Creating equitable and sustainable livelihoods in the northwest highlands of Vietnam through livestock-led interventions

Introduction
This profile presents key components of the Vietnam priority country program (2019–2020) under the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock (Livestock CRP). This program aims to consolidate Livestock CRP research to date and translate it into a pilot consisting of combinations of integrated interventions. It will generate evidence needed to attract development investment to scale up possible interventions by national development partners.

The program plan has benefited from input from national partners generated through a consultation workshop held in November 2019. The detailed plan will be finalized and implemented in early 2020.

Objectives
General objective
The program aims to stimulate system transformation through consolidated livestock-based interventions in northwest Vietnam, covering livelihoods, environment, equity and markets in order to improve the livelihoods of highland farming communities.

Specific objectives
- Intensify smallholder crop-livestock production in northwest Vietnam sustainably and equitably by (i) identifying, testing and evaluating livestock-based interventions; (ii) improving knowledge and skills in animal husbandry; and (iii) increasing awareness of environmental degradation.
- Commercialize livestock and livestock-related products in a sustainable manner for all gender and ethnic groups in northwest Vietnam through identification, facilitation and evaluation of institutional innovations that stimulate local livestock product development, market linkages and effective service delivery.
- Promote inclusive intersectoral environment and agriculture policy dialogue and interactions at different levels that address trade-offs and synergies and that lead to more conducive and effective policy attention to smallholder crop-livestock systems in northwest Vietnam.

Site selection
Project sites in Mai Son district, Son La province, Vietnam
Son La is the largest mountainous province in northern Vietnam with a total area of 1.4 million hectares and a total population of one million people. This region was selected because of the high density of ethnic minority people; high levels of poverty; high livestock density; the important role livestock play in livelihoods; and the array of pressing environmental, market and production problems. The population here is made up of 12 ethnic groups—55% Thai, 18% Kinh, 12% H’mong, 8% Muong and 7% others—who are some of the most vulnerable groups in Vietnam.

Expected outcomes
The program’s target is for farming communities in Mai Son district (specifically ethnic minorities), men and women at the three levels of lowlands, midlands and highlands to have:
- sustainably intensified crop-livestock smallholder systems;
• commercialized livestock smallholder production; and
• policies supporting sustainable livestock intensification (desk review and key informant interview).

Research design
The baseline will be carried out in three groups of communities.
• **Treatment**: two communities—Chiềng Chung and Chiềng Lương—have been selected. They include all three types of farming systems, i.e. lowlands, midlands, and highlands.
• **Control**: two control communities—Chiềng Chân and Mường Bằng—were selected to match the “treatment” communities based on similar characteristics in association with altitude, population and livestock density, poverty level, ethnic minority, main species and accessibility.

• **Contrast**: additional communities will be selected within the district of Mai Son to capture the variation in the district, thereby allowing for a representative district-level characterization.

Key partnerships
The project is funded by the Livestock CRP and co-implemented by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Vietnam National Institute of Animal Science (NIAS), National Institute of Veterinary Research (NIVR), Northern Mountainous Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (NOMAFSI), Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Son La Province, Mai Son Agriculture Division and Mai Son Agriculture Service Center.

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