

## Supporting Green Growth in Thanh Hoa



### Introduction

Two decades of rapid economic growth have transformed Vietnam from one of the poorest nations in the world to a middle-income country. While poverty rates have dropped dramatically, new challenges are arising. Changing production and consumption patterns put pressure on the country's natural resources, while climate change poses risks of extreme weather events and sea level rise. To cope with these challenges, the Vietnam Government developed a National Green Growth Strategy (2012) and National Action Plan on Green Growth (2014), which aim to safeguard the country's economic prosperity while protecting the natural environment.

Vietnam's provinces were encouraged to develop their own plans in line with the national strategy. Thanh Hoa Province was supported by the USAID Vietnam Forests and Deltas Program in developing a Green Growth Action Plan that meets the unique needs of the province. The plan was approved in January 2016 and constitutes one of the first provincial Green Growth plans in Vietnam.

#### What is Green Growth?

"Green growth is the new revolutionary development paradigm that sustains economic growth while at the same time ensuring climatic and environmental sustainability. It focuses on addressing the root causes of these challenges while ensuring the creation of the necessary channels for resource distribution and access to basic commodities for the impoverished"

- Global Green Growth Institute (2011)

### A Green Growth Action Plan for Thanh Hoa

Thanh Hoa has made impressive strides in improving its socio-economic situation over the past years. The province's annual economic growth rate is twice as high as the national average, and poverty levels fell from 24.8% of the population in 2010 to 7% in 2015. Thanh Hoa's expansive upland forests and bamboo reserves have played a crucial role in accelerating the province's development. The provincial government is committed to pursue a Green Growth pathway that sustains economic growth while reducing pressures on the ecosystem services upon which it depends.

The USAID Vietnam Forests and Deltas Program supported the development of Thanh Hoa's Green Growth Action Plan by providing technical and financial assistance. A series of trainings were organized to build institutional capacity for calculating greenhouse gas emissions, developing scenarios and setting ambitious, yet feasible, targets.

The resulting Action Plan seeks to catalyze provincial policies and leverage investments to support green growth actions in the agriculture, energy, industry, waste and forestry sectors. The proposed interventions focus on low emission planning, greener production, and the promotion of healthier and greener lifestyles.







## Piloting Green Growth interventions

After supporting the development of the Action Plan, the USAID Vietnam Forests and Deltas Program is currently concentrating its efforts on piloting a selection of forestry, agriculture and energy interventions on the ground. This includes providing support for:

- The development of a REDD+ “Emissions Reduction Project Document” for a large forested landscape spanning across six north-central provinces.
- Sustainable bamboo forest management.
- The efficient use of agricultural residues as a source of energy and for enhancing soil fertility.
- The development of proposals for a low emission climate smart rice program.
- The development of climate-smart livelihood models, for example through the promotion of agroforestry and evergreen farming practices, a market-based approach for the dissemination of improved cook stoves, and chicken rearing under the canopy.

Once different approaches have been developed and tested, proven success models need to be upscaled in order to meet Thanh Hoa’s Green Growth targets. Significant public and private investment will be required to achieve landscape-wide impacts.

*“We hope that Thanh Hoa Province will serve as a model within Vietnam for our contributions to addressing climate change challenges, harnessing investment for green business, supporting social inclusion and preserving ecosystem services”*

– Mr. Nguyen Duc Quyen, Standing Vice Chairman of Thanh Hoa PPC

## Green Growth in agriculture

Agriculture accounts for over 36% of Thanh Hoa’s greenhouse gas emissions. The sector offers significant climate smart, pro-poor opportunities for reducing inputs, enhancing climate resilience and reducing emissions:

**Climate Smart Rice** – The USAID Vietnam Forests and Deltas program has been working with farmers and extension agents to implement models for climate smart rice production, using native seeds, reduced fertilizer and improved irrigation methods. There is a huge potential for upscaling this project in the province, with the support of the private sector and public agencies.

**Residues** – We are supporting the Women’s Union of Thanh Hoa to utilize straw, a common agricultural residue which is usually burned, as a medium for mushroom production. So far, the 20 households in the pilot have seen substantial increases in their incomes, and we plan to upscale the model to other producer groups.

**Composting** – Currently there are more than 15,000 biogas units in Thanh Hoa, providing a clean energy source for rural households. However, the residue of the process, bio-slurry, is often discarded despite its potential as an organic fertilizer. Through our training programs we aim to build the capacity of 800 farmers to produce over one ton of organic bio-slurry compost each year.