

Getting Vietnam Crops To Market

Most countries have a transportation infrastructure geared for at least three types of transportation services. Many countries have four methods of taking goods from point of origin to market, either domestic or overseas. They are air, rail, ground and ship. Land locked countries would not have access to a seaport and ships, but for certain products a pipeline could be built through friendly countries to a seaport. The ragged transportation system of Vietnam were restricted to half the normal means. The Viet Cong ended the last rail service long before I ever reached Vietnam. I've seen photos of trains in Vietnam, but never saw the Saigon train station, nor signs of railway tracks entering or leaving the city.

Air Vietnam flying DC-3's and DC-6's was in a situation of barely providing in country passenger service, and what few international routes it possessed. Besides the usual passenger luggage, the planes I saw carried pigs, geese and other farm animals. Air Vietnam was in no position to fly any tonnage of crops to market. Even when Air Vietnam was gifted* with a pair of 727's, these jets were allocated to the company's international flights to Bangkok, Manila, Hong Kong and Taipei.

Trucks were used in Vietnam to transport products to market. The problem seemed to be not enough big rigs to meet the demand. In the delta town of Long Xuyen, trucks were primarily used for transporting rock from Nuy Sap Quarry to construction sites, Trucks also were in demand to carry CORDS sponsored new farming techniques (see story at this web-site) including rice, pigs, chickens and many other crops introduced to the delta by CORDS all needed markets. Around Saigon trucks hauling logs to saw mills and tea and rubber crops had to be transported from plantations to markets or dock facilities.

On the South China Sea, ships carried products between major ports. Chinese junks, houseboats moved goods to smaller towns. With sampans and a multitude of other water craft carried farmers goods and raw materials from points of origin to manufactures or for shipment to overseas markets. Sampans and house boats were used to carry watermelons, cocoanuts and sugar cane, to docking site near the Saigon Central Market and sugar mills for refining process. Nuk Mum, the fermented fish sauce was highly prized by the Vietnamese, the same as American have an appeal for A-1 Steak Sauce. Nuk Mum was shipped out of the Cholon district of Saigon plant to market all over Vietnam.

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For the average Vietnamese farmer, with a small crop, hiring a big truck was out of the question. In many areas of the Central Highland, with no navigatable streams to use boats or sampans, created a void in the transportation system. It was solved with the use of bicycles with a hopper behind, water buffalo, oxen and mules drawn carts, or any other practical means of getting field grown crops to market.

The road system varied widely depending on the season. During the dry season gravel roads turned to dust leaving columns of dirt and dust lingering in the air. In the wet season, water standing create muddy tracks were all there was for a road.

* When Pan Am's landing rights expired at Saigon, the renewal contract asked Pan Am to provide two Boeing 727's to Air Vietnam.

1. Truck travelling down dusty road, kicking up lots of dust.
2. Military convoy kicking up dust in the dry season.
3. Wet swampy water puddle road used to get crops to market.
4. Aerial of part of a rubber plantation.
5. Push cart carrying sugar cane in Saigon after rain shower.
6. Pedicab and bicycle cart with sugar cane in Saigon.
7. Bicycle cart with green vegetables in Saigon Traffic.
8. Farmer bringing load of grassy crop, probably rice to market.
9. Ox cart with two large logs hung between oxen.
10. Two Vietnamese men pulling cart of grassy crop.
11. Farmer taking four water buffalo to market.
12. Cargo truck broke down on the Saigon/Bien Hoa Highway.
13. Same as above
14. Vehicles passing the broken down truck.
15. Truck on Bien Hoa Saigon Highway.
16. Sugar cane pedicab being passed by U.S. convoy, probably on the Saigon to Tay Ninh Road
17. Same as above
18. Ox cart approaching RUFF/PUFF (Regional and Popular Forces check point.
19. Two trucks off loading sugar cane at market, in background other vendors selling oranges can be seen.
20. Two sugar cane push carts in Saigon at the Central Market.

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21. Push cart fighting city traffic by Catholic Church on a busy Saigon street, trying to get the sugar cane to market.
22. Mule drawn cart with bundles of goods in the Saigon area.
23. Crop of rice sitting in harvested field awaiting man to get crop to market. Entire family in field.
24. Three ox carts loaded with rice to take to mill or to market.
25. Ox cart with one long log between oxen and hung out the back of the cart.
26. Two ox carts transporting big logs to a saw mill.
27. Esso gas truck in Saigon on the way to deliver a gas shipment. Esso is the International name for Exxon in the U.S.
28. Stacks of wood ready to go to market, with oxen in background.
29. Pedicab in field near Bam Me Thout with three baskets on the cart heading to market.
30. A convoy of ox carts taking crops to market.
31. Charcoal ready for market and stacks of wood to make charcoal.
32. Nuk Mum (Spelling?) ready to be shipped out from the Cholon section of Saigon.
33. Papaya on tree ready to be picked.
34. Four Vietnamese men try to lift heavy bag of market goods from sampan onto the dock.
35. Push cart of green bananas and sugar cane fighting Saigon city traffic.
36. Sampans loaded with watermelons at a canal in Saigon ready to be sold to street vendors or taken to the Central Market.
37. Sampans in a Saigon canal dock space in Cholon section of Saigon laden with sugar cane.
38. Truck that brought crops to the Long Xuyen market in the delta city. Empty baskets needing to be stacked for sale.

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