

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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**THE ROLE OF THE STATE
IN THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS
IN THE MEKONG DELTA**

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

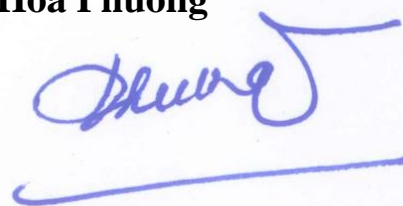
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INTRODUCTION

1. The urgency of the Thesis topic

In recent years, agricultural products and especially fruits have played a role in enhancing food security, promoting nutrition, alleviating poverty, and driving economic progress thanks to the guidance and support provided by the government in overseeing fruit production and consumption. However, in the context of international integration, challenges arising from climate change, along with persistent internal limitations in fruit consumption activities, continue to present new demands and expectations regarding the State's role. In the Mekong Delta region (MDR), despite its considerable potential, fruit production remains fragmented, small-scale, spontaneous, and predominantly individual. Farmers often rely on traditional methods, with little attention paid to standardized processes. Product quality, including design, safety, and hygiene standards, frequently fails to meet regulatory requirements. Moreover, farmers and enterprises involved in fruit production and trade in the region continue to face the recurring issue of “bumper harvests but plummeting prices”.

In addition to the challenges arising from producers and businesses, it is evident that the State's role in fruit consumption has not been fully and systematically leveraged. Fundamental challenges remain unaddressed, particularly in the face of increased global economic integration. The practical development of the country has affirmed the indispensable role of the State in guiding, supporting, and regulating the economy. However, to align with the development of each sector, it is essential to accurately identify the scope and content of the State's role.

The goal of this research is to define and evaluate the effectiveness and significance of the state's involvement and to suggest ways to boost its participation, in promoting fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta region with a focus on aligning the interests of stakeholders, like farmers, consumers and the authorities. As a result, the doctoral candidate has selected the topic “*The Role of the State in the Consumption of Fruits in the Mekong Delta*” for the Doctoral Thesis in Political Economy at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.

2. Research objectives and tasks of the Thesis

2.1. Research objectives

The Thesis aims to clarify the theoretical and practical foundations of the State's role in fruit consumption. It evaluates the current situation and proposes several solutions to enhance the State's role in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta.

2.2. Research tasks

- Provide an overview of significant research works connected to the Thesis topic, elaborating on and clarifying theoretical and practical concerns that have not yet been thoroughly examined, as well as recommending opportunities for additional exploration.

- Create an analytical framework to analyze the scope of the State's role, define assessment criteria, and investigate the factors impacting the State's participation in fruit consumption. This involves researching other nations' and areas' experiences with the government's participation in agricultural product consumption, with a particular emphasis on fruits, in order to draw lessons for the Mekong Delta.

- Analyze current situation of the situation's involvement in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta from 2016 to 2023, taking into account achievements, limits, impediments, and causes.

-Propose directions and solutions to strengthen the state's influence over fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta up until 2030.

3. Research subject and scope of the Thesis

3.1. Research subject

The Thesis examines the role of the State in fruit consumption from the perspective of political economy.

3.2. Research scope

- *Content:* The study investigates the role of the State in fruit consumption, focusing on three key aspects: the State's role in orientation, support, and management of fruit consumption activities within the value chain. The State as an Entity includes: the central and local legislative and executive branches. The entities involved in the consumption of fruit commodities include: farmers, cooperatives and enterprises who produce, accumulate, process, export fruit commodities.

- *Spatial Scope*: The study is applied to the Mekong Delta, especially the provinces and cities with strengths in fruit production and consumption. The study chosen three main locations which are Long An, Tien Giang, Dong Thap, Vinh Long, Can Tho and Hau Giang.

- *Temporal Scope*: The Thesis researches the time period from 2016 to 2023, with projections until 2030.

4. Theoretical, practical foundations of Thesis research, analytical framework and research methods

4.1. Theory and practice basis

- *Theoretical Basis of the Thesis*: The theories of Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's idea on the role of the State and the policies and directions of the Communist Party of Vietnam on the consumption of agricultural products in general and the consumption of fruit commodities in particular.

- *Practical Basis of the Thesis*: International and domestic practices of increasing the role of the State in the consumption of fruit commodities in the region.

4.2. Analytical framework and research methods

- *Analytical Framework*: The efficiency of fruit product consumption is influenced by various factors, including the role of the state. To propose solutions for enhancing the state's role in fruit product consumption, it is essential to first evaluate the current implementation of the state's functions in this area. This involves assessing the appropriateness and challenges encountered. By comparing these findings with evaluation criteria and the factors affecting the state's role in fruit product consumption, the analysis aims to identify strengths and limitations in the state's performance in this regard.

- *Research Methods*: Based on the methodological foundation of Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism and historical materialism, the Thesis employs the following specific research methods: the scientific abstraction method, the logical-historical method, the analytical method, the comparative and synthetic methods, data collection and information processing methods, and statistical methods.

5. Novel contributions of the Thesis

- The novelty of this Thesis is the study of the role of the state in the consumption of fruit commodities, including: development and generalization of the conceptual framework for the role of the state in the consumption of fruit commodities; Formation of a theoretical content for considering the functions of the state, where it can manifest itself as an orientation, support, and management in the consumption of fruit commodities; Construction of an evaluative framework with criteria for the assessment of the role of the state in the consumption of fruit commodities; Analyze the factors affecting the state's role in consuming fruit commodities.

- Analyze and evaluate the status of the state management of fruit product consumption in the Mekong Delta region from 2016 to 2023; summarize results achieved, limitations, and difficulties encountered.

- Propose directions and solutions on enhancing the state's role in consumption of fruit commodities in the Mekong Delta by 2030.

6. The Scientific and practical significance of the Thesis

-The results of this Thesis are a useful reference for policymakers and managers in establishing guidelines relating to the production and use of fruit commodities. This is especially meaningful in the context of Vietnam's continued and deeper integration into the world economy, with a view to optimizing added value and raising the overall living standard of its people.

- Researchers can apply the analytical framework they have on the role of the state in fruit consumption developed throughout this Thesis to complement their studies on value chain-based policy development for fruit product production, consumption, and processing.

- The Thesis will also serve as a high reference for the teaching, research, and study of Marxist-Leninist political economy in the political academies, colleges, and universities.

7. Structure of the Thesis

In addition to the introduction, conclusion, the list of the author's published scientific works related to the Thesis, the bibliography, and the appendices, the Thesis consists of four chapters and ten sections.

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC

1.1. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUIT COMMODITIES

The Thesis summarizes the conclusions of the study on the influence of the state in the consumption of fruit commodities, which may be classified as follows:

First, studies by scholars related to the role of the state.

Second, research on the consumption of agricultural products in general, with particular emphasis on fruit commodities.

Third, studies addressing the consumption of fruit commodities in the Mekong Delta region.

Although the above-mentioned studies adopt different approaches and are conducted in varying practical contexts, they generally converge on several key points that this Thesis can build upon: (1) Proposing solutions to enhance the State's macroeconomic management role in a market economy. This involves the implementation of investment and financial policies aimed at establishing the necessary foundations for the development of various sectors and industries. These policies also facilitate the regulation and orientation of fruit production and consumption in both domestic and international markets. (2) Recognizing that under new practical conditions, the State's role in specific economic sectors must be adapted to align with evolving circumstances. This is particularly critical for sectors that are highly dependent on the demands and standards of import markets, such as the fruit industry.

However, the results of the overview related to the Thesis topic also indicate that existing research by scholars has not addressed certain new issues regarding the role of the State that need to be addressed today, such as: The relationship between the State and the fruit product consumption market, and what position and role does the State play in that relationship? What role does the State have in both encouraging, supporting, facilitating, and creating conditions for the development of the fruit consumption market, while ensuring that it does not violate market principles or Vietnam's commitments in the process of international integration? Based on a comprehensive and accurate understanding of this new issue, what should the State do, and how should it act to promote the consumption market for Vietnamese fruits in general, and fruits from the Mekong Delta in particular, in the context of international integration and the current impacts of climate change?

1.2. GAPS IN PUBLISHED RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION AND THE RESEARCH DIRECTION OF THE THESIS

Through the study of this topic, the Thesis must continue to clarify the following issues:

Firstly, what are the objective foundations for the necessity of enhancing the role of the State in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta?

Secondly, what areas should the State direct, support, and manage to effectively fulfill its role? What are the criteria for evaluating and the factors affecting the effectiveness of the State's role in fruit consumption?

Thirdly, what are the advantages and challenges in enhancing the role of the State in fruit consumption in the region in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the trend of international integration?

Fourthly, what are the directions and solutions for enhancing the role of the State in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta in the new context?

The “gaps” outlined above present scientific issues that the research task must address, with specific focus on the following content:

In terms of theory, it is necessary to clarify the state's role in promoting the consumption of agricultural products in general, and fruit consumption in particular. This includes identifying the areas where state intervention is required to enhance its role, as well as establishing criteria for evaluating and the factors influencing the state's role in this issue.

In terms of practice, an analysis and assessment of the current state of the government's role in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta over the past decade is required, demonstrated through the effectiveness and efficiency of central government policies and their implementation at the local level.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL BASIS AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ON THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION

2.1. CONCEPT, CHARACTERISTICS OF FRUIT PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION, AND THE NECESSITY TO ENHANCE THE STATE'S ROLE

2.1.1. Concept of the State's role in fruit consumption

Based on the synthesis of research results from scholars on the role of the state in fruit consumption within the framework of Marxist-Leninist political economy, the author of this Thesis asserts that: *the state's role in fruit consumption is all activities of the state through tools, mechanisms and*

resources to regulate the relationship between subjects to enhance the exchange and sale of fruit products on the market and bring economic benefits to subjects participating in consumption activities.

2.1.2. Characteristics of fruit production and consumption and the necessity of enhancing the State's role

2.1.2.1. Characteristics of fruit production and consumption

First, fruit is a product generated through agricultural production activities, the result of the growth and development process of crops, and therefore is influenced by natural conditions and has a seasonal nature.

Second, fruit production is characterized by being dispersed, regionally specific, and predominantly consisting of fresh fruit varieties.

2.1.2.2. The necessity of enhancing the State's role in fruit consumption

In addition to the notable achievements, the current fruit production and consumption in Vietnam still face several challenges and limitations, such as: the organization of production not fully meeting the market's demands; the area of fruit orchards that meet quality and food safety standards is still limited; infrastructure for production, processing, and consumption of fruit commodities remains insufficient, non-integrated, and outdated; the application of science and technology in production and processing is not yet advanced; and fruit exports face fierce competition while also needing to meet increasingly stringent requirements regarding transparency and quality from importing countries, especially as Vietnam integrates into the global economy.

These limitations highlight the indispensable role of the state in establishing a comprehensive, cohesive legal and institutional framework, guiding regional planning, selecting appropriate fruit crops, and supporting the production, processing, and consumption of fruit commodities in alignment with market demands for quality, safety, and reasonable prices.

2.2. CONTENT, EVALUATION CRITERIA, AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE STATE'S ROLE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION

2.2.1. Content of the State's role in fruit consumption

2.2.1.1. The State's role in providing strategic direction

(1) By promoting a shift in mindset from producing fresh fruit and raw materials to developing processed fruit commodities with higher added value. (2) Through the formulation and implementation of economic policies in the agricultural sector. (3) By employing tools such as programs and initiatives to foster the development of fruit varieties that leverage the potential and comparative advantages of different ecological regions, with the aim of improving product quality and competitiveness.

2.2.1.2. The State's supportive role in fruit consumption

(1) The state promotes the construction of logistics infrastructure to satisfy the demand for fruit commodities in both domestic and export markets. (2) The state promotes linkages across the production, processing, and consumption of fruit commodities along the chain to enhance product value; (3) The state also promotes trade, branding, and market information dissemination for the competitiveness of fruit commodities.

2.2.1.3. The State's management role in fruit consumption

(1) Developing and organizing the enforcement of laws related to fruit consumption; (2) Inspecting and supervising the fruit consumption market.

2.2.2. Criteria for assessing the State's role in fruit consumption

2.2.2.1. Criteria for assessing the State's guiding role

(1) Planning, formulating plans, promulgating institutions, policies and regulations on standards and regulations to develop production, processing, consumption and export of fruits.

(2) Indicators of fruit tree growing area; fruit output compared to planning and plans; Fruit export output and turnover; Shifting the structure of export goods.

(3) Mobilizing social resources and investment capital for fruit production and consumption.

(4) Profits of gardeners, cooperatives, processing facilities, businesses, and enterprises participating in the consumption of fruit commodities.

2.2.2.2. Criteria for evaluating the State's supportive role

(1) Criteria for assessing the State's support in the development of infrastructure systems.

(2) The State's supporting role in promoting linkages in production, processing and consumption of fruit commodities.

2.2.2.3. Criteria for assessing the State's management role

(1) The results of developing and directing the implementation of strategies, planning, and policies for the fruit production sector. The results of enforcing laws on national standards and regulations in the production, processing, and consumption of fruit commodities.

(2) The effectiveness and efficiency of using state management tools (policies, laws, planning, and plans) for market management, inspection, and supervision of fruit product quality to ensure food safety.

2.2.3. Factors affecting the role of the State in fruit consumption

2.2.3.1. Objective factors: (1) The context of international economic integration; (2) The impact of climate change; (3) The issue of trade competition and technical barriers of countries and import markets.

2.2.3.2. Subjective factors: (1) The level of government and dissemination of State policies and laws; (2) The level of perfection of the system of State policies and laws and the capacity of the State apparatus to organize and implement them; (3) Resources for the State; (4) The needs and awareness of gardeners and businesses towards State policies and laws.

2.3. EXPERIENCES IN PROMOTING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION AND LESSONS FOR THE MEKONG DELTA

2.3.1. Experiences from selected countries

2.3.1.1. The case of Thailand

Currently, many types of Thai fruits are commercially produced and exported to various markets worldwide, yielding significant economic returns. These remarkable achievements can be attributed to several factors, among which the orientation, support, and management of the state in fruit consumption play a critical role. This is evident in several key areas: The state provides strategic direction for the development of centralized hubs to facilitate efficient trade; Government support includes assisting in building strong brand identities for Thai fruits and disseminating market information to producers and exporters; Considerable attention is given to improving transportation infrastructure in tandem with logistics services to lower production costs; In addition to boosting exports, the state emphasizes strengthening the domestic market to enhance overall consumption efficiency.

2.3.1.2. The experience of China

The role of the Chinese government is first and foremost reflected in its swift adjustment of fruit production structures based on specialized agricultural zones, with a strong emphasis on improving product quality through the application of scientific and technological advancements. This includes increasing crop yields, restructuring farm and cooperative economies, and fostering the development of the fruit processing industry. Additionally, the government leverages the comparative advantages of different fruit-growing regions to optimize production. Moreover, state policies are designed to accelerate the establishment of comprehensive market information systems, standardization frameworks, and mechanisms for ensuring product safety and quality. The government also adjusts agricultural protection and support policies to align with international regulations and commitments in the context of economic integration.

2.3.2. Experience of some socio - economic regions in Vietnam on promoting the role of the State in fruit consumption

2.3.2.1. The experience of the Southeast region

In an effort to gradually improve the quality and brand value of fruit commodities, localities in the Southeast region have implemented several strategic measures. These include enhancing the effectiveness of planning processes and guiding producers in selecting key fruit commodities. The region has also established concentrated production areas linked to consumption channels to meet both domestic and international market demands. At the same time, efforts have been made to support the development of branding for key fruit commodities and collective trademarks. The region has intensified trade promotion activities and provided assistance to enterprises and farmers in showcasing their products at trade fairs and exhibitions, thereby expanding market reach and boosting product visibility.

2.3.2.2. The experience of the Red River Delta region

In an effort to increase production value per unit of land, localities in the Red River Delta have been focusing on the cultivation of high-value fruit crops. This strategy is closely tied to the development, maintenance, and expansion of specialized fruit production zones, which have demonstrated substantial economic returns. Key initiatives include providing support for the promotion and marketing of fruit commodities, facilitating connections with modern, safe distribution channels both domestically and internationally. A particular focus has been placed on expanding markets within the region and across the country. Furthermore, local authorities have enhanced their management and oversight of food safety conditions in fruit retail outlets. By offering guidance and conducting inspections, ensure compliance with safety regulations.

2.3.2.3. The experience of the Northern Midlands and Mountainous region

Despite its natural advantages and potential for fruit production, the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region faces significant challenges in the production and consumption of fruit commodities. Key obstacles include underdeveloped infrastructure for transportation, digital connectivity, and post-harvest storage and processing, which limit the region's capacity for efficient transportation and fruit processing. Additionally, most enterprises have not invested in the development of dedicated raw material zones, relying instead on fruit collection through intermediaries. This results in inconsistent fruit quality and difficulties in managing traceability. In response, local authorities have made concerted efforts to support stakeholders involved in fruit production and

distribution through value chain integration. These efforts include promoting cooperative models for fruit cultivation, providing assistance in building and protecting product brands, diversifying product offerings, and expanding export markets.

2.3.3. Lessons for the Mekong Delta region

- Promoting the role of the State in directing production organization linked to processing and fruit consumption.

- Promoting the role of the State in supporting promotion and trade facilitation.

- Promoting the role of the State in managing the distribution and consumption systems for fruit commodities.

Chapter 3

THE STATE'S ROLE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION IN THE MEKONG DELTA REGION

3.1. NATURAL, SOCIO - ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, AND FRUIT CONSUMPTION IN THE MEKONG DELTA (2016 - 2023)

3.1.1. Overview of the natural and socio - economic conditions of the Mekong Delta and their impact on fruit consumption

First, the region's geographical location, topography, and ecological resources.

Second, the socio-economic conditions.

3.1.2. Advantages and challenges of the natural and socio - economic conditions of the Mekong Delta in implementing the State's role in fruit consumption

- Advantages: (1) The natural conditions and socio-economic characteristics of the Mekong Delta are completely suitable for the development orientation of sustainable and ecological agriculture of the Region; (2) The capacity of economic actors involved in fruit production and consumption has been progressively enhanced. (3) There is a clear policy direction toward transitioning from fragmented, small-scale agricultural models to concentrated ones, supported by the development of a modern and synchronized infrastructure system.

- Challenges: (1) The negative impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly complex and unpredictable. (2) Policies aimed at encouraging logistics enterprises to promote investment remain slow to be fully developed.

(3) The linkages among actors in the value chain of fruit production, processing, and consumption in the Mekong Delta remain limited.

Through analysis, it can be observed that the natural and socio-economic conditions of the Mekong Delta present both opportunities and challenges for the implementation of the State's role in fruit consumption in the region.

3.1.3. Fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta

The analysis of fruit consumption focuses on the following aspects (1) The volume and export value of fruit commodities; (2) Domestic consumption and export activities of fruit commodities in the Mekong Delta.

3.2. THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION IN THE MEKONG DELTA (2016 - 2023)

3.2.1. The current situation of the State's guiding role

Firstly, the process of developing and implementing strategies, plans, mechanisms, and policies for fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta has gradually been improved, in alignment with the region's position, role, advantages, and potential.

Secondly, the consumption of fruit in the Mekong Delta is shaped by the national strategy framework.

3.2.2. Current State of the State's supportive role

First, the State has supported investments in the development of infrastructure systems to facilitate the consumption of fruit commodities in the Mekong Delta region.

Second, it has provided support to promote fruit production and consumption through linkage models and concentrated specialized fruit cultivation areas.

Third, efforts to assist in brand building and market expansion have contributed to enhancing the efficiency of fruit product consumption in the region.

Fourth, the State has leveraged the roles of ministries, sectoral agencies, diplomatic missions, trade commissioner and trade representatives in key export markets such as the United States, the European Union, and Japan to unlock market potential and promote fruit exports.

3.2.3. Current State of the State's regulatory role

First, the State's role in promulgating legal documents and national technical standards and regulations related to fruit commodities.

Second, the organization and implementation of legal provisions related to fruit consumption in Vietnam as a whole, and in the Mekong Delta region in particular.

3.3. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE'S ROLE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION IN THE MEKONG DELTA, 2016 - 2023

3.3.1. Achievements and underlying causes

3.3.1.1. Achievements

First, the State's policies and guidelines on fruit production and consumption have played a crucial role in achieving the Mekong Delta's economic development targets. Specifically:

- At both the central and local levels, authorities in the Mekong Delta have proactively directed the development of large-scale, technology-driven fruit production and consumption systems. These efforts emphasize cultivation methods that meet standardized requirements, positioning fruit as one of the region's key economic products.

- The State's strategies, plans, and programs for promoting domestic fruit consumption and exports have become increasingly aligned with national conditions and international contexts, demonstrating improved foresight.

- The contribution of fruit commodities from the Mekong Delta has significantly bolstered the region's economic growth recovery since 2022.

Second, the State's support mechanisms and policies have contributed to enhancing the competitiveness of fruit commodities from the Mekong Delta.

- The linkage between production and consumption markets has been a key focus for local governments in the Mekong Delta. This effort includes expanding concentrated cultivation areas for key fruit crops and gradually increasing the acreage of fruit trees grown according to VietGAP and GlobalGAP standards, ensuring compliance with food safety requirements.

- Local authorities have closely collaborated with ministries, sectors, and businesses to provide comprehensive information about regional specialty and unique fruit commodities to domestic consumers.

- Support has also been provided to organizations and individuals in building fruit product brands associated with geographical indications. Additionally, efforts have been made to establish fruit trading platforms (e.g., CanTho Trade, TienGiang Trade) and implement trade promotion activities. These initiatives aim to boost the formal export of fruits to traditional markets (e.g., China) while expanding to other markets such as Japan, the United States, Canada, South Korea, Russia, ASEAN, the EU, the Middle East, and North Africa. Emphasis has been placed on producing fruit commodities tailored to the demands of import markets and addressing trade barriers.

Third, state management of food safety in the agricultural sector has played a crucial role in protecting the rights of domestic and international consumers of fruit commodities.

- Agricultural departments in Mekong Delta provinces have developed and implemented plans to effectively enforce regulations, policies, and laws that encourage investment in large-scale fruit production and processing along safe food supply chains.

- Local authorities in the region have successfully facilitated supply-demand connections, establishing strong linkages between fruit producers and distributors with a focus on food safety compliance.

- The network of businesses handling fresh fruit and fruit-based processed products has expanded significantly, both in quantity and quality. This includes controlled distribution systems within the region and the growth of convenience stores and specialized fruit shops.

- Regular market inspections and monitoring by local authorities have helped to promptly detect and strictly address violations. These include selling fruit commodities that fail to meet food safety standards, lack clear origins, or involve fraudulent practices in markets, commercial centers, supermarkets, and convenience stores. These efforts ensure consumer rights are protected in accordance with the law.

3.3.1.2. Causes

First, the consistent and ongoing dissemination of Party directives, state policies, and legal regulations to both citizens and businesses - particularly through diverse and engaging policy communication methods - has significantly raised awareness and compliance.

Second, the trends in socio-economic development, urbanization, competitive pressures from international economic integration, and the impacts of climate change have driven farmers and enterprises to prioritize safe, high-quality fruit production and business practices. They have also demonstrated a relatively strong adherence to legal regulations governing the fruit trade.

Third, the State has increasingly implemented policies that guide, support, and regulate agricultural production, rural economies, and social governance in rural areas. These measures aim to limit spontaneous production activities and promote environmental protection, providing clear direction and assistance.

Fourth, there has been a notable shift in the awareness and actions of agricultural management personnel. This change has been further supported by guidance and technological transfer from research institutions, experts, and scientists, enhancing the capacity for improved agricultural practices.

3.3.2. Limitations and their causes

3.3.2.1. Limitations

First, the implementation of State policies and directives on fruit production and consumption in the Mekong Delta region suffers from a lack of coordination between central authorities and local governments.

- While numerous directives and policies have been introduced to promote sustainable development in the region, particularly in agricultural economics, they are often issued by different authorities (such as the National Assembly and the Government). This has led to inconsistencies, and in some cases, even contradictions between these policies.

- Certain directives from the Government and relevant ministries are included in officially approved plans, but their implementation timelines, priority rankings, and funding sources are often not clearly specified. This ambiguity can lead to poor coordination between ministries, agencies, and local governments, or even among localities within the region.

- Policies and mechanisms designed to encourage investment from different economic actors in fruit production, processing, and consumption have been slow to adapt, particularly in attracting investment for high-tech fruit production and the development of processed products derived from fresh fruit.

Second, certain State support policies have yet to create sufficient momentum to boost fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta region.

- The region's transportation and logistics infrastructure for fruit consumption remains inadequate, with slow progress in achieving comprehensive and modern development.

- Domestic and export fruit sales via e-commerce platforms continue to face significant challenges, including infrastructure and workforce-related barriers.

- Efforts to promote, implement, and manage electronic traceability systems and production-consumption linkages for fruit commodities in several localities have not yielded high efficiency.

Third, State management, oversight, and control of fruit consumption have, in certain aspects, lagged behind market demands, particularly in developing and updating national standards and technical regulations.

- Some legal documents issued by regulatory agencies are vague, making it difficult for fruit businesses and exporters to comply. Regulations and guidelines on food safety remain insufficient and unclear.

- National standards and technical regulations for certain fruit commodities have not been updated promptly, posing challenges for government agencies, businesses, and producers.

- Violations of food safety regulations in fruit production and consumption persist, and enforcement measures lack sufficient deterrent effect.

3.3.2.2. Causes of limitations

First, objective factors: The area dedicated to specialized fruit cultivation remains below the required level. The fruit processing industry is underdeveloped, with limited capacity for deep processing. Additionally, the Mekong Delta lacks sufficient seaports and logistics hubs to support fruit consumption. This is largely due to the region's fragmented terrain, weak geological foundation, and severe impacts of climate change and rising sea levels, which result in high construction costs and limited investment projects. The ability to mobilize social resources is constrained. Many localities in the region still lack the necessary infrastructure to organize large-scale trade promotion activities at regional and national levels. Furthermore, the linkage within the network of trade promotion organizations and industry associations is not yet strong or effective.

Second, subjective causes:

(1) From the perspective of the State and local governments:

- There has not been sufficient emphasis on managing and supporting stakeholders involved in the post-harvest stages of fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta. These stages, which include processing, preservation, quality standards, and market development—key to generating higher value-added—remain secondary to a primary focus on production.

- Coordination among functional agencies is inadequate, both within the same level and across different administrative levels. The regulatory framework concerning management processes, penalties, implementation guidelines, and technical standards for product traceability and goods has yet to be fully developed.

- The capacity of officials, both in terms of policy formulation and the implementation of management, planning, and support policies for fruit production and consumption, remains limited.

- Public media (print, radio, and television) have not paid adequate attention to supporting the consumption of the region's fruit commodities.

(2) Second, from the perspective of stakeholders targeted for support and management in fruit production and consumption:

- Awareness among enterprises, production facilities, farmers, and local governments in the region about the importance of developing logistics systems linked to agricultural product consumption remains inconsistent. Collaboration between the agricultural and logistics sectors remains weak. Transactions

between these parties are primarily limited to contract-based leasing arrangements, with little cooperative effort to mutually enhance product quality and service standards.

- Most production, processing, and trading establishments in the region operate on a small, household scale, resulting in limited awareness and compliance with food safety regulations.

Chapter 4

ORIENTATIONS AND SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS IN THE MEKONG DELTA

4.1. CONTEXT AND ORIENTATIONS FOR ENHANCING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS IN THE MEKONG DELTA BY 2030

4.1.1. Context affecting the role of the State in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta

4.1.1.1. International context

- The advances of modern science and technology and the fourth industrial revolution reduce production and business costs, this will have a positive impact on trade activities in developing countries. The increasing demand and requirements of consumers of fruit commodities.

- Environmental protection requirements will be given priority first in development goals, in which economic growth must be associated with solving social issues, creating livelihoods for people, Limiting environmental pollution, and using resource saving.

- The process of international integration and implementing commitments in the new generation free trade agreements has just opened up new opportunities and creates challenges for the export of Vietnamese fruit commodities due to the other by the fruits. The importing country increased the application of technical barriers in trade to protect trade and domestic manufacturing industries.

4.1.1.2. Domestic context

- Institutional systems and policies are also gradually improved in the direction of creating a favorable environment, strong encouragement, and mobilization of the participation of the non-state sector.

- The Mekong Delta is the most affected and clearly affected area; environmental pollution, climate change, sea level rise, saline intrusion, natural disasters, and epidemics are factors out of control.

- Opportunities from international economic integration and proactively dealing with challenges from implementing commitments in free trade agreements and the trend of enhancing the application of technical barriers in trade to protect trade households and domestic manufacturing industries.

- The trend of e-commerce development, digital transformation, and industrial revolution has a strong impact on the field of production and trade, including the production and consumption of fruit items.

4.1.2. Orientations for promoting the role of the State in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta by 2030

First, promoting the role of the State in fruit consumption to ensure harmony of interests, from the interests of gardeners and fruit growing cooperatives to the interests of businesses trading and exporting fruit commodities and the interests of the State.

Second, promoting the role of the State in fruit consumption activities in the Mekong Delta must be in the direction of maximizing the comparative advantages and natural conditions of the Region, applying science and technology to develop specialized fruit growing areas with high productivity, good product quality, increasing competitiveness in the domestic and export markets

Third, promoting the role of the State in the direction of creating a favorable investment and business environment through building a system of policies and laws that are synchronous, strict and highly feasible.

Fourth, enhance the role of the state management apparatus, the coordination between relevant management agencies and local authorities in the Mekong Delta to focus on overcoming internal limitations, as well as removing bottlenecks in the consumption of fruits in the region.

4.2. SOLUTIONS FOR ENHANCING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN FRUIT CONSUMPTION IN THE MEKONG DELTA

4.2.1. Policy measures to strengthen the State's guiding role in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta

4.2.1.1. Improving the effectiveness of planning and management in fruit production areas

Local governments in the Mekong Delta should intensify their oversight by directing relevant departments and agencies to reassess and refine the planning of the fruit production sector. This should align with the broader objectives of agricultural development in the region, particularly for key products linked to processing and consumption. Once approved, planning proposals must be made public and subject to regular monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, local

authorities at all levels in the Region must raise awareness among civil servants, people and businesses about the importance of properly implementing the planning orientation for fruit growing areas and yields in the Region.

Specialized agencies of the Government, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade need to strengthen surveys and comprehensive assessments of the advantages, disadvantages, and current status of fruit acreage in the Mekong Delta to specifically plan concentrated fruit growing areas in the direction of large-scale commodity production, ensuring quality and efficiency, avoiding duplication and overlap in planning in localities in the region.

Under the unified management of specialized ministries, provincial and municipal People's Committees should provide directives and guidance to the agricultural sector and related departments to effectively implement planning measures tailored to the specific characteristics and conditions of each locality. During the implementation process, these efforts should be integrated with other policy frameworks, such as policies on production and consumption linkages, brand development and promotion, and trade promotion. In addition to State budget support, public-private partnerships should be strengthened, and preferential policies on capital and mechanisms for attracting businesses should be developed. These measures will encourage participation from all economic sectors in the procurement, processing, and consumption of fruit commodities at the local level.

4.2.1.2. Enhancing the role of the State in informing and disseminating the agricultural development policy of the region, providing timely market information as well as from climate change, international economic integration and the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Propaganda and mobilization are considered one of the most important implementation solutions to raise awareness and enhance knowledge for cadres, people and businesses to understand the current situation of fruit production and consumption in the direction of clean, safe, environmentally friendly and adaptable to climate change. Official information channels such as radio, television, and local officials are important channels to convey information to farming households and are important channels to provide information and raise people's awareness. Advocacy and communication strategies should focus on three main aspects: the target audience, the content of the messages, and the methods of delivery.

Local authorities in the Region should focus on promoting the capacity of staff working in production, market and rural development in the area, especially training, fostering and improving policies for this staff.

4.2.2. Measures to improve State support mechanisms for the consumption of fruits in the Mekong Delta

4.2.2.1. Investment in infrastructure development, particularly in transport and logistics

Firstly, regarding transport infrastructure: The focus should be on constructing one or two major ports alongside Cai Cui Port in Can Tho city to create a breakthrough in the development of the Mekong Delta's infrastructure. In addition to technical solutions, it is essential to mobilize capital for the region's transport infrastructure development needs.

Secondly, regarding logistics infrastructure: State management agencies should base their plans on the Government's Master Plan for the Development of the Logistics Center System to design a logistics infrastructure network in the area. This includes both hard infrastructure (transport infrastructure and logistics centers) and soft infrastructure (ICT).

4.2.2.2. Supporting investment attraction in fruit preprocessing, preservation, and processing

Provincial People's Committees, in collaboration with relevant departments and agencies, must work closely with central ministries to address the challenges faced by businesses. These efforts aim to attract investment in the fruit processing industry by utilizing policies on taxation, finance, credit, and land. Additionally, effective mechanisms and policies should be implemented to encourage enterprises to invest in fruit processing in the Mekong Delta, with a particular focus on increasing the proportion of advanced processing for the region's key fruit commodities.

4.2.2.3. Innovation in linkage models for the production, processing, and consumption of fruit commodities in the Mekong Delta

The inevitable trend is to establish a linkage center for production, processing and consumption of agricultural products in the Mekong Delta region (located in Can Tho city). However, the project to establish the Center is still under review for approval by competent authorities. In the short term, to contribute to improving the competitiveness of fruits in the region in the trend of international integration, it is necessary to base on the characteristics of the fruit sector, the scale and capacity of fruit production in the region to consolidate and develop existing linkage models, specifically as follows: (1) linkage and

cooperation to solve "input" and "output" for commercial fruits; (2) linkage and cooperation to exchange information.

4.2.2.4. Policies to enhance the capacity of economic actors in the consumption of fruits in the Mekong Delta

Firstly, measures to improve the quality and efficiency of fruit production for domestic consumption and export. Specifically: (1) The State should conduct research on the supply and demand of both domestic and international fruit markets to determine the appropriate scale of fruit cultivation areas and identify inefficient rice-growing areas that need to be converted to other uses; (2) Localities in the Mekong Delta should prioritize research on fruit varieties with potential and competitive advantages that meet market demands and adapt to climate change; (3) Government agencies must regularly provide local authorities and enterprises with accurate market demand forecasts to ensure stable outlets for production and export. Particular emphasis should be placed on adhering to stringent regulations on quality control systems and applying international quality standards such as ISO, HACCP, etc., from the stages of production and processing for both domestic and export markets.

Secondly, measures to strengthen the organization of fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta: (1) Support the promotion of fruit trade in both domestic and international markets. (2) Enhance fruit trade promotion activities and provide market information updates to relevant stakeholders.

4.2.2.5. Policies to support human resource development and the application of science and technology in the production and consumption of fruit commodities

Firstly, at the national level, the government should implement specific mechanisms, policies, and measures to enhance the workforce's capacity to adopt and apply technical advancements and new technologies, particularly in the fruit industry and the processing of fresh fruit commodities.

Secondly, in the context of the Mekong Delta region, local authorities must collaborate closely with specialized agencies from central ministries, as well as experts in fruit production and processing, such as the Southern Horticultural Research Institute and Can Tho University. These efforts should focus on providing short-term training programs tailored to the knowledge absorption capacity, skill levels, and labor practices of farmers. Additionally, local governments should work with international organizations to facilitate training, updates, and the adoption of new methods, techniques, and technologies in fruit cultivation.

4.2.3. Measures to enhance the efficiency of management, inspection, and supervision of fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta

4.2.3.1. Developing and refining national standards and technical regulations on food safety in agriculture, with support for international standardization of agricultural products

The State must provide guidance and disseminate regulations on technical standards and specifications of import markets, as well as international commitments, through relevant agencies. Additionally, it should organize the management, inspection, and supervision of compliance to ensure that stakeholders adjust their production processes and innovate consumption methods accordingly. The government, in collaboration with local authorities in the Mekong Delta, should strengthen outreach efforts to educate farmers on the benefits of adopting VietGAP and GlobalGAP practices. Special emphasis should be placed on sharing information about successful models applying these standards through digital platforms or television broadcasts.

4.2.3.2. Strengthening State management of food safety in Agriculture

The goal in the coming period is to vigorously promote the production of fresh and clean fruit commodities, prioritizing the development of specialized cultivation areas and aiming for the widespread adoption of standards and regulations for both export-oriented processed fruits and imported processed fruits for domestic consumption, particularly in major urban centers. To achieve this objective, ministries, agencies, and local governments in the Mekong Delta must intensify efforts to disseminate information, raise awareness, and provide education on food safety in agriculture. This includes promoting advanced quality management and safety practices, with a particular focus on small-scale food production and trading households. Moreover, it is essential to closely coordinate with and leverage the roles of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the Farmers' Union, the Women's Union, and other socio-political organizations at all levels in the region to advocate for and monitor the implementation of food safety measures.

4.2.3.3. Leveraging opportunities from international and regional economic integration to negotiate expanded import markets for Mekong Delta fruits

The State should strengthen international cooperation and expand foreign economic relations to secure favorable agreements for Vietnam's fruit industry in general, and the production and consumption of Mekong Delta fruits in particular. This involves utilizing the expertise of professionals in international

trade and industry associations to support and guide enterprises in developing strategies to seize opportunities and overcome challenges. Additionally, trade counselors, especially in key fruit markets such as the EU, the United States, and China, should be directed to provide comprehensive information on market trends, import policies, technical barriers, and non-tariff barriers. This information will enable local governments in the Mekong Delta to promptly relay relevant updates to businesses and farmers. Provincial and municipal authorities in the Mekong Delta, based on their local conditions, partner characteristics, and export market specifics, should proactively propose tailored recommendations to ministries and agencies, in coordination with trade counselors at Vietnam's diplomatic missions abroad.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, the production, processing, and consumption of agricultural products in general, especially fruits in particular, in the Mekong Delta have experienced considerable expansion in both quantity and diversity, making a vital contribution to the region's economic growth. It can be argued that, under the present circumstances, the agricultural sector in the Mekong Delta would struggle to fully play its role as a cornerstone of the regional economy - providing fruit for domestic markets and contributing significantly to the nation's fruit and vegetable export revenue - without the direction, support, and oversight provided by the State. This involves the direct leadership and administration from the Government, the technical direction from the relevant Ministries, and the proactive and effective organization by local governments in the region. At the same time, in-depth research into the role of the State in the consumption of fruit in the Mekong Delta is essential for clarifying the current situation, identifying practical directions, and formulating solutions to maximize the State's role in the consumption of one of the region's three key products, contributing to sustainable agricultural and rural development. With this framework, the study has made several significant contributions in both theoretical and practical aspects as follows:

Theoretical Contributions: This study initially defines the concept of the State's role in the consumption of fruit commodities, identifying the key aspects of this role, evaluation criteria, and the factors influencing its effectiveness. It presents and analyzes the experiences of enhancing the State's role in

agricultural product and fruit consumption in Thailand, China, and several key economic regions in Vietnam, including the Southeast, the Red River Delta, and the Northern Midlands and Mountain regions. From these analyses, the study extracts valuable lessons and applies them to strengthen the State's role in the consumption of fruit commodities in the Mekong Delta in the coming years.

Practical Contributions: Through presenting and analyzing the opportunities and challenges arising from the natural and socio-economic conditions in the Mekong Delta, the Thesis examines their impact on the consumption of fruit commodities, as well as the implementation of the State's role in this area. The study evaluates the current situation, highlighting significant achievements, as well as key limitations, challenges, and underlying causes in the period from 2016 to 2023, when the State has exercised its role in the region. Based on an analysis of the international and domestic contexts influencing fruit consumption, as well as policy directions for strengthening the State's role in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta through 2030, the Thesis proposes three main groups of solutions. These solutions aim to enhance the role of the State and local governments in fruit consumption by providing strategic direction, support, and management of actors involved in the production, processing, and distribution of fruit commodities in the region.

Based on the above overview, it can be concluded that the Thesis has successfully achieved its goal of developing an analytical framework to assess the State's role in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta. This framework evaluates the role of the State from three key dimensions: strategic guidance, support, and management. In addition, the Thesis proposes three main groups of solutions to strengthen these roles, particularly in the consumption of fruit, one of the three key products of the Mekong Delta region.

Although the researcher has made significant efforts in conducting the study, the broad scope of the topic, which requires interdisciplinary knowledge and addresses complex, specialized issues, posed challenges. Furthermore, due to limitations in personal capacity and time constraints, the collection of data may not be fully comprehensive or up-to-date, and some gaps or shortcomings are inevitable. Therefore, the researcher respectfully seeks feedback and contributions from esteemed scholars to further enhance the role of the Vietnamese State in the development of the fruit sector and the sustainable growth of agriculture in the Mekong Delta.

LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S PUBLISHED SCIENTIFIC WORKS RELATED TO THE THESIS

1. Dang, M.T.H (2023). Enhancing the role of the State in fruit consumption in the Mekong Delta. *Review of Regional Sustainable Development*, ISSN 2354-0729, Vol 13, 4 (12/2023), pp.93-103.
2. Dang, M.T.H (2023). Experiences from selected foreign countries to enhance the role of the State in the consumption of fruits in the Mekong Delta. *Economy and Forecast Review*, ISSN 1859-4972, 34 (12/2023), pp.70-73.
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