

Vietnam developing circular economy in rice production and processing

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"In Vietnam's current conditions, farmers have an important role in developing circular agriculture. Therefore, the most important thing is to have policies that benefit farmers so that they can participate in developing circular economy in rice production" Yvonne Pinto, General Director of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

Circular economy is an inevitable trend to achieve sustainable development in the future. With abundant by-products from the rice industry, Vietnam is facing a great opportunity to develop an agricultural circular economy. Not only making organic fertilizer from straw, but also other solutions to take advantage of by-products from straw such as: using straw to grow mushrooms, making food and biological bedding for livestock, organic fertilizer from straw, biochar and biosilica from rice husk,... These are potential solutions to help increase the added value of rice by-products, while creating clean and sustainable energy.

According to Le Thanh Tung, Deputy Director of the Department of Crop Production (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), each year, rice production in the Mekong Delta releases about 24 million tons of straw into the environment but

only 30% of straw (7.4 million tons) is collected, while 70% of straw is burned by people or buried in fields, causing environmental pollution and increasing methane and other greenhouse gas emissions.

To solve these problems, Mr. Le Thanh Tung said that circular economy is an approach to minimize negative impacts on agricultural ecosystems and improve economic performance. Taking advantage of secondary sources and waste products from rice production is important in improving the value chain of the region's rice industry. Rice by-products can become raw materials for the next steps, creating an ecosystem of high-quality products.

According to Mr. Le Thanh Tung, the goal of the project of 1 million hectares of high-quality rice is that by 2030, 100% of straw will be collected from the fields and processed according to the principle of circular agriculture. In the immediate future, it is necessary to build a database and information on technology to support circular agriculture for rice (specifically, by region, specialized, economic - technical - environmental). Provinces in the region need to develop plans to propose - request, strengthen capacity, and develop production models on straw management towards circular agriculture.

Yvonne Pinto committed to strengthening the cooperative relationship between IRRI and Vietnam in the coming time. Vietnam implemented the Project of 1 million hectares of high quality rice, which has received the attention of many countries around the world. The significance of the project has gone beyond the space of one country and reached out to the whole world. IRRI is building many digital toolkits and is ready to share with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.