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### **Soft-shell Turtle Farming in Duong Quang**

For a long time, no one in the mountainous commune of Duong Quang has farmed any animals that they caught from the mountains or the deep forest. Therefore, local people in the commune are surprised with Mr. Ha Huy Luc's idea to catch soft-shell turtles from local streams in the middle of the commune in order to farm the soft-shell turtles in his pond.

He is 52 year-old resident of Vang Ri hamlet of Duong Quang commune of Bac Can town. There are favourable condition for farming soft-shells in his commune because there are some rivers and streams passing through the area. Particularly, the Nam Cat Stream, which means "Cold Stream", serves as home to many precious wattle-necked soft-shell turtles. Although many people have rushed to collect the soft-shell turtles, they have not thought about farming soft-shell turtles, which has nearly exhausted supplies of soft-shell turtles in the local area.

Wondering how to preserve and breed precious soft-shell turtles, at the beginning of 1993, Mr. Ha Huy Luc invested time in successfully catching 20 soft-shell turtles and releasing them in his 20-square-metre pond. Since then, his group of soft-shell turtles has grown, and he has sold thousands to local farmers and people from other areas such as Cho Moi and Bach Thong. His soft-shell turtles are healthy as breeding stock, are not prone to get diseases, and are suited to develop in the local weather condition. On average Mr. Luc sells a soft-shell turtle as breeding stock for 30,000 to 40,000 VND, earning nearly 10 million VND in total from selling soft-shell turtles as breeding stock. Moreover, Luc sells soft-shell turtle for meat at prices of 380,000 to 400,000 VND per kilo. Observing Mr. Luc's success in farming soft-shell turtles, an increasing number of local households have come to buy soft-shell turtles as breeding stock, and receive training on how to farm soft-shell turtles.

At present, in Duong Quang commune there are over 20 households that farm soft-shell turtles. Each of the households holds at least 40 soft-shell turtles. Although local farmers do not have much knowledge and experience with farming soft-shells, Mr. Luc is willing to show others how to do it. In an effort to support soft-shell turtle farmers, the Farmers' Union of Duong Quang Commune held a training course on soft-shell turtle farming for communal farms, helping with instructions on how to care for soft-shell turtles, as well as assisting farmers in securing loans.

After becoming acquainted with soft-shell turtle production in Bac Can province, it is clear that soft-shell turtles that are farmed in Duong Quang commune are mainly sold to restaurants. With high prices for soft-shell turtles, farmers of Duong Quang have many opportunities to escape from poverty by farming soft-shell turtles. Maybe, no one will forget the name of Mr. Ha Huy Luc, the first man who embarked on farming soft-shell turtles in the commune.