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**Farmers' responses to VietGAP: a case study of a
policy mechanism for transforming the traditional
agri-food system in Vietnam**

A dissertation presented
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Systems and
Environment**

at Massey University

Palmerston North, New Zealand



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2018

Abstract

The VietGAP programme is one of a suite of policies used by the Vietnamese Government to transform the country into a more market-led economy. It was implemented in 2009 to help foster the development of a modern agri-food system in Vietnam. However, it has had limited success with less than 5% of farmers adopting the programme. Little is formally known about how the programme was implemented or why it was not adopted by the majority of farmers. This dissertation contributes to understanding farmers' responses to VietGAP, a policy mechanism that is associated with an emerging socio-technical regime in the early stages of a transition to a modern agri-food system. A single-case study design was employed, and data was collected primarily through semi-structured interviews supplemented with relevant documents. Qualitative data analysis techniques were used to analyse the interview data and relevant documents.

In this study, VietGAP was viewed as a policy mechanism used by the government to help it shift from a traditional to a modern agri-food system. Significantly, this study found that the social, cultural, and institutional dimensions that define the dominant traditional agri-food system determined farmers' responses to VietGAP. Firstly, there was a lack of concern about food safety among value chain actors, particularly consumers and this limited demand for VietGAP-certified vegetables. Secondly, subjective rather than objective measures were used to assess vegetable quality by actors throughout the domestic vegetable value chain. Thirdly, the coordination of this vegetable value chain was dominated by informal, trust-based relationships between value chain actors rather than through formal written contracts.

In addition, farmers' responses to VietGAP were influenced by the broader transition from a centrally planned to a more market-led system that is occurring in the country. The implementation of VietGAP changed the roles and nature of relationships between value chain actors and this influenced how farmers responded to VietGAP. This study highlights that farmers' uptake of VietGAP requires changes to the socio-technical regime of the traditional agri-food system. Many farmers did not adopt VietGAP because of: 1) a lack of market demand for VietGAP-certified vegetables, 2) the risks associated with breaking informal institutions between farmers and preferred collectors; and 3) a lack of capability in key value chain actors. In contrast, a small number of

farmers adopted VietGAP because of: 1) the level of support they received from the local government; and 2) their political aspirations and loyalty to the government.

This research re-conceptualizes a public VietGAP scheme as a policy mechanism for transforming the traditional agri-food system in Vietnam. It provides insights into farmers' responses to such policy mechanism and provides a more systemic view of the determinants of GAP adoption by producers. The insights gained from this study into what shaped farmers' responses to VietGAP highlight areas that need to be considered when designing policies to enhance the uptake of public GAP programmes in developing countries that are in the early stages of a transition from a traditional to a modern agri-food system.

Acknowledgements

This PhD research project has been accomplished by an individual effort, and with the love, support, commitment, involvement, input, and encouragement from many people and organisations. I would like to take a chance to thank these people and organisations, and recognize their contributions. First, completing this PhD research would have not been possible without the love, support, and encouragement from my parents, parents-in-law, brothers and sisters, and my family: my daughter Hoang Minh Chau and my wife Duong Thi Dieu My who always inspired me to pursue this PhD study.

I am honoured to have been supervised by Dr Janet Reid and Dr David Gray. Both provided me with great wisdom in designing and implementing this PhD research. I sincerely thank you very much Dr Reid and Dr Gray for your teaching and enthusiasm and for what you have taught me about science. Your guidance, encouragement, support, patience, and commitment were significant to this PhD research project.

I would like to thank staff and friends at the School of Agriculture and Environment of College of Sciences at Massey University. I would like to thank Denise Stewart for her administrative support. Denise always ensures all PhD students at the School of Agriculture and Environment have what they need to accomplish their studies effectively.

I would like to thank each of the 54 participants who were involved in this study. Their inputs about the VietGAP programme for vegetables have contributed to the success of this research. I also would like to thank the Government of New Zealand for granting me a scholarship to study a PhD programme at Massey University. I would like to express my gratitude to Sylvia Hooker and Jamie Hooper for their support and facilitation in managing the scholarship during the study period. Finally, I would like to thank the Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry-Hue University where I have worked as a lecturer, and my colleagues at the university who supported me to study at Massey University for four years.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
LIST OF FIGURES	X
LIST OF TABLES	XI
ABBREVIATIONS	XII
CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH	1
1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION.....	3
1.4. REFLECTION ON RESEARCH.....	4
1.5. THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	5
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH CONTEXT	7
2.1. INTRODUCTION	7
2.2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF VIETNAM	7
2.3. LAND OWNERSHIP POLICY IN VIETNAM	15
2.4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURE IN VIETNAM.....	19
2.4.1. <i>Administration of agriculture</i>	19
2.4.2. <i>Agricultural organisations</i>	22
2.4.3. <i>The agricultural industry in Vietnam</i>	28
2.5. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE FOOD MARKETING SYSTEM IN VIETNAM	33
2.6. GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND VIETGAP IN VIETNAM.....	35
2.6.1. <i>The development of GAP, EurepGAP and GlobalGAP</i>	35
2.6.2. <i>The development and implementation of VietGAP in Vietnam</i>	38
2.7. SUMMARY	43

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	45
3.1. INTRODUCTION	45
3.2. RATIONALE FOR TAKING A SYSTEMIC APPROACH	45
3.3. TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS	47
3.3.1. <i>The nature of a transition</i>	47
3.3.2. <i>The characteristics of a transition</i>	48
3.3.3. <i>Technological transitions</i>	51
3.4. INNOVATION SYSTEMS.....	57
3.4.1. <i>What is an innovation system?</i>	57
3.4.2. <i>The classification of innovation systems</i>	58
3.4.3. <i>Innovation system approach</i>	60
3.5. VALUE CHAINS	65
3.5.1. <i>What is a value chain?</i>	65
3.5.2. <i>Types of value chains</i>	66
3.5.3. <i>Value chain approach</i>	67
3.6. RESEARCH INTO GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES PROGRAMMES	72
3.6.1. <i>Factors that influence producers' adoption of GAP schemes</i>	72
3.6.2. <i>The drivers for introducing and implementing GAP programmes</i>	75
3.6.3. <i>The impact of the introduction of GAP schemes on farmers</i>	76
3.7. SUMMARY	77
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	79
4.1. INTRODUCTION	79
4.2. PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH PARADIGM	79
4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	80
4.4. CASE SELECTION	82
4.5. DATA COLLECTION	84

4.5.1. <i>Sampling method</i>	84
4.5.2. <i>Data collection</i>	95
4.6. DATA ANALYSIS	100
4.7. RESEARCH QUALITY	103
4.7.1. <i>Credibility</i>	103
4.7.2. <i>Transferability</i>	104
4.7.3. <i>Dependability</i>	104
4.7.4. <i>Confirmability</i>	105
4.8. THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER	105
4.9. MANAGING ETHICAL ISSUES	106
4.9.1. <i>Informed consent and participants' rights</i>	106
4.9.2. <i>Confidentiality and anonymity</i>	106
4.10. SUMMARY	107
CHAPTER FIVE: CASE DESCRIPTION	108
5.1. INTRODUCTION	108
5.2. THE THUA THIEN HUE PROVINCE	108
5.2.1. <i>A brief overview of the Thua Thien Hue province</i>	108
5.2.2. <i>Land use in the Thua Thien Hue province</i>	110
5.2.3. <i>Main characteristics of agriculture in the Thua Thien Hue province</i>	111
5.3. X DISTRICT AND AGRICULTURE IN THE DISTRICT	113
5.4. XA COMMUNE	115
5.4.1. <i>Physical characteristics</i>	115
5.4.2. <i>Land use characteristics</i>	117
5.4.3. <i>The social and economic characteristics</i>	119
5.4.4. <i>Organisational arrangements for agriculture</i>	120
5.5. XB COMMUNE	122

5.5.1. <i>Physical characteristics</i>	122
5.5.2. <i>Land use characteristics</i>	122
5.5.3. <i>Social and economic characteristics</i>	124
5.5.4. <i>Organisational arrangements for agriculture</i>	125
5.6. NATURE OF FARMERS AND FARMS IN BOTH COMMUNES.....	126
5.7. VIETGAP AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE TWO COMMUNES	128
5.7.1. <i>The process of VietGAP implementation in the two communes</i>	128
5.7.2. <i>Vegetables grown conforming to VietGAP in both communes</i>	132
5.8. SUMMARY	133
CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS	135
6.1. INTRODUCTION	135
6.2. THE IMPACT OF VIETGAP ON THE LOCAL VALUE CHAIN FOR VEGETABLES	135
6.3. THE CHARACTERISTICS, ROLES, FUNCTIONS OF THE ACTORS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS	140
6.3.1. <i>Input suppliers: a wide range of actors supplying inputs for farmers</i>	140
6.3.2. <i>Farmers and their activities of producing and marketing vegetables</i>	146
6.3.3. <i>Collectors and their activities of marketing vegetables</i>	161
6.3.4. <i>Wholesalers: trust-based interactions</i>	171
6.3.5. <i>Retailers: the dominance of the traditional markets</i>	173
6.3.6. <i>Consumers: limited demand for certified produce</i>	176
6.4. SUPPORT ACTORS IN HORIZONTAL NETWORKS OF THE VALUE CHAIN SYSTEM	178
6.5. SUMMARY	183
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION	185
7.1. INTRODUCTION	185
7.2. THE IMPORTANT THEORETICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASE	185

7.3. VIETGAP AS A POLICY MECHANISM FOR TRANSFORMING THE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM	190
7.4. FARMERS’ RESPONSES TO VIETGAP AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH THE TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSITION IN VIETNAM	193
7.5. FARMERS’ REASONS FOR NOT ADOPTING VIETGAP.....	200
7.5.1. <i>A lack of market demand for VietGAP-certified produce.....</i>	201
7.5.2. <i>A risk of breaking informal institutions between farmers and collectors....</i>	203
7.5.3. <i>A lack of actor capability within the VietGAP vegetable value chain.....</i>	205
7.6. FARMERS’ REASONS FOR ADOPTING VIETGAP	207
7.6.1. <i>The benefit of government support and its influence on farmers’ decisions to adopt VietGAP.....</i>	208
7.6.2. <i>The influence of political aspirations and loyalty on farmers’ decisions to adopt VietGAP</i>	210
7.7. FARMERS’ DECISIONS TO DIS-ADOPT VIETGAP: LIMITED MARKET DEMAND	211
7.8. SUMMARY	212
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS	214
8.1. INTRODUCTION	214
8.2. KEY CONCLUSIONS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION	214
8.3. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE	217
8.4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS	220
8.5. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	221
8.6. FUTURE RESEARCH	222
REFERENCES.....	224
APPENDICES	255

List of Figures

FIGURE 2. 1: A MAP OF VIETNAM (DSM, 2017)..... 8

FIGURE 2. 2: A SIMPLIFIED VIETNAMESE POLITICAL SYSTEM (FFORDE, 2003) 10

FIGURE 2. 3: A SIMPLIFIED STRUCTURE OF AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION 20

FIGURE 2. 4: THE PUBLIC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM (MARD, 2017)..... 24

FIGURE 5. 1: A MAP OF THUE THIEN HUE (DSM, 2017)..... 109

FIGURE 6. 1: A MAP OF THE INTERLINKED VALUE CHAIN SYSTEM FOR VEGETABLES 137

List of Tables

TABLE 2. 1: SOME RECENT ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR VIETNAM.....	15
TABLE 2. 2: A SUMMARY OF LAND USE IN VIETNAM IN 2016	17
TABLE 4. 1: A LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED KEY INFORMANT IN THE XA COMMUNE	85
TABLE 4. 2: A LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED FARMERS IN THE XA COMMUNE	87
TABLE 4. 3: A LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED VALUE CHAIN ACTORS IN THE XA COMMUNE ..	88
TABLE 4. 4: A LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED KEY INFORMANTS IN THE XB COMMUNE	89
TABLE 4. 5: A LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED FARMERS IN THE XB COMMUNE	90
TABLE 4. 6: A LIST OF THE INTERVIEWED VALUE CHAIN ACTORS IN THE XB COMMUNE ..	91
TABLE 4. 7: A LIST OF THE DISTRICT GOVERNMENT OFFICERS INTERVIEWED	92
TABLE 4. 8: A LIST OF THE PROVINCIAL ACADEMICS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICERS INTERVIEWED.....	93
TABLE 4. 9: A LIST OF THE VALUE CHAIN ACTORS AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL INTERVIEWED.....	94
TABLE 4. 10: A LIST OF THE GOVERNMENT OFFICERS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL INTERVIEWED.....	95
TABLE 4. 11: CLASSIFICATION OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT GROUPS.....	101
TABLE 5. 1: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF THUA THIEN HUE PROVINCE	110
TABLE 5. 2: A SUMMARY OF LAND USE IN THUA THIEN HUE PROVINCE IN 2016.....	111
TABLE 5. 3: LAND USE IN THE XA COMMUNE IN 2016.....	117
TABLE 5. 4: SOME OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS IN THE COMMUNE	119
TABLE 5. 5: LAND USE IN THE XB COMMUNE IN 2016.....	123
TABLE 5. 6: SOME OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS IN THE COMMUNE	124
TABLE 5. 7: QUANTITY AND PERCENTAGE OF FARMERS WHO ADOPTED VIETGAP.....	133

Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Full phrases
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CPC	Commune People's Committee
CPCo	Commune People's Council
CIEM	Central Institute for Economic Management
DDARD	District Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DERG	Development Economics Research Group,
DSAE	District Station of Agricultural Exertion
DPC	District People's Committee
DSM	Department of Survey and Mapping
DPCo	District People's Council
EurepGAP	European Retailer Produce Working Group Good Agricultural Practices
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GlobalGAP	Global Good Agricultural Practices
GOV	Government of Vietnam
GSO	General Statistics Office of Vietnam
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment

NCAE	National Centre for Agricultural Extension
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDARD	Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
PCAE	Provincial Centre for Agricultural Extension
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PPCo	Provincial People's Council
SCNA	Standing Committee of the National Assembly
VietGAP	Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices
VND	Vietnamese dong
WB	World Bank