



Thuong Nong awakens the potential of the highlands.

Thuong Nong, a mountainous commune classified as one of the most disadvantaged in the province, is gradually escaping poverty thanks to a change in production mindset. From small-scale, self-sufficient farming, the locality is effectively exploiting its agricultural and forestry strengths, introducing medicinal plants under the forest canopy and new livestock farming models into practice, opening up a sustainable path for the people here.

Leading us on a tour of her model of growing purple cardamom under the forest canopy, Ms. Dang Thi Khe from Ban Cuom village said: In 2023, she boldly brought more than 100 cardamom plants to experiment with on 0.3 hectares of her family's forest land. After 3 years of persistent care, the plants adapted well to the soil, developed well, and yielded their first harvest of fruit in 2025, selling for 80,000 VND/kg of fresh fruit.

"Growing cardamom doesn't require much care, the initial investment is low, and it makes use of the vacant land under the forest canopy. This year, the plants are entering their peak harvesting cycle, promising to bring a high income to the family," Ms. Khé shared.

Following the initial success of Ms. Khé's household, Thượng Nông commune now has 7 households participating in planting cardamom under the forest canopy, with a total area of approximately 1.5 hectares. Monitoring has shown that this medicinal plant is very suitable for the climate and humidity of the highlands, grows vigorously, and, importantly, does not affect the existing natural forest.

Thuong Nong commune currently possesses 7,081 hectares of forest land, accounting for a large proportion of its total natural area, with a forest cover rate exceeding 72%. This is considered a "treasure" for the locality to develop its forest economy, medicinal plants, and non-timber forest products.

According to preliminary calculations, from the fourth year onwards, each hectare of purple cardamom can yield an income of over 250 million VND/year from selling fresh fruit, a much higher income than traditional crops. Capitalizing on this positive trend, in 2026, the commune integrated funding from national target programs to support seed production and expand the area for cardamom cultivation in Thuong Giap and Ban Gioong villages, involving 26 households and covering 13 hectares. The goal is to establish a concentrated commodity production area by 2030, gradually making cardamom a key crop for poverty alleviation.

New model for challenging terrain

Along with medicinal plants, the livestock farming mindset of the people in Thuong Nong has also undergone significant changes. Instead of simply letting buffalo and cattle roam freely according to old customs, some young people in the highlands have boldly explored new models with higher economic value.

Mr. Ban Van Son (born in 1995), from Thom Luong village, is a prime example. Recognizing the abundant natural food sources in his locality, such as various types of grass and forest leaves suitable for deer farming, Mr. Son traveled to many neighboring provinces to learn techniques for building enclosures, caring for the deer, and preventing diseases. Overcoming initial difficulties in capital and experience, his family now maintains a healthy herd of 10 deer.

Mr. Son shared: "Each pair of deer antlers currently sells for about 10 million VND. By utilizing readily available leaves, the feed costs are almost negligible, and the market is stable. Besides harvesting antlers, the deer herd also breeds, providing offspring and bringing a considerable income to the family."

Based on the success of Mr. Son's model, in 2026, Thuong Nong commune plans to implement a pilot model of deer farming for antler velvet production with 2 households participating, on a scale of 20 deer. The commune will prioritize households with suitable housing and feed sources to organize farming in a disease-free manner, as a basis for replication throughout the commune.

Formation of commodity production zones

Despite significant positive changes in agricultural production, the economy of Thuong Nong commune still faces bottlenecks. Agricultural production remains largely small-scale and fragmented; the supply chain from production and processing to consumption is not yet sustainable; the level of digital transformation adoption among the people is limited; and there are no businesses investing in deep processing in the area.

Comrade Nguyen Van Cuong, Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of Thuong Nong commune, said: In the period 2026–2030, the locality has identified agriculture, forestry, and forest economy as the pillars of development. The commune focuses on shifting from self-sufficient production to concentrated commodity production, linked with increasing added value. Accordingly, Thuong Nong prioritizes the development of Shan Tuyet tea, Khau Lang and Khau Pai specialty sticky rice, medicinal plants under the forest canopy; and the development of herds of buffalo, mountain goats, black pigs, and native poultry. Crops such as soybeans and fragrant green pumpkins are identified as supplementary crops, developed according to market mechanisms rather than being planted indiscriminately. In addition, with the unique local culture of the ethnic minorities and the existing natural landscape, the commune aims to link agricultural development with ecotourism, community tourism, and the development of distinctive OCOP products.

Changing farming mindsets, maximizing the potential of forest land, and selecting the right crops and livestock will be key to Thượng Nông's goal of sustainable poverty reduction and gradually increasing people's income.

Source: <https://www.vietnam.vn/en/thuong-nong-danh-thuc-tiem-nang-vung-cao>