

'Moc Chau safe vegetables' for the common interest of farmers, suppliers, retailers and consumers

By Nguyen Thi Quynh Chang¹, Bui Thi Hang², Bui Van Tung³,
Le Khai Hoan⁴ and Pham Thi Sen⁵

'Rau an toàn Mộc Châu' or 'Moc Chau safe vegetables' are now presented daily on the tables of many families, canteens and restaurants in Hanoi, meeting the demands of many consumers for safe, fresh and delicious vegetables. This is a result from strong linkages between the Moc Chau district authority, Son La provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the research team of the ACIAR-funded project 'Improved market engagement for counter-seasonal vegetables producers in North-West Vietnam' (AGB/2009/053). The research staff are from the Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (NOMAFSI), Centre for Agrarian Systems Research and Development (CASRAD), Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA), Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute (FAVRI), Fresh Studio (FS), French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and the University of Sydney. Thanks to this multi-disciplinary, multi-organisational and multi-level partnership, farmers have been supported in all aspects, including policy, information and technical, to successfully change their production practices and develop linkages to Hanoi markets.

To help farmers sustainably develop safe vegetables and long-term value chains, the project has supported the formation of farmer groups and cooperatives. Two years after their establishment, the cooperative of Tu Nhien village, and the two groups of farmers from An Thai and Ta Niet villages are now operating well. Tu Nhien cooperative and Ta Niet group have both been granted certification for conforming to VietGAP (Vietnam Good Agricultural Practices) standards and the An Thai group has been granted certification for conforming to safe vegetable production standards.

With assistance from the Project's research team, Son La DARD's unit of Agricultural, Forestry and Aquaculture Products Quality Control, Moc Chau District Extension Station and District Department of Agriculture, farmers' cooperative and groups have started self-monitoring and inspection as well as

supporting their members to follow the requirements of safe vegetable production. They also regularly update market-related information and help member households develop production plans and apply suitable harvest and post-harvest techniques.

After three years, thanks to great efforts and the commitment of all stakeholders, the project has supported Moc Chau authority and farmers to take advantage of the local climate and land conditions for improving both the quality and diversity of vegetables. Nowadays, in addition to the region's 'traditional' vegetables like cabbages, green onions, H'mong mustard, tomato and cucumber, many 'new' vegetables such as okra, potato and carrot are coming from Moc Chau to Hanoi markets fresh and safe.

Acknowledging the benefits from participating in the value chain of safe vegetables, more farmers in Moc Chau wish to become members of the farmer groups and cooperatives that have been formed under the project. Thus, in 2014, the project supported farmer cooperatives and groups to expand their membership and extend their safe vegetable production areas. Local collectors have invested in vehicles to transport vegetables to Hanoi. They have been supported to develop linkages with diverse market channels, and are now able to supply Moc Chau safe vegetables to many consumers in Hanoi through supermarkets and shops - Fivimart, BigGreen, Bac Tom, Chat Viet, Dong Nam A and Metro.

Next year, the project plans to support more farmer groups, not only in Moc Chau but also in Van Ho district, for the long-term benefits of local farmers, local collectors, and Hanoi suppliers and consumers.

^{1,2,3,4,5} Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (NOMAFSI)

For further information, please contact Dr Pham Thi Sen

<phamthisenprc@gmail.com>