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Changes in the Mekong delta

One of the most unique factors about Vietnamese culture is the importance of food. In most cultures the type of foods that people create are a big part of what defines them. It is the river that is constantly supplying and sustaining a vivacious valley. In rural Vietnam one of the major factors effecting food security is the lack of developing and implementing sustainable agricultural practices to combat erosion, desertification, and soil depletion. In the act of this country's best interest, the best agricultural practices to implement are to slowly introduce crop diversity and rotation, and reverse and minimize environmental degradation.

In a modern Vietnamese family the structure follows a traditional southern Chinese cunfucian house hold. An extended family house hold includes the nuclear family along with the grandparents. Unfortunately many people especially in the central regions of Vietnam the Mekong deltas have little to no health care. To many it's non-existent. There illiteracy rate is rising astronomically at the same rate as the rate of uneducated children. The rural developmental students from Can Tho University state that the central region is the poorest and has the least recourse. Their calamities are only escalated by problems with erosion and natural disasters such as typhoons.

The main agricultural staple is rice. The Mekong delta produces almost one half of the Vietnamese agricultural products. This generates more than forty percent of the country's total agricultural production and more then eighty percent of the country's rice exports.

The fact is that several of the country's poorest districts are located in the Mekong delta. The goal in the production of rice for a long time has been quantity over quality. All efforts went into producing more and more rice. Until recent years the priority of production did not falter.

Many government organizations such as World Food Bank have gotten involved in the agricultural sector. When this transpired, the reverse of what had been taking place for several years took action. Rather than increase the quantity production, they decreased the quantity and introduced new rice varieties. One strain is a rice called golden rice-*b-carotene* is an effective source of vitamin A, which has been genetically modified to provide and efficient source of nutrients for children. "Vitamin A deficiency can result in visual or ocular malfunctions such as night blindness and xerophthalmia" (1, Tang) this rice strain is effective in preventing these blindness symptoms in children. This problem ensues quit often in the Mekong delta. Along with diversification of crops many other ways to contain food security are being implemented.

Like many developing countries, racing to industrialize rapidly to catch up with developed countries, such as the United States, the toll on environment is abysmal.

Vietnam is on different. AS of 2001 “Vietnam has only 9.8 million hectares of natural forest left and less than 2 Million hectares of plantation forest. War damage, overexploitation, shifting cultivation toxic chemicals from industrial waist, acidic rain and the lack of forest management, are some of the several causes of environmental degradation” (3, Sam and Mau). Because of this extreme environmetal degradation the availability of land for crops has shrunk dramatically. The short available amount of land is due to the erosion of healthy top soil and the additives of industrial waste, which is changing the pH and chemical makeup of the soil. The additives are making it either too acidic or nutrient deficient for crops to be sustained.

In recent years many new ideas have been implemented to reverse the detrimental factors. For example, there are new plants that revive and replenish the environment. One plant is called the hyacinth. These extremely unique plants grow along the banks of rivers and help replenish and improve the water quality of the region. These plants make the water healthier to drink. These flowers are bulb flowers that originate in the Mediterranean region.

Another important plant is the Malacca tree. It has roots that penetrate extremely deep and brings up nutrients that are buried far below the ground. These nutrients help neutralize the extremely acidic soil. “When the trees have served their purpose the soil is suitable for planting other agricultural crops” (13, Sam and Mau) not only are plants restoring the soil and water, Vietnam government is enforcing stricter laws on water sanitation. Not only in rural Vietnam but also in urban cites and industrial areas that are contributing to the pollution.

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