

Brewing change: Ha Hoang's journey from farming to entrepreneurship



In the heart of Lat commune, Central Highlands of Vietnam, lies a captivating coffee farm cared for by Ha Hoang, a dedicated K'Ho farmer. As you breathe in the air, it carries the delightful scent of freshly brewed coffee, blending with the sweet aromas of banana, persimmon, and macadamia trees. And with each sip of the carefully brewed coffee, you taste not just the gifts of nature, but also the essence of Ha Hoang's dedication. It fosters a deep appreciation for the sunlit landscape and the ethnic communities that Ha Hoang cherishes wholeheartedly.

Taking big risks for bigger results

Back in 2019, SNV's Café-REDD project invited Ha Hoang to join its activities, unaware of the extraordinary impact he would have. As the first farmer in his village to work with Café-REDD, he faced the challenging shift from traditional to completely new farming practices.

'At first, it wasn't easy. We went a long way to show our coffee to the buyers. But in that first year, our coffee didn't meet the qualified size. Some farmers in the village hadn't adopted the new approach. But even when I got rejected, I still paid the farmers who gave us their coffee. It was like saying; I trust you. I wanted to encourage them to keep trying for the next year. Nobody's perfect from the start.'

Skills like these don't happen overnight: Ha Hoang dedicated years to extensive training on coffee ripeness, drying methods, sun exposure, and proper storage with Café-REDD experts. His mindset shifted to prioritise long-term benefits over short-term gains, gradually transforming his farm. He started to add shade, use cover crops, and conserve water. Most importantly, he now waits for fully ripe red cherries. With the tools provided by SNV, he confidently measures the sweetness of his coffee to ensure the highest quality.



From one to thousands – transforming landscapes

Nam Pham, Café-REDD's project manager, deeply appreciates Ha Hoang's efforts, stating: 'At SNV, our aim extends beyond creating a few successful pilot cases among farmers. Our vision is to support thousands of farmers in the region, creating positive change for the entire landscape. That is why we greatly value farmers like Ha Hoang, who not only improve their own practices but also persuade fellow farmers in their village to embrace more efficient and sustainable farming practices.'

From 2018 to 2022, an impressive 3,355 individuals became part of the project, transitioning 1,936 hectares of monocrops into agroforestry models. These models have the potential to create a landscape with enhanced biodiversity, improved soil health, climate change resilience, and, more importantly, diversified income for farmers.



Ha Hoang learning how to replace traditional chemicals with eco-friendly alternatives.

Planting the seeds of entrepreneurship

What surpassed the project's expectations was Ha Hoang's strong initiative to collaborate with fellow farmers in his village, forming their own business. Together, they collect coffee beans and have them roasted at a local roastery. Ha Hoang transformed his house into a simple, yet authentic coffee shop called Chu Mui, attracting guests not only from his village but also from neighbouring cities.

Ha Hoang shared, 'Café-REDD has equipped me with the knowledge and tools to grow amazing coffee and the confidence to start my very own coffee business. I'm proud that our efforts have been recognized by both customers and Lat commune's officials, who even awarded us a special badge as a reliable village business!'

Chu Mui Coffee stands out for its authentic taste sourced directly from local farmers and its strong commitment to Café-REDD's sustainable vision. They actively participate in the digital monitoring and traceability system, recognizing the importance of accurately inputting data without external supervision. 'As farmers and entrepreneurs, we understand that eco-friendly, delicious coffee can open doors to premium markets and long-term profits. And applying this traceability system gives us a little push of confidence to step into this market.'



Ha Hoang receiving the traceability stamps from SNV.



The Lat Coffee Logo designed with SNV's support to help Lat commune coffee farmers establish their brand.

Since 2021, SNV has invited marketing professionals to help Lat commune create a unique logo. Beyond enhancing coffee quality, the project's broader objective is to transform the entire landscape and empower farmers to become leaders in their communities. Fostering ownership and leadership ignites a lasting passion in each farmer, ensuring their commitment to sustainability even after the project concludes. Establishing a recognizable brand for Lat commune plays a vital role in forging a collective identity, inspiring farmers to strive for continuous improvement. As more farmers follow Ha Hoang's lead, the project envisions a future where entrepreneurial dreams are pursued, fair trade is promoted, and positive change ripples throughout Lat commune and beyond.

Source: "Source: "Coffee Agroforestry and Forest Enhancement for REDD+ (CAFÉ-REDD) project" -
<https://www.snv.org/update/brewing-change-ha-hoang-s-journey-from-farming-to-entrepreneurship>