

MULTI-FUNDER INITIATIVE

Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFS RF)

Scaling up local production of therapeutic and fortified foods in Vietnam

Researchers from Vietnam and Canada are tackling poverty and malnutrition among women and children with fortified foods that use locally grown crops, local manufacturing facilities, and local distribution channels. This market-driven approach reduces reliance on imported fortified foods, creates a more stable source of income for smallholder women farmers, and provides sustainable food security for thousands of people living in rural Vietnam.

Local solutions improve incomes and diets

Despite remarkable socio-economic growth in the past two decades, Vietnam continues to face significant problems with food insecurity and chronic malnutrition among women and children, particularly in rural areas. Tackling the two main causes—poverty and insufficient access to healthy foods—is a major goal of Vietnam’s National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), under the Ministry of Health.

NIN successfully developed and field tested Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods made from local crops. These ready-to-eat, energy- and micronutrient-rich foods are used in feeding programs for severely undernourished children. NIN also developed fortified complementary baby foods (instant pabulum and instant flours) for routine use at home for children between 6 to 24 months.

This latest effort builds on the success of NINFoods, a business subsidiary of NIN, in developing and distributing tasty fortified foods, including a high-energy bar used to help treat severe acute malnutrition among children and adults, such as those living with HIV.

Establishing a reliable supply chain

NINFoods is working with Canadian researchers to bring sustainable solutions to rural Vietnam. These include the direct procurement of crops by smallholder women farmers, the decentralized production of fortified foods in small local food processing facilities, and a reliable commercial supply chain that sees products purchased by hundreds of nutrition counseling centres.

Another partner, the Vietnam Women’s Union, will help to develop and deliver training workshops in agro-ecological practices, effective post-harvest handling, food safety, and feeding practices, as well as forming producers’ associations.

The first three processing facilities, primarily staffed by women, will be established in three provinces in Northern Vietnam where malnutrition rates are high.

Expected results

- Improved livelihood, health, nutrition, and food security for thousands of rural Vietnamese
- Reduced reliance on imports of fortified foods
- Reduced post-harvest losses, increased shelf-life, and lower local prices of nutritious foods for young children as a result of decentralized production and distribution
- Stable commercial market for local crops
- New jobs, especially for women, at local food processing facilities
- An evidence-based model to inform food security policies such as the National Nutrition Strategy

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Country: Vietnam

Funding: CA\$1.2 million

Duration: November 2015 to February 2018

The **Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFS RF)** is a program of Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada (GAC).



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