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

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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.

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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