting and even those who want to support the project from afar have the chance to do so by purchasing seeds and local products handmade by women in the area. The more participation the project gets, the more awareness it raises, with the harmonization of socio-cultural aspects and nature while benefits for all actors are ensured.

Both of these projects are able to integrate well socio-economic elements that achieve multiple objectives. Both are well progressing with even expansion (144,147). Some similarities can be observed in the community-based approach, as social inclusion is used to optimize resources. Communities are listened to and empowered in decision making, as well as provided with tools and help to achieve targets; which is important in sustainability of the project, ensuring locals can carry it forward. Regarding social inclusion, in both cases, women and youth make an impact and even lead to the success of projects. It suggests the

potential of development through utilizing resources and making linkages to generate new value in society.

*In brief, what can be learned from the two projects of CISP with its local partner is the importance of social inclusion and community-based approach for the development and sustainability of the project. In the context of Mediterranean countries, women in Palestine and Lebanon are given more recognition and confidence. They take the lead as well as motivating other members of the community to participate. It is believed that even after the project ends, what is created will continue to be carried out by those who have been empowered.*

### ***5.1.3. Latin America and the Caribbean:***

In this region, CISP is implementing the project “Forests, Biodiversity and Community”, within the framework of EUROCLIMA + program (the EU's cooperation program with Latin America that addresses climate change in the area), EUROCLIMA + aims at mitigating the impact of climate change to the region by promoting initiatives in adaptation and environmental sustainability in its 18 partner countries (148).

The project “Forests, Biodiversity and Community Development ”- within the line of work from the cooperation program was launched with the objective of improving livelihoods of vulnerable communities in the protected areas of Guatemala and Honduras while ensuring environmental sustainability (149). 1295 indigenous from marginalized populations benefit from the project; “Binational Biological Corridor" Guatemala-Honduras was established for joint force in combating climate change. Community organizations are financed for their actions in biodiversity conservation and promote sustainable tourism; 200 hectares of forest are in protection while 50 others hectares are reversed for deforestation (149). These are some results of the project. Bird-watching is one of the tourism modes that is promoted in the protected area of Guatemala with the attraction of rare yellow-headed parrots in the area (149). With this new method of income generation, indigenous people switch from fishing that could harm mangroves to practice of services that have less impact on nature but require a certain level of protection to ensure continuity of earning. Jobs are created as accompaniment with training in services, souvenir shops with local handcrafts are opened, students are educated about biodiversity as they help with beach cleaning etc. The joint force of the community is promising in maintaining the good result of the project.

*In brief, once again sustainable tourism, as an instrument for project development, depicts its effectiveness in inclusion of different stakeholders. In addition to community engagement, culture and characteristics of the community should be taken into consideration.*

#### **5.1.4. From Africa**

In Africa, some projects in social cohesion are implemented in Somalia, Kenya and Niger which involve and center on cultural heritage. CISP' projects continue to build up solutions for sustainable socio economic development , but in this case more focused on culture, art and identity (140). Similarly to other regions forementioned, young people and women are the main subject of focus as they are in more vulnerable situations, especially in the context of at-risk migration. In Somalia, the organization chose art for the project "Promoting a Culture for Inclusion in Somalia " in Mogadishu and Galkayo. Through various activities such as public art exhibitions, art education in school, photo narrating activities etc, the project gained positive results. As assessed after the end of the project, 90% of arts workshop participants, with both adults and children taken into account, have shown a medium to high sense of identity and inclusion; while women's participation was recorded at 60%; while 72% were aware of the importance of resolving community issues through dialogue (150).

*In brief, culture and art can also be an approach to development projects as they strengthen community identity, boost residence self-awareness and confidence.*

**In conclusion of the CISP case studies section,** although based on the specific geographical and social situations that projects are constructed upon, cultural identity and a community-based approach are significant in all cases. It is important for the community to have full awareness and embrace their cultural identity and heritage which affect the ability to translate it into income generation opportunities while maintaining environmental protection. Participatory social dialogue and realization of the project is also important, as all ideas and voices should be heard to make use of all resources that are available. Eventually, the community is the one who adapts and implements the projects, as well as deciding the direction of them after the organization hands it over. The empowerment of community takes

place through training, financing of projects and constant feedback and discussion which strengthens their decision-making processes later on. This applies to other groups in the community, for example women and youth. In societies that are male-dominant, women have less chance to express themselves, their ideas and capabilities. But when they are being heard, being recognized, they soon take the lead and support other women. It can be seen most clearly from the Palestine case of PHTrail where the most active participants are women. They even motivate their family members, including their husband, to take part in new ways to diversify income. They make use of their advantages in skills they gained from household work, turning it into advantages over their male counterparts in providing services. For example, cleaning and arranging houses translates into homestay management, traditional cooking and local products can be purchased by visitors, handcraft skills into souvenirs. That is one of the arguments why women may perform better than men in the service sector. It is consistent with the theories about income diversification that women have a big role in motivating and engaging households into action. Youth, as mentioned, are the successors of their community in carrying on projects, they are also fast adopting and reflect future prospects. They should be encouraged in embracing their role in the community.

## **5.2. SWOT Analysis on Vietnam tourism toward and sustainable tourism:**

This analysis aims to assess “Strengths, Weakness, opportunities, Threats” to Vietnam tourism as a whole toward sustainable tourism. It provides more insights to the foundation upon which agritourism develops in Vietnam.

- **Strengths:**

*Vietnamese history stretches over 4,000 years*, resulting in a broad range of diverse traditions, customs, religions and beliefs. Additionally, 63 provinces and 54 ethnicities with their distinctive specialities paint a promising picture for cultural tourism potential in Vietnam. Each province has their own celebrations, festivals and unique food as it also applies to each ethnicity as well. With much to offer, cultural tourism in Vietnam has great potential to be developed upon and integrated with other modes of tourism. From statistics of 2008, there are 7,300 sites of cultural and historical significance which are mostly located in rural areas, including nearly 8,000 festivals and more than 2,000 handicraft villages (151).

*The stability of political institutions* ensures a safe environment for tourism activities. In addition, tourism is always considered as a key factor from governmental orientation of economic restructuring toward the services sector, due to higher return value than the

agricultural sector. The government also invested in upgrading infrastructure to facilitate the development of tourism in both transport systems and telecommunication (152). However, it was the essential change in strategy of the Ministry of Tourism that strengthened development in the long run, from a ‘quantity over quality’ approach of tourism to ‘quantity but sustainable’ tourism (153). With the support from a high level of administration, the implementation of projects, initiatives and proposals, that meet the demand of sustainable, high value tourism is encouraged and recommended.

*The growth in both domestic and international demand for tourism* represents new possibilities for the sector. The expanding Vietnam consumer class, who have sufficient income for living, are able to absorb economic shocks and even consume to some extent goods that are non-essential. In the space of only 2 years, between 2014 and 2016, 3 millions Vietnamese people joined the global middle class (154). This is one of the momentums for tourism development. In addition, a 2017 research ranked Vietnamese consumers first in oriented towards sustainable society and development in South East Asia (18). The Tourism Competitiveness Index from the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2017 ranked Vietnam 32th (out of 120th) globally and 3rd in South-East Asia for attractiveness and strong growth in inbound tourism, placing it among the top performers of the region (155).

*The young population* under 35 years old accounts for 55.5% total population according to the 2019 census (156), while 82% of total population can access mobile broadband (154), which can be the dynamic of change and integrating in the constantly changing global scene of tourism and the services sector in general.

- **Weakness**

A key weakness worth mentioning is constraints in *infrastructure*. Growing fast as an emerging economy, the country’s infrastructure development speed could not keep up with the speed of economic development which has since led to other problems. Lack of efficient public transport facilities in both air and ground cause congestion in traffic, especially in big cities as well as difficulties in inter-provincial transportation. A number of new facilities to host tourists and provide services are being built but the overall capacity of infrastructure (for example electricity, water, waste management etc) is not meeting the growing demand (155). This potentially leads to two issues. First, the dissatisfaction of visitors, which in turn will affect their decision to return in the future (157): road and traffic safety concerns left 42.7% of visitors surveyed in 2017 with a bad impression of tourism in Vietnam (155). Second, the



overcrowding of destinations due to availability of service providers means that tourists concentrate in only a few places.

With regards to *human resources*, there is a lack of availability of high quality labour working in this sector (155) which results in poor performance in service delivery. Organizational and quality assurance from authorities of the services is inadequate, which leaves tourists with a bad impression. Some of the reasons are cheating in goods and services (24.3% of visitors surveyed), trouble with vendors (22.4% of visitors surveyed), and poor foreign language communication of service providers (8.4 % of visitors surveyed) (155).

*Branding of cultural identity is still weak*, especially with new forms of tourism. Agritourism is an example, as farmers perceive this as an increasing income opportunity, they spontaneously start businesses on a small scale with insufficient care in building image and quality of services and products that are being offered to tourists (158). Despite the abundance in the country's cultural diversity, it is not yet well interconnected with tourism products. While the image and brand of destination has a strong effect on the loyalty of tourists, which is one of the issues of tourism in Vietnam (159). It also affects the diversity of visitors' nationality profile, with 60% of visitors coming from Northeast Asia in 2018 (152).

- **Threats:**

*Competitiveness in the regional tourism scene* is a significant threat. South-East Asia has caught the attention of the international community in terms of tourism with its beautiful tropical landscape, culture and people. However, it depends on the capability to deliver service of the country in comparison with others in the region that can affect the number of in-bound and return visitors. Vietnam's limited ability in services are reflected through lower spending of tourists there than all countries of South-East Asia, and lower rates of returning visitors; while 60-70% and 55% of tourists are returning to Thailand and Indonesia respectively, while the rate in Vietnam was only 30-40% (155). Within the region, Vietnam has much to do to enhance its attractiveness and distinctiveness that relates to improvement of services provision and diversification of tourism products which suit the needs for sustainable tourism and sustainable development.

*Environmental Issues:* The environment scene in Vietnam has been complicated over years of national development. Natural resources are exploited for economic development that lead to degradation of the environment which deepens the climate change effect in the country with some areas being more severe than others (152). Pollution threatens to harm

tourism sites (155), while negatively affecting citizens and demotivating tourists to come. On the other hand, over-crowded visitors put a stress on the environment as pollution follows.

*Novel Pandemic of Covid-19:* The pandemic has dramatically hit the tourism industry over the world in all aspects, in tourist traffic, revenue and employment. Vietnam is no exception. This great challenge puts an urge in a response plan in the short and long term with the scenario that the industry may need a long time to recover.

- **Opportunities:**

*Redirection of domestic customers:* With the restriction of movement over the world and within Vietnam policy (160), international visitors may take time to return to the country. While domestic travelers hold great potential as international destinations are now less accessible. The spending for overseas tourism, which was \$5.9 billions in 2019 (161), accounted for 38% of total spending by Vietnamese tourists.

*Rebranding after covid:* This is high time to redefine tourism in Vietnam toward sustainability through research and the development of new models, by reinforcing the existing, effective ones and improving labours skills in preparation for the recovery of the tourism industry.

*The relevance of sustainable tourism* which is culture and community-based toward locals. More and more people, especially from urban areas, return to the rural area to visit, learn and experience. Rapid urbanization brings more conveniences to life but has the effect of delinking people with nature and origin. This is the region where people care more about culture as well as engage more in these activities.

### **5.3. Policy recommendations for agritourism development and sustainable tourism in general**

Therefore, the effective implementation of the project “Restructuring the agricultural sector towards higher added value and sustainable development” is an urgent requirement being placed on the country's agriculture sector (160). The new rural construction program for the period 2010-2020 also sets the goal of building our rural areas to become civilized, advanced and modern, but still imbued with the cultural identity and traditions of rural Vietnam. It is argued that to be successful in the agriculture sector and to be successful in agritourism, strong public policies are required (162). The policy recommendation is made into two levels of administration: Central government level and local authority level (province).

**At governmental level,** as plans for sustainable socio-economic development are established, it is necessary to stay actively involved in the process of implementation to meet the planned targets. In some cases, the actual achievements are lower than expected, which suggests that monitoring and flexible adjustments are needed so as to contribute to the final result. In relation to policy recommendations to adopt agritourism and sustainable tourism in general, the author has three suggestions based on empirical evidence and case studies.

*Firstly,* to take into consideration the involvement of different stakeholders into action in which to utilize all resources. The importance of this was demonstrated in forementioned case studies analysis while the idea is supported by previous research (163). Throughout the analysis of this paper, women's role appeared as the link between different aspects of development as the potential driver of change to both objective economic and social development alike. Hence the writer suggests the inclusion of women's role in policies for agritourism and/or rural development. An inclusive public policy is suggested to affect women's success factors in agriculture (164). On the other hand, women's contributions are important from the planning to implementation of policies and initiatives since women have more motivation in participation in the non-farm and services sector than men in the same comparison (75). Further policies on women's empowerment and encouraging their participation in the economy in general are recommended, especially within the services sector in rural areas.

*Secondly,* with the notion of education, as this factor always holds great importance, the government should invest in constant innovation of education and updating to match the relevance of knowledge in response to a changing world. In the context of this research, a higher level of education translates to an increase in agricultural income; choices to generate income from agriculture alternatives; and the level of knowledge adoption either in new modes of economic activity like agritourism or in technology to improve agriculture productivity. Education system (at least in the Vietnamese context) should integrate its role in the objective to increase one's awareness on climate change, sustainable development and encourage one to transform it into actions. Green technology should also be included to enrich education, while the fourth evolution in industry has been integrating deeper into Vietnam's production. In the long term, this action would promote the active involvement of the whole society in building a resilient and sustainably-developed setup, coming from their own people and for the sake of their own people. Additionally, vocational training, especially in the services sector, is in need of more attention. A more strict quality assurance in service

training may serve as another suggestion, where study and evaluation is in accordance with international standards. This is to enhance labour performance in the sector, which would result in increasing customer satisfaction and higher chances that they will return for future visits; thus improving Vietnam tourism competitiveness within the region then globally.

*Thirdly*, suggestions on improving infrastructure in general and infrastructure for tourism development. As described, public infrastructure is a weakness for Vietnam in planning or implementing policies. It requires time and capital to resolve this problem. The government's role here is not only to build new systems and facilities but also effectively use the existing ones, as well as thoroughly monitoring urban and rural planning. More specifically, roads that connect rural-urban should be enhanced as well as, schools and banks in rural areas should be built for citizen needs. About infrastructure for tourism development, it is not only about physical facilities but digital facilities as well. It is an inevitable trend and with the context of the pandemic it has become more relevant than ever. Considering the young, tech savvy generation within Vietnam itself of the new consumer class, strategies to promote tourism and methods of doing such should be updated. To open new markets for tourism as well as facilitate the environment for business to develop, is an assignment of urgency for the Ministry of Tourism to further develop channels for promotion, especially in digital. Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism should work closely with other Ministries to develop collaboration tourism products. For example, together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Tourism can come up with agritourism models that combine the best of both sectors.

**At local authorities level**, as an intermediary between central government and local community, it is recommended to ensure effective communication between these two actors. From local authorities, government policy is introduced and engages communities, while the ideas and progress of the community return as feedback for the government. The suggestion here is in accordance with the findings from analysing case studies, for sustainable tourism or specifically agritourism development, in which a community and culture-based approach is relevant.

*First suggestion* for local authorities is to fully understand communities from within, through dialogue, engaging them in action and empowering their decisions. This is to uncover the full potential of communities, including youth and women. It helps in reinforcing community identity in the meantime as they have more awareness and confidence in themselves. In addition, the thorough understanding of cultural value assists local authorities

and its citizens to develop the unique product of “One Commune One Product” (OCOP) which is recommended by Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (52) for boosting local competencies. All of this understanding, self-awareness, and tourism product development will eventually create a unique brand for the community; which at the current moment is still somewhat missing.

*Second suggestion* is in another direction of information flow, the local authorities should communicate well with the central Government about needs, wants and proposals by communities in order for the designing of policies to be relevant and fitting.

*Third suggestion* to the local authorities is to cooperate and facilitate actions of NGOs in the relevant field, private investors. Since they may have more innovative initiatives, capital, that can assist the development of plans, projects and in this case sustainable tourism. In addition, local authorities can cooperate with others in order to develop joint products which can both give tourists new integrated experiences and benefit local businesses that participate in.

*In brief*, a general suggestion for both central government level and local authority level is to enhance collaboration vertically and horizontally within the institutions. In central government, vertical here means the link from central government to local authority and horizontally means its ministries and agencies. Coordination, collaboration within each dimension should be ensured for optimization of resources. Similar to local authority where vertical means the link from its lowest administrative unit to highest, while horizontal means divisions within local apparatus (agriculture division, culture division, tourism division etc.) Again, all connections should be well assured for connectivity and tight collaboration. A smooth operation within institutions then can attract, maintain regional cooperation to create value chains. With the central government, regional linkages can be Vietnam and other countries in SouthEast Asia. With local authority level, it can be provinces in the same region like Can Tho and An Giang within the Mekong Delta. In brief, cooperation is the key to utilising resources, to learn from and support each other; especially in time of reconstruction post-pandemic, to rebuild but better.

#### ***5.4. Action Plan Recommendation for agritourism and sustainable tourism in general in Vietnam***

- **In short term:**

With more focus on the response to the novel pandemic due to its great impact on the tourism industry as a whole. The country closed its border last year (2020) at the beginning of the pandemic (160), but there is still no estimation for the re-opening because of the complexity of the pandemic situation on both the international and domestic level, even more than one year into the pandemic, 2021. Tourism has since depended on domestic travellers. Some of the recommendation for action plan is made as follow:

*For the Government:* Firstly, exert effort in containing the transmission of the disease, assure the safe, stable environment in the context of new normality for present domestic tourism presently and for international inbound tourism in the future. The government's response to the pandemic has remained crucial to the tourism industry as when the transmission rate is low, domestic travel is boosted which helps service providers to sustain their business. In contrast, when the transmission rate is high, with travel restrictions, fear of disease, tourism is once again in hibernation. Secondly, it is a need that the government continue to support the industry with financial packages and subsidiaries such as: allowing tourism businesses to pay tax late (in an agreed time span) or sell them electricity at production price instead of commercial price etc (160). Additional policies on labour to support those who lost their jobs in the service sector should be developed and soon implemented.

*For the Ministry of Tourism:* Promoting domestic travel some activities can be suggested such as holding campaigns that relink tourists to traditional values, social media coverage, essays or photo contests etc. Within the context of domestic travel development, agritourism is a strong candidate where tourists may seek for a natural getaway while enjoying agricultural productions. As analysed in the previous part, this is the chance for Vietnam tourism to rebrand itself where destinations and modes of tourism are to be introduced to the public; while it might not be caught by tourists before when they prefer to have experience overseas. The rebranding should happen in the view of international visitors as the country is striving for a more professional image as a safe destination to travel in the new post-pandemic normality.

*For local authorities:* the role is similar to that of the Government in controlling the transmission of diseases and supporting local business in entering or remaining in the services sector. However, the task of this actor remains as the bridge between Government and community in policy feedback.

*For tourism business owners:* Tour operators can diversify product options, seek alternatives while optimizing existing ones or cooperate with other industries like transportation or other travel agencies and business in providing tourists with value travel packages. While other tourism businesses in accommodations can alternatively host people who are subjected to quarantine with services including restaurants, food stores can switch to delivery instead of eat-in, for example. Business owners should explore and adopt the options that best suit them, however, seeking help from local authorities and other businesses can also be an option.

*For agritourism businesses owner:* This is an opportunity for improving presence, as well as increasing brand awareness among domestic tourists. Hence, the recommendation is to actively promote the business and cooperate with tour operators. It is also applicable for those who intend to enter the market of agritourism as a services provider and this may be the best time to do so.

*For NGOs:* workshop, training in raising awareness on sustainable tourism practises, women's empowerment is still applicable as it can serve as preparation stage for later projects development.

- **In the long term**

*For the Government :* Similar to three suggestions made in policy recommendation.

*For the Ministry of Tourism:* In the broader outlook of Vietnam tourism in the long term, less visited destinations and a new innovation model of tourism should be researched and promoted so as to avoid overcrowding at one place while others with great potential are missed. The Ministry should also integrate more technology in promotion, for example 3D visit of the site and interactive mobile applications for tourist's information. In addition, the

Ministry should actively collaborate with other related Ministries to develop and enhance policy development and implementation. For example, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (in developing agritourism products); Ministry of Construction (infrastructural enhancement); Ministry of Information and Communications (for tourism promotion, digitalization); Ministry of Environment in development of projects or in facilitating initiatives that fulfill the objectives of both; Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with other countries to deliver a connected chain of services can benefit both countries; etc. In the future, even if the state of tourism returns to pre-pandemic levels, domestic travel should still remain in the Ministry's focus. Meanwhile, when still in uncertainty, it is a good time to review, restructure the tourism industry; invest in training activities, develop quality assurance and control systems.

*For the local authorities:* The recommendation is also similar to that of the previous parts. In addition, they should also work on quality control of services to be delivered as they are in a closer position of observant than that of the Ministry. At the same time as promoting communities in the engagement of businesses that aim to improve socio-economic development, the local authorities should monitor businesses in order to maintain a good public image and high satisfaction of tourists.

*For the tourism business owner:* In the longer term, business owners should always seek for innovation and collaboration which can be learned from the pandemic. Creativity and utilization of resources should always be considered.



## **6. Conclusion:**

In order to answer the research question of what is the current state of agritourism in Vietnam and what to recommend, the study analysed case studies both in Vietnam and worldwide CISP projects. Although being a country with agricultural advantages and much potential for agritourism development, what has been implemented thus far is not well-developed. Few provinces have systematically integrated agritourism into development policy. In addition, the status of agritourism development is not sustainable since only economic development was focused on. Therefore, the introduction of CISP case studies was to give insights and examples of sustainable development through sustainable tourism. The case studies facilitated analysis as well as provide good practices and approach models that Vietnam can research more on. In the action plan proposed based on policy recommendation, short-term actions refer mostly to the response to the pandemic, while in the long term, the central government should invest more on education, infrastructure, engaging stakeholders while local authority should strengthen their role in ensuring robust communication between central government and community.

The experience at CISP was valuable to the writer in both academic and professional competences. Beside providing insights for the thesis analysis, the internship enabled the writer to learn about the international cooperation sector and project development and management, practice research skills, and build understanding of the host organisation operation.

In conclusion, the paper has provided a qualitative analysis on agritourism practice in Vietnam and recommendations to be made. But further study and research about agritourism is suggested for future researchers in order to uncover its full potential for sustainable development in Vietnam.

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