

VIETNAMESE SPENCER GULF KING PRAWN MOUSSE WRAPPED IN CABBAGE LEAVES AND SERVED IN PRAWN BISQUE



Luke Nguyen visits
Mrs Minh's vegetable
garden. PHOTO: DFAT

ABOUT THE COOK

Luke Nguyen is a Vietnamese-Australian chef, restaurateur and television presenter. During a trip to the Bac Ha district in Vietnam's Lao Cai province, Luke met Mrs Minh, a farmer in an ACIAR-funded project. Inspired by Mrs Minh's traditional cooking, Luke has created a unique, gourmet recipe of his own that brings together fresh ingredients from products of north-western Vietnam with Spencer Gulf king prawns.

SUSTAINABLE AND PROFITABLE VEGETABLES IN NORTH-WESTERN VIETNAM

North-western Vietnam encompasses some of the poorest provinces in the country, with 40% of Lao Cai's population living below the poverty line. Chronic malnutrition in these communities is also a problem, with one in three children under five suffering from stunting. Enhancing the role that vegetables play in rice-based and temperate fruit farming systems provides an opportunity for smallholders to improve net household income by engaging with a range of new markets.

The vegetable sector, however, is faced with several challenges, including rapidly transforming markets, poor regional competitiveness, heightened food safety demands, poor infrastructure, logistics and environmental sustainability.

THE PROJECT

This project team, led by the University of Adelaide, aims to enhance the profitability and sustainability of smallholder vegetable farmers in the north-western region of Vietnam, with a strong focus on women and ethnic minorities in Sa Pa and Bac Ha in Lao Cai province, through engagement of high-value markets and integrated resource and disease management practices at the farm level.

The project has undertaken a series of market analyses for indigenous and conventional vegetables to identify best-suited opportunities for smallholder producers to pursue. Findings from socioeconomic and farm productivity research led the research team to value-chain and postharvest interventions, which are being tested.

The team will now focus its efforts on understanding the food demand and consumption behaviours in urban and rural areas of Vietnam. The Vietnam vegetables project is led by Dr Dale Yi from the University of Adelaide and is commissioned through ACIAR's Agribusiness Program.

Mrs Luong Thi Nhuan is a vegetable farmer in the Bac Ha district of Lao Cai province and since 2011 she has been a member of the Di Thang cooperative with other farming sisters. "Being a member of Di Thang, I have learnt many new techniques like fertilising, seed collection and preserving, and managing my crop to have a higher productivity," Mrs Luong said. Since joining

the cooperative she has shared her experiences of vegetable production with other women farmers in the group. Every month the members of the cooperative gather to plan production schedules.

Because she participates in the cooperative, Mrs Luong no longer has to go to the market early to sell her vegetables. With higher demand through the cooperative, she has enlarged her planting area to more than 5000 square metres. Thanks to the new market channels through the cooperative, Mrs Luong and other members can sell at higher prices. Her income from vegetables has doubled in the space of a few years. ■

ACIAR PROJECT AGB/2012/059

Towards more profitable and sustainable vegetable production systems in north-western Vietnam.

MORE INFORMATION

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