

## Prosperity Initiative News

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### Bamboo Industry Outlook Conference

On 28-29 November, more than 150 provincial government leaders, bamboo business owners and experts from China gathered in Hanoi to attend the Bamboo Industry Outlook Conference co-hosted by Viet Craft and Prosperity Initiative's Mekong Bamboo programme.

The Conference was the first of its kind in Viet Nam, bringing together people from across the spectrum of the Mekong bamboo industry.



"This was really the first opportunity in Viet Nam for industry leaders and the private and public sector to come together to discuss and propose solutions to the issues and challenges that face the bamboo industrial sub-sector and handicrafts industry," explained Tim de Mestre, Head of the Mekong Bamboo Programme.

"The fact that so many people came together over those two days and actively participated shows the level of interest present in the industry" de Mestre said.

Mekong Bamboo hosted experts like Professor Zhu Zhaohua, one of the founders of the International Network of Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) in China and an INBAR Distinguished Fellow for Life, and Master Chen Yunhua, owner of a large handicraft company who also runs a handicraft vocational training school in Chengdu. The two experts presented on China's

experience in becoming the global bamboo industry leader in less than 30 years - vital lessons for Vietnamese decision makers and industry players.

Companies like Artex Tien Dong, one of Viet Nam's leading bamboo manufacturing firms, presented on the outlook for high value bamboo products in both domestic and export markets, focusing especially on the technique of Strand Woven bamboo.

Strand Woven is a new technology that very efficiently turns bamboo into hardwood equivalent products - it is high value products like these that deliver more money to poor farmers and small businesses. And it's for this reason that Mekong Bamboo helped introduce this technology to Artex Tien Dong and indeed Viet Nam.

Speakers from all segments of the industry presented on a variety of topics. Primary and secondary processors discussed their unique opportunities and challenges, and Mekong Bamboo presented on the global market outlook. Provincial officials from Thanh Hoa - one of Mekong Bamboo's main partner provinces - discussed further development of the industry from a local government perspective.



Break out sessions took place on the second day and included discussions on three of Mekong Bamboo's main focus areas: sustainable bamboo supply, processing (efficiencies) and bamboo handicrafts.

Mekong Bamboo introduced their online [Bamboo Business Database](#), which contains contact and product information for more than 300 businesses in Viet Nam. The database is available in both English and Vietnamese. The Team also presented a [Mekong Bamboo video](#), a film on North West Viet Nam's potential in Industrial bamboo.

Overall feedback from the conference was very positive. Participants reported that the Conference created an important venue for sharing information and networking, in particular bringing together the Chinese and Vietnamese experiences and perspectives.

"For Mekong Bamboo, with our partner Viet Craft, it was an exciting event to be involved in," de Mestre said. "We will seek to hold a similar event the same time next year and hope to broaden the discussion with greater input from government authorities."