

# DEVELOPING POLICIES FOR GREEN JOBS IN VIETNAM IN THE CONTEXT OF INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *developing green jobs is a central issue for countries worldwide to realize their commitments to sustainable development. Vietnam has firmly committed to green transformation to get net zero emissions by 2050, demonstrating the Vietnamese government's responsibility and determination to link green jobs with the overall criteria for sustainable development (ESG). The article clarifies three fundamental issues when researching boosting green jobs in Vietnam. The first is some theoretical issues on green jobs. The second is policies related to green jobs in Vietnam. The last is the current situation and proposed solutions for developing green jobs in Vietnam towards sustainable development, contributing to implementing SDG 8: "Decent work and economic growth" to balance economic development, environmental protection, and improving the quality of human life.*

**Keywords:** *development, green jobs, sustainable development, and Vietnam.*

# РАЗРАБОТКА ПОЛИТИКИ СОЗДАНИЯ ЗЕЛЕННЫХ РАБОЧИХ МЕСТ ВО ВЬЕТНАМЕ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ И УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ

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**Аннотация:** *создание экологических рабочих мест является ключевым вопросом для стран мира в реализации их обязательств по устойчивому развитию. Вьетнам твердо привержен зеленому преобразованию с целью достижения нулевого уровня выбросов к 2050 году, что демонстрирует ответственность и решимость вьетнамского правительства увязывать экологические рабочие места с общими критериями устойчивого развития (ESG). В статье рассматриваются три основных вопроса, связанных с исследованием стимулирования создания экологических рабочих мест во Вьетнаме. Первый касается некоторых теоретических вопросов, касающихся экологических рабочих мест. Второй касается политики, связанной с экологическими рабочими местами во Вьетнаме. Третий посвящен текущей ситуации и предлагаемым решениям по созданию экологических рабочих мест во Вьетнаме в целях устойчивого развития, способствующим достижению ЦУР 8: «Достойный труд и экономический рост», для достижения баланса между экономическим развитием, охраной окружающей среды и повышением качества жизни людей.*

**Ключевые слова:** *развитие, зеленые рабочие места, устойчивое развитие и Вьетнам.*

Green jobs are part of Vietnam's green growth strategy. Although a basic legal framework for green growth and sustainable development has been established, Vietnam has not had a concept, scope, or indicators for measuring green jobs and specific policies on green jobs. This creates an institutional gap, affecting the implementation of green growth and circular economic development in Vietnam and leading to difficulties in international cooperation on boosting green jobs between Vietnam and countries in Asia and the world. The paper uses the concept of green jobs of the International Labor Organization (ILO), combined with the World Bank (WB) survey data in collaboration with the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, to research and evaluate the situation of green jobs in Vietnam. The article also uses textual analysis, system structure, generalization, and forecasting methods to clarify relevant policies and actual states and propose fundamental solutions to develop green jobs in the context of integration and sustainable development of Vietnam and the world.

### 1. The concept of green jobs

The 2008 Green Jobs Initiative report, the result of a partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Organization of Employers (IOE), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), defines "green jobs" as any decent work that maintain and restore environmental quality, whether in agriculture, industry, services or administration. We can achieve this result by reducing energy and raw material consumption, minimizing pollution and waste, protecting and restoring ecosystems, and enabling companies and communities to adapt to climate change [10].

The 2015 European Commission report "Resource Efficiency and the Circular Economy in European SMEs: Examining the Role of Green Jobs and Skills" indicates that green jobs consist of "all jobs that depend on the environment or are created, displaced or redefined in the transition to a greener economy" [1]. In 2018, the European Commission defined green jobs more broadly, saying they are "jobs that directly involve the use of information,

technologies or materials that help preserve or restore environmental quality. These jobs require skills, knowledge, training or specialized experience, for example, verifying compliance with environmental laws, monitoring resource use efficiency in the companies, promoting and selling green products and services” [2].

The Vietnam Institute of Labor Science and Social Affairs supposes that green jobs are satisfactory jobs in economic activities and sectors that contribute to environmental conservation and restoration in traditional sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and emerging sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Thus, based on studies, it can be understood that green jobs are sustainable jobs in economic, political, cultural, and social fields. They can be jobs in traditional sectors or emerging green sectors. Green jobs make a great contribution to environmental conservation or restoration by enhancing the efficiency of energy and raw materials use, limiting greenhouse gas emissions, protecting and restoring ecosystems, minimizing waste and pollution, and supporting adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Green jobs have a dialectical relationship with building and expanding a green economy for the sustainable development of countries worldwide.

## **2. Policies related to the green jobs in Vietnam**

Policies for green jobs that are closely related to creating a green economy and sustainable development have existed early in Vietnam. They are reflected in the legal system and national policy framework. Specifically, in 2004, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued the “Strategic Direction for Sustainable Development of Vietnam” (Vietnam Agenda 21) to build a system of goals and solutions and implement Vietnam’s international commitments in addressing sustainable development goals. *Decision No. 1393/QĐ-TTg, dated September 25, 2012, of the Prime Minister approving the National Strategy on Green Growth for the 2011-2020 period and vision to 2050* demonstrated the orientation and goal of greening the economy. The general goals were “implementing green growth and moving towards a low-carbon economy. Enriching natural capital was the primary trend in developing a sustainable economy. Reducing emissions and increasing the ability to absorb greenhouse gases became mandatory and vital indicators in socio-economic development.” There were three specific objectives. The first was to restructure and improve economic institutions towards greening existing industries, encouraging the development of economic zones, and effectively using energy and resources with high added value. The second was to research and widely apply advanced technology to use natural resources more efficiently, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to responding to climate change. The last was to improve people’s lives and build environmentally friendly lifestyles by creating more jobs in *green industries, agriculture, and services*, investing in natural capital, and expanding green infrastructure. The three strategic tasks included reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting the use of clean energy and renewable energy, greening production, and greening lifestyles, as well as promoting sustainable consumption [6]. This was the first and most comprehensive strategy in the field of green economic development in Vietnam. Although the term “green jobs” was not mentioned in this document, Vietnam’s National Strategy from 2011 to 2020 identified the essential content of green jobs: jobs from green industries, agriculture, and services. Creating green jobs would contribute to environmental protection, green growth, sustainable economic development, and improving people’s lives.

In 2021, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued Decision No. 1658/QĐ-TTg dated October 1, 2021, approving the National Strategy on Green Growth for the 2021-2030 period, with a vision for 2050. This decision mentioned the following goals. Firstly, it was limiting economic sectors generating large amounts of waste, causing pollution and environmental degradation, and creating conditions for developing new green production sectors. Secondly, it was promoting the rapid development of green economic sectors to create more jobs, raise income, and enrich natural capital. Thirdly, it was focusing on applying green technology and management and control systems of production activities according to good practices to save resources, reduce emissions, and improve the ecological environment. Fourthly, it was promoting the green transition in social areas such as employment, health, and tourism and ensuring equal access to opportunities, information, and primary social services in the green transition process. Fifthly, it was *developing human resources and green jobs with five commitments*, including:

- Enlarging human resources for green industries and creating green jobs;
  - Focusing on organizing training and fostering knowledge and management skills in the green economy and green manufacturing industry for enterprises and public administrators, especially leaders, managers, and policymakers;
  - Enhancing capacity and knowledge on green growth for teachers and education managers, integrating the content of green growth into educational programs and activities at all levels, opening up training codes for human resources in green professions, and expanding the construction of safe, green, clean, and smart school models;
  - Boosting activities on research, survey, and statistical data and periodically forecasting the demand and supply of human resources for green industries;
  - Disseminating and providing information on the green job market; Prioritizing investment in school facilities and vocational training facilities according to green criteria to serve training and teaching [7].
- Thus, in the National Strategy on Green Growth for the 2021-2030 period, with a visionary outlook to 2050, the Vietnamese government identified creating green jobs as one of the strategic orientations and solutions to serve the goal of sustainable development in Vietnam. The content of green jobs was defined more specifically with five commitments on human resource development for green occupations in both the public and private sectors, focusing on leaders, managers, and policymakers. It focused on developing education and training to create human resources in green occupations, encouraging summary, research, forecasting, and enhancing information on the green job market. They were consistent commitments of the Vietnamese government to expand green jobs, establishing the basis for realizing specific goals and solutions for developing green jobs.

On July 22, 2022, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued *Decision No. 882/QĐ-TTg, approving the National Action Plan on Green Growth for the 2021-2030 period*. The Action Plan included 18 topics, 57 groups of tasks and activities, and 134 specific tasks and activities. Accordingly, the third topic referred to “human resource development and green jobs, including two groups of tasks and activities and six specific tasks and activities” with the following contents:

“- Researching, surveying, compiling statistics, periodically forecasting the demand and supply of human resources for green industries.

- Disseminating and providing information on the green job market and creating conditions to encourage the evolution of human resources for green industries.

- Strengthening education and training in green professions, fostering knowledge and management skills on green growth” [8].

This plan was the basis for ministries and local agencies in Vietnam to deploy more detailed tasks and solutions following each province’s resources and capabilities.

### **3. Actual state and proposed solutions for developing green jobs in Vietnam towards sustainable development**

Researching, summarizing, and forecasting green jobs are vital in many countries’ policy-making. They help governments to more objectively assess market trends, labor needs, and the impact of economic and institutional innovation to implement green growth. Comparative data by Sulich, A., Rutkowska, M., and Popławski, Ł [9] for selected groups in the National Classification of Economic Activities (NACE) showed that in both Poland and Belgium, about 15% of young people found their first job in the sector of green jobs. In the Czech Republic, this proportion was much lower (only 1.83%). It could be seen that the increasing focus on building a green economy shall bring job opportunities for the young looking for their first job.

In Vietnam, the World Bank (WB) researched and assessed the actual state of green jobs by approaching two concepts in parallel: *task-based* (measuring jobs related to performing environmentally friendly tasks) and *outcome-based* (measuring jobs in industries that produce goods and services, contributing to reducing environmental impacts). Accordingly, the WB linked occupations from ISCO-08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008) classified according to the GTI toolkit with the Vietnam Standard Classification of Occupations (VSCO) and analyzed the description according to the GTI method for the remaining 15% of occupations that differed between VSCO and ISCO-08 to obtain the occupational classification results (VSCO 4-digit codes) based on the ratio of green tasks and potential green tasks.

Research results by the World Bank in collaboration with the General Statistics Office of Vietnam show that in Vietnam, green jobs currently account for only a small portion of total employment, at 3.6%, equivalent to the proportion of green jobs in the United States, Indonesia, and Cambodia. In addition to the 39 green jobs, there are 88 other jobs with the potential to become green ones, accounting for 41% of total employment, showing the vast benefits of greening the Vietnamese economy. The sectors with the highest concentration of green jobs are electricity, gas, and water supply (23%), mining (5%), market services (5%), and environmental services (5%). Agriculture has the most potential green jobs (83%). The share of green industries in total employment is 4.8%, higher than that of green jobs at 3.6%. Although workers in the green industry may not perform green tasks or use green skills, the green transition will have an impact on these jobs. According to WB analysis data, enterprises in green industries are primarily small and medium-sized ones. This is an issue to note when developing priority policies for these enterprises, such as green finance and tax incentives for investment in renewable energy. Thanks to that, it is possible to continue encouraging small and medium enterprises to invest in green technology, promoting large enterprises to have strong, breakthrough solutions, and strengthening cooperation with the government to pioneer the green job market in Vietnam.

The WB survey also showed that the rate of green jobs in Vietnam remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2021 and was less affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the potential green rate tended to decrease in the context of structural transformation and shifting away from agriculture. Thus, immediate solutions were needed to prevent the agricultural sector’s downward trend of green jobs. Solutions to enlarge green jobs in the industrial and service sectors were an objective requirement for stabilizing the macro-economy, labor market, and workers in the context of green economic transformation.

By geographic location, green jobs and jobs in green industries were more concentrated in the Red River Delta, North Central, South Central Coast, and Mekong Delta, while potential green jobs were more widespread. Yen Bai, Bac Lieu, and Soc Trang provinces had the highest levels of green jobs, reaching 13%, 12%, and 9%, respectively. These were also provinces with low economic growth rates. The Northwest, Northeast, and Central Highlands regions had low proportions and levels of green jobs, indicating potential benefits from the greening process. The above indicators could be a suggestion for the Vietnamese government to complete the national green jobs policy framework to realize the advantages of potential green jobs and jobs in green industries, to create momentum to promote green growth, upsurge the resilience of the economy to environmental impacts and complex developments in the regional and global socio-political situation.

In 2023, the World Bank coordinated with the General Statistics Office of Vietnam to conduct the Green Jobs Survey (GJS) to collect detailed information on the tasks, skills, and qualification requirements of green jobs in Vietnam. The survey not only measured the proportion of green tasks in the total number of tasks and the task content of green jobs but also examined the frequency of performing tasks and the skills used in jobs, including green skills, cognitive skills, digital skills, management skills, and technical skills. According to the results of the GJS, the proportion of green workers performing daily green tasks with high frequency was 38%. Workers performing green tasks with high frequency did not necessarily use green skills regularly. This indicated that green tasks included green

skills and many other skills (such as communication, problem-solving, technical, management, digital skills, etc.). The digital skills most frequently used by workers in green jobs were computer document editing, social media use, and internet research. The GJS also found that while green jobs required higher levels of education, most could be trained in less than 12 months. Higher-skilled green jobs required training in science, while middle-skilled jobs demanded engineering, manufacturing, and construction training. Regarding gender, men had more access to green jobs than women. Thus, men dominated green jobs and jobs in green sectors. Green jobs were more likely to be formal than non-green jobs.

Another notable finding from the survey was that green jobs in Vietnam needed workers with higher levels of education, but workers did not receive higher wages. Unlike in the US and UK, wages for employees in green jobs are higher. The share of medium- and high-skilled jobs in total green jobs was higher than that of non-green jobs, at 92% and 74%, respectively. This demonstrated that green jobs could be a way to upgrade the Vietnamese workforce's skills. This finding differed from the results of studies using similar methods, although these studies were mainly conducted in high-income countries. In the United States, wages for employees in green jobs were 4% higher, and low- and medium-skilled employees in green jobs also had higher salaries. In the UK, wages for employees in green jobs were higher, especially for jobs that required lower skill levels. This may reduce the incentive to move into green jobs in Vietnam because the wages for these jobs are lower than those for non-green job positions. The cause of the above situation comes from the Vietnamese market's inadequate awareness of green jobs and higher investment costs in green jobs, although green jobs are mainly concentrated in small and medium enterprises and limited in capital, and the government and enterprises lack specific policies to develop green jobs. However, when green jobs are becoming needed for the development of the state, businesses, and workers with increasingly higher requirements, income from green jobs can motivate the young generation to choose majors related to green jobs and green industries. Therefore, perfecting the legal policy framework and specific policies on green jobs is becoming a requirement of the green economy in Vietnam. This is a solution to the income bottleneck for workers participating in green jobs and jobs in green industries.

Vietnam has now identified 39 occupations in the green job group. However, it is forecasted that the labor market will have more opportunities for new green jobs when the government issues *Decision No. 500/QĐ-TTg approving the National Power Development Plan for the 2021-2030 period, with a vision to 2050*, aiming for a renewable energy ratio of 15-20% by 2030 and 20-30% by 2045. According to the ILO, by 2030, 60% of young Vietnamese workers may lack the skills needed to thrive in the green economy. Therefore, it is essential to focus on investing in skills, such as digital skills, advanced cognitive skills (problem-solving), and social skills for all workers, including those switching to green jobs, to match future green jobs. On the other hand, it is crucial to integrate environmental and climate issues into education and training programs at all levels and consider general education as the foundation for developing awareness, skills, and attitudes for learners at university and postgraduate levels. Besides, establishing public-private partnerships to identify demands and improve green skills training is an indispensable task, helping to upskill the workforce in green jobs and provide green skills to meet domestic and global demand. Higher skills make it easier for workers to take on more environmentally friendly jobs.

Economic actors in all sectors should regularly monitor the impact of green growth on employment. It is about integrating statistics reports on green jobs to assess the impact of the green transition on the labor market. Accordingly, it is requisite to focus on transforming the economic structure to stimulate and promote potential green jobs in each industry. For example, agricultural production is the foundation of Vietnam's economy, and agriculture is also the sector with the highest convergence of potential green jobs. Therefore, it is fundamental to base on the summary, assessment, and forecast of green transformation in agriculture to issue policies on green jobs. Identifying green job positions in agricultural production, with incentives on taxes, capital, technology, and experts for each region and province, is needful. Furthermore, it is critical to focus on investing in and developing a system of training schools on agricultural, forestry, and fishery production to create more green jobs in this field while preparing workers with the key green skills in the future. In the industrial sector, policies need to give incentives on taxes, fees, land, technology, and brand promotion for enterprises to encourage them to commit and complete production and business programs and plans, adjust production activities according to the goal of developing green jobs, with higher incentives for businesses that cooperate with green job training facilities for the labor market. For services, the government's preferential policies can focus on developing green finance by establishing a comprehensive and consistent legal framework and policies related to green finance, developing a team of experts and workers, supporting transformation, training essential green skills for personnel, and promoting the expansion of green jobs in the financial sector. Financial institutions should strengthen coordination with public and private units in training, research, and forecasting to create resources, innovate, and improve green skills for human resources. State incentives to develop jobs in green finance can promote green shopping, consumption, and tourism activities.

### **3. Conclusion**

Thus, green jobs are still a relatively new issue in Vietnam. Although green jobs are essential to promoting green growth and are the choice of many enterprises and workers, the Vietnamese government has not given a specific policy on enlarging green jobs. Hence, the following solutions can be applied to solve this problem. The first is researching international experience on green jobs and assessing the actual state of the job market in Vietnam to build a suitable concept system and measurement method for green jobs. The second is developing a national green economy sector system in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, which is considered a foundation for innovating, transforming, and developing more green jobs. The third is focusing on green financial incentives for transformational and supporting industries in the processing and manufacturing industry because these sectors will create breakthroughs and bridge the

agricultural, forestry, and fishery sectors with the service industry. The last is legislating for the green finance sector to protect and develop financial instruments, contributing to adjusting financial markets with sustainable development goals and transitioning to an economy with more green jobs. Furthermore, it is vital to focus on financial instruments to support individuals participating in green jobs and jobs in green industries.

Accordingly, policies on green jobs may include the following contents: Policy objectives are specific, measurable, and closely linked to Vietnam's green growth goals for the 2021-2030 period, with a vision for 2045. Solutions to develop green jobs shall focus on prioritizing capital resources, especially for economic entities that are committed and have detailed plans for implementing the transition to green jobs. Besides, it is critical to consider a tax on environmental insurance for organizations and individuals working in non-green industries, regulate environmental insurance premiums for employees to increase individual responsibility, strengthen coordination between the government and citizens, build a social culture for green jobs, and protect the environment. Supporting tuition and living expenses for students who register to study and commit to choosing and working in green jobs and the national green economic sector system is urgent. Furthermore, it is indispensable to implement preferential policies on social insurance, such as reducing premiums, improving health care services for workers, and providing tax and financial incentives for individuals and enterprises involved in green jobs and green self-employment. In particular, public and private entities need to build a salary regime for green jobs on par with non-green jobs, moving towards paying higher salaries to workers in green jobs.

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