



CGIAR

BETTER DIETS
AND NUTRITION



Recommendations on interventions and policy experiments for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Viet Nam (Hanoi and Son La province)

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Abbreviation

BDN	The CGIAR Science Program on Better Diets and Nutrition
CASRAD	The Centre for Agrarian Systems Research and Development
FAVRI	Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute
MSMEs	Micro, Medium, and Small Enterprises
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SMEPC	The Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Center
ToT	Training of Trainers
VAAS	Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences
VietGAP	Vietnamese Good Agricultural Practices

1. Introduction

The main goal for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the food sector is to optimize their profits and potentially to grow their businesses. Although some MSMEs have found a market niche by beginning to supply safe and nutritious products to the market, the number of such MSMEs remains limited, and has not yet established a strong mainstream trend. Given the dominance of MSMEs in supplying food to consumers in the retail sector in Viet Nam (e.g. de Brauw et al., 2025), if consumers are to choose healthier diets, they will need improved options in markets. As a result, improving the retail supply of safe, nutritious products hinges on improving the options for MSMEs to sell more healthy foods.

However, MSMEs face several barriers in selling additional healthy foods. A primary barrier is a lack of knowledge about what is meant by healthy food (e.g. Ceballos et al., 2025). Moreover, MSMEs currently possess little understanding and lack the know-how to effectively apply nutritional information into marketing strategies and product packaging. As a result, healthy products may not attract appropriate consumer attention to more nutrient dense products, reducing the incentive to invest in this segment. Finally, even those MSMEs that participate in safe food supply chains often lack in-depth knowledge regarding the specific nutritional value of the products they create.

In Viet Nam, several projects and programs that support MSMEs are funded and implemented by both the state budget and international organizations (ODA, NGOs). But topics related to nutrition, nutritious foods and healthy diets have not yet been included in training (Pham TMH. et al. 2025). Utilizing and integrating nutrition content into existing support programs is urgent to attempt to create a spillover effect in a cost-effective manner.

The primary goal of CGIAR's Better Diets and Nutrition Science program (BDN) is to catalyze a shift of consumption patterns towards more sustainable, healthier diets. To meet this goal, it is important to remember that consumers regularly obtain food from MSMEs - in urban areas and more often in rural areas as well. Therefore, an intermediate goal is to help food MSMEs overcome constraints inhibiting the delivery and sale of sustainable nutritious foods to marginalized populations. This document will help develop a plan for further activities to help attain that goal that will take place in 2026-2027.

Given the study conducted in 2024-2025 on understanding characteristics of interventions for MSMEs in Hanoi and Son La, this report provides a set of recommendations for interventions currently being implemented among MSMEs in Viet Nam (with a focus on Hanoi and Son La province), as well as those that could potentially be collaborated on in the coming years under the BDN, with the aim of influencing the availability of nutritious foods.

2. Methods

Eleven organizations with key activities supporting MSMEs in Hanoi and Son La were selected for in-depth interviews.

Table 1. List of interviewed organizations in Hanoi and Son La

No.	List of organizations interviewed	Category
1	Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VAAS)	Research institution
2	Centre for Agrarian Systems Research and Development (CASRAD)	Research institution
3	Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute (FAVRI)	Research institution
4	Department of Cooperatives and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment	Governmental institution, ministerial level
5	Hanoi Trade Promotion and Enterprise Supporting Center, Hanoi Department of Finance	Governmental institution, provincial level
6	Son La Department of Finance	Governmental institution, provincial level
7	Son La Agricultural Technique Center	Governmental institution, provincial level
8	Small and Medium Enterprise Promoting Center (SMEPC), Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)	NGO/an organization operating at national level that gathers and represents the Vietnam business community
9	Oxfam	NGO
10	Rikolto	NGO
11	SAFEGRO	Project-NGO

3. Recommendations

3.1. In Son La province

a) Develop a "nutrition-sensitive extension" module in local training programs

- Integrate a specific module on nutrition knowledge and safe food production, healthy diets, food systems, and the benefits of producing and marketing nutritious products into the mandatory training curriculum of the annual provincial-level agricultural extension program of Son La Agricultural Technique Center (under the national agricultural extension network with national budget) for cooperatives producing and trading nutritious foods. This module should go beyond biological aspects of nutrition to emphasize its economic value. For example, should equip cooperative members with practical knowledge and skills to market nutrient-dense products (like indigenous vegetables) as a premium category, including via nascent e-commerce platforms.

The intervention is proposed to include the development of standard operational toolkits to support the compilation of model materials, including handbooks and flyers, specifically designed for community agricultural extension groups to use when consulting farmers. These materials should include "Nutrition Logs" for farmers to track inputs ensuring food safety, and "Storytelling Templates" that help cooperatives explain the health benefits of their products to buyers (e.g., Doveco, Moc Chau Milk).

b) Integrating into Moc Chau ward - Connecting agriculture and tourism

- "Nutrition-Tourism" Value Chain Training: Design specialized training courses for MSMEs operating at the intersection of agriculture and tourism. The training should focus on "commercializing indigenous products associated with nutrition stories." For instance, guiding cooperatives to create "Healthy Menus" using local safe vegetables and plums for tourists, transforming raw agricultural products into high value "gifts of health". This potential intervention could be implemented under the annual commune-level program to support the promotion and trading for local products in local markets and tourism areas. In addition, it can be integrated into a project being developed for 2026-2027 by CASRAD to promote Moc Chau territorial branding for reputation shaping through regional agroecological transition.
- Moc Chau reputation development for agro-tourism products and services:
 - o Support the local administration to include "Nutrition & Safety" as core criteria for the usage of the Moc Chau regional brand/image/reputation.
 - o Support the process of trials for MSMEs working on agro-products to transparently display nutrition facts or adhere to specific safety standards (VietGAP/Organic) receive priority in trade promotion activities funded by the province.
 - o Collaborate with line agencies in Moc Chau region (with different wards and communes) in training programs focusing on local indigenous nutrition of local agro-products marketing in tourism places/areas, linking and marketing directly to the consumers/tourists.

3.2. In Hanoi

a) Supporting the nutrition-based marketing strategy as well as the integration strategy in training courses and marketing activities

- ***The Hanoi Investment Promotion and Enterprise Support Center***

- The Hanoi Investment Promotion and Enterprise Support Center is looking for new contents to refresh their training programs in the 2025-2030 period under the Scheme "Support for small and medium enterprises in Hanoi for the 2026-2030 period" under the Decision 5418/QD-UBND. The Scheme will be implemented at a larger scale than in the previous phase and will include components specifically targeting

disadvantaged women It focuses on strengthening the capacity of MSMEs (including food MSMEs applying high-tech) to participate in value chains. This creates an opportunity to collaborate with them to integrate modules of "Nutrition-based Marketing Strategy" into the in-depth training courses of the 2025-2030 scheme.

- Instead of framing it as "health education," frame it as a "market insights and opportunity analysis" module. This helps Hanoi MSMEs explore and validate the emerging consumer interest in healthy, transparent, and eco-friendly food products, while providing them with the data to assess these shifting demands. This transition aligns with the strategic objectives outlined in Hanoi's Plan No. 374/KH-UBND which target 70-80% of traditional markets and 100% of supermarkets adopting eco-friendly packaging and 100% of wards/communes raising awareness on sustainable lifestyle and consumption by 2026 (Hanoi People's Committee 2024). Empirical research on Hanoi households confirms that while 67.75% have engaged with organic products, a significant 'green gap' persists where high-level health awareness does not always translate into daily purchasing behavior due to price premiums and limited availability. By leveraging these insights, MSMEs can move beyond generic messaging to address the primary drivers of consumption - subjective norms and social trust - considering that 60% of Hanoi consumers prioritize transparent origin and personal recommendations (Tran, A. T. V., Nguyen, N. T. 2021). Consequently, the module helps food MSMEs to strategically position themselves within the city's changing conditions and consumer demand, open market opportunities for MSMEs.
 - Green & healthy investment matching: Coordinate to organize matching sessions between investors interested in "Ecological Agriculture/Nutrition" and Hanoi enterprises during the Center's investment promotion events. Provide the Center with a database or criteria to screen potential "nutrition-sensitive" investors, thereby increasing the quality of these matching sessions.
- ***The Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Center (SMEPC)***

Each year, the center conducts around 40 training courses, funded through its own budget, project funds, or from cooperative activities with the Department of Finance.

- Collaborate to build specific case studies and modules on nutrition and healthy diets to integrate into existing training courses on Business Administration (CEO/CMO) and Marketing strategy.
- In Risk Management course, include a module on "Regulatory Risks related to Nutrition Labeling." In a "Product Development" course, include "Reformulation for Healthier Products".
- Incentivizing Nutrition through Awards: SMEPC has piloted the "Excellent Supplier" award this year and included "supplying nutritious/healthy food" as an important criterion for the selection of the winner. This creates a prestige incentive for MSMEs to pay attention to the nutritional quality of their supply chain without requiring immediate regulatory changes and highlight the importance of integrating topics on nutritious/healthy foods into training programs.

b) Training of Trainers (ToT)

- Potential to create a core team of "Nutrition Business Advisors" in the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Center (SMEPC) for providing advisory services including training.
- Collaborate to engage in organizing ToT courses on "Nutrition in Food Business" for a selected cohort of staff from SMEPC, The Hanoi Investment Promotion and Enterprise Support Center, and core agricultural extension leaders in Son La.
- The curriculum should cover: (1) Fundamentals of sustainable healthy diets; (2) The business case for nutrition; (3) Advisory skills to help MSMEs pivot towards healthy products. Provide a "plug-and-play" teaching toolkit (slides, case studies, assessment tools) so these source lecturers can confidently integrate nutrition content into their future lectures.

c) Integrating into the design of training materials for Food System Partnership members

This recommendation should be further discussed with AoW1.4 activities actively supporting the food system transformation in Viet Nam. The Food Systems Partnership (FSP) brings together diverse stakeholders (including enterprise supporting centers, private sectors) to transform the national food system. Building the capacity of its members is foundational. There is a need to ensure that the private sector voice and the reality of MSMEs are reflected in the high-level dialogue. Training materials can be collaborated, designed and trained at the local level for stakeholders:

- Compile a set of training materials with specialized content on "Supporting MSMEs to transition to supply nutritious food".
- These materials should be used to orient the Technical Working Groups of the Food Systems Partnership, ensuring that when they design high-level interventions, they consider the practical constraints (capital, technology) of the MSMEs that will ultimately deliver food.

4. Ways forward

- Technical group discussion and priority identification for further collaboration with potential organizations.
- Further meetings and discussions with related organizations supporting MSMEs (referred lists of informants in 2024 and 2025 in this study).

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About BDN

The CGIAR Science Program on Better Diets and Nutrition (BDN) identifies, co-designs and tests consumer-oriented solutions to ensure sustainable healthy diets for all while enhancing livelihoods, social equity, and environmental sustainability. Through evidence-based research and collaboration, BDN supports country-led food system transformation in low- and middle-income countries. To learn more about BDN, please visit <https://www.cgiar.org/cgiar-research-portfolio-2025-2030/better-diets-and-nutrition/>.

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