
**CURRENT STATUS OF MEDICINAL HERB PRODUCTION
AND TRADE IN VIETNAM LINKED TO THE GLOBAL MEDICINAL HERB
MARKET AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS UP TO 2030**

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Abstract:

This study evaluates the current status of medicinal plant production and trade in Vietnam. Vietnam possesses rich medicinal plant resources with more than 5,000 species used in traditional medicine. However, domestic production only satisfies part of the national demand. The development of value chains and standardized cultivation areas is essential for strengthening the herbal medicine industry.

The herbal medicine market has expanded significantly over the past decades due to increasing interest in natural health products. This paper analyzes the global herbal medicine market structure, growth trends, and future prospects toward 2030 based on secondary data from international reports and industry analyses. Results indicate that Asia dominates global production, while Europe and North America represent major consumer markets. Market value is projected to reach approximately USD 550 billion by 2030. The findings provide important insights for developing countries seeking to expand their medicinal plant industries.

Keywords: Medicinal herbs; Medicinal plants; Traditional medicine; Medicinal herb market; Development trends.

1. Introduction

Medicinal plants have played a fundamental role in human healthcare for thousands of years. Long before the development of modern pharmaceuticals, plant-based remedies were widely used in traditional medical systems to treat various diseases and maintain health. Even today, herbal medicines continue to represent an important component of healthcare in many countries. According to estimates from the World Health Organization, approximately 70–80% of the population in developing countries still rely on traditional medicine, particularly herbal remedies, as a primary source of healthcare. The continued reliance on medicinal plants reflects not only cultural traditions but also their accessibility, affordability, and therapeutic potential.

In recent decades, global interest in herbal medicine has increased significantly due to several

factors, including the rising prevalence of chronic diseases, increasing healthcare costs, and growing awareness of natural and preventive healthcare approaches. Consumers worldwide are increasingly seeking plant-based products that are perceived as safer and more sustainable compared with synthetic pharmaceuticals. This trend has led to a rapid expansion of the global herbal medicine market and has stimulated extensive scientific research on medicinal plants and their bioactive compounds.

Medicinal plants contain a wide variety of secondary metabolites that exhibit diverse biological activities. These compounds include alkaloids, flavonoids, terpenoids, phenolic acids, saponins, and glycosides, many of which possess pharmacological properties such as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and anticancer effects. Numerous modern drugs have been developed based on plant-derived compounds. Well-known examples include

paclitaxel from *Taxus* species for cancer treatment, artemisinin from *Artemisia annua* for malaria therapy, and morphine from *Papaver somniferum* for pain management. Such discoveries demonstrate the significant potential of medicinal plants as sources of novel therapeutic agents.

In addition to their pharmaceutical applications, medicinal plants are increasingly used in other industries such as functional foods, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and dietary supplements. Plant extracts rich in bioactive compounds are widely incorporated into health products aimed at improving immune function, preventing chronic diseases, and promoting general well-being. As a result, the global demand for medicinal plant raw materials has grown rapidly, creating new economic opportunities for countries rich in biodiversity.

Among the major producers of medicinal plants, countries such as China and India currently dominate the global herbal medicine market. China has established a highly developed industry based on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), supported by large-scale cultivation systems, advanced processing technologies, and strong government investment in research and development. Similarly, India has developed a thriving herbal industry closely linked to the Ayurvedic medical system. Both countries have successfully integrated traditional knowledge with modern scientific research and industrial production, enabling them to become major exporters of medicinal plant products and herbal medicines.

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam is recognized as one of the countries with exceptionally high biodiversity. The country is home to more than 5,000 medicinal plant species distributed across diverse ecological regions ranging from tropical forests to mountainous ecosystems. Many of these plants have been traditionally used in Vietnamese folk medicine and traditional medical practices for the treatment of various diseases. In recent years, the Vietnamese government has increasingly recognized the economic and scientific potential of medicinal plant resources and has implemented several national programs aimed at promoting medicinal plant conservation, cultivation, and commercialization.

Despite these advantages, the development of Vietnam's medicinal plant industry still faces several challenges. One of the main limitations is the lack of large-scale and standardized cultivation systems. Many medicinal plants are still harvested from

wild populations or grown in small-scale farming systems, which may lead to inconsistent supply and variations in phytochemical composition. Furthermore, the application of standardized cultivation and harvesting practices such as Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP-WHO) remains limited in many production areas.

Another important challenge is the limited development of advanced processing and extraction technologies. In many cases, medicinal plants are exported as raw materials rather than processed products, resulting in relatively low economic value. In contrast, countries with more developed herbal industries have established modern extraction technologies that enable the production of standardized plant extracts, phytopharmaceuticals, and high-value herbal formulations.

In addition, the increasing globalization of the herbal medicine market has led to stricter regulatory requirements related to product quality, safety, and traceability. International markets require herbal products to comply with various standards such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), quality control of active compounds, and standardized phytochemical profiles. Meeting these requirements represents a significant challenge for developing countries that seek to expand their participation in the global herbal medicine trade.

Nevertheless, the growing demand for natural products presents significant opportunities for countries with abundant medicinal plant resources. With appropriate investments in scientific research, biotechnology, and sustainable cultivation systems, medicinal plants can become a valuable source of economic development and pharmaceutical innovation. Strengthening the medicinal plant value chain - from cultivation and harvesting to processing and commercialization - will be essential for maximizing the economic and therapeutic potential of these natural resources.

Therefore, understanding the development trends of the global herbal medicine market and evaluating the position of different countries in the medicinal plant value chain is important for developing effective strategies for industry growth. Comparative analyses among major producing countries can provide valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of different production systems and help identify opportunities for improving competitiveness in the international market.

The present study aims to analyze the global development trends of the herbal medicine market

and examine the export performance of medicinal plant products, with particular emphasis on the position and potential of Vietnam in the international medicinal plant industry. By reviewing available market data and comparing the development patterns of major herbal medicine producing countries, this study seeks to provide insights that may contribute to the sustainable development and international integration of the medicinal plant sector.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design

This study employed a descriptive and analytical research design to examine global development trends in the herbal medicine market and to evaluate the medicinal plant value chain with a particular focus on Vietnam. Secondary data from international organizations, scientific publications, and market reports were collected and analyzed to identify key patterns in production, trade, and industry development. The study also compared the herbal medicine industries of major producing countries, including China, India, and Vietnam, in order to evaluate their relative positions within the global market.

2.2. Data Sources

Data used in this study were obtained from multiple reliable sources to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the analysis. These sources included international reports from organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Additional data were collected from peer-reviewed scientific journals, government reports, and market research publications related to herbal medicine and medicinal plant trade.

Statistical data on the global herbal medicine market size, export value of medicinal plants, and industry development trends were compiled from publicly available databases and previously published studies. These datasets were used to construct tables and charts illustrating market growth and export performance.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to evaluate trends in the global herbal medicine market. Market size data were summarized and presented in tabular form to illustrate the projected growth of the herbal

medicine industry over time.

Comparative analysis was conducted to examine differences in medicinal plant production, export performance, and industry development among selected countries. China and India were chosen as reference cases because they represent the most developed herbal medicine industries globally. Vietnam was included as a case study due to its high biodiversity and growing interest in developing the medicinal plant sector.

Graphical visualization techniques were used to present key results, including charts showing global market growth and medicinal plant export trends. These visual tools helped illustrate the economic expansion of the herbal medicine industry and the relative contribution of different countries.

2.4 Medicinal Plant Value Chain Analysis

To better understand the structure and operational mechanisms of the medicinal plant industry, this study conducts a medicinal plant value chain analysis. This value chain includes key stages such as cultivation and harvesting of medicinal plants, raw material processing, extraction and production, product development, and distribution to domestic and international markets.

Value chain analysis allows for the identification of limitations and opportunities in each stage of the production system. In this study, particular attention is paid to the challenges that Vietnam is facing in building a complete medicinal plant value chain, including issues related to cultivation standardization, raw material quality control, and technological capacity in processing and extracting medicinal plants.

2.5. Limitations of the Study

This study is primarily based on secondary data sources, which may vary in methodology and reporting standards. In addition, the availability of consistent global data on medicinal plant trade and herbal medicine markets remains limited in some regions. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as general trends rather than precise market measurements. Future research involving primary data collection, field surveys, and industry interviews would provide deeper insights into the development of medicinal plant value chains.

3. Results

3.1. Global herbal medicine market growth

Year	Market Size (Billion USD)
2015	71
2019	83
2025	300
2030	550

Table 1. Global herbal medicine market size forecast

The global herbal medicine market has experienced substantial expansion over the past decade. As shown in Table 1, the market size increased from USD 71 billion in 2015 to USD 83 billion in 2019, reflecting steady growth driven by increasing public interest in natural health products and traditional medicine systems.

Market projections indicate a dramatic acceleration in the coming years. The global herbal medicine market is expected to reach approximately USD 300 billion by 2025, representing nearly a fourfold increase compared with 2015. Long-term forecasts further predict that the market may expand to USD 550 billion by 2030, highlighting the rapidly growing economic significance of medicinal plants and plant-based healthcare products.

Several factors contribute to this strong growth trend. First, rising healthcare costs and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases have encouraged patients to seek complementary and alternative therapies. Second, growing consumer awareness of preventive medicine and healthy lifestyles has stimulated demand for herbal products, functional foods, and nutraceuticals. Third, scientific validation of bioactive compounds from medicinal plants has strengthened confidence among healthcare professionals and consumers.

Additionally, the expansion of the pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and nutraceutical industries has significantly increased the demand for plant-derived raw materials. As a result, medicinal plants have become an important component of the global bioeconomy and pharmaceutical supply chain.

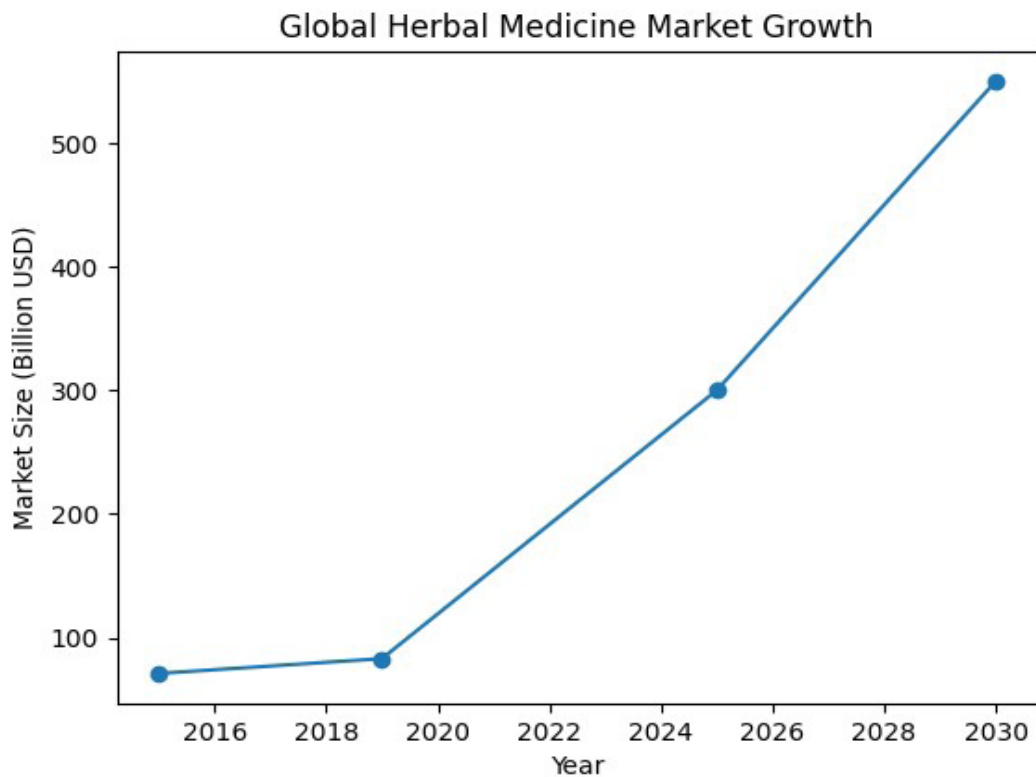


Fig. 1. Export value of medicinal plant products by year

3.2 Export performance of medicinal plants

The export value of medicinal plants and herbal products has shown a continuous upward trend over recent years. The growth reflects increasing international demand for natural ingredients used in pharmaceuticals, dietary supplements, cosmetics, and traditional medicine preparations.

Global trade in medicinal plants is dominated by several major producing countries, including China, India, and Vietnam. Among these, China maintains the largest export volume due to its large-scale cultivation, well-developed processing industry, and strong integration with international supply chains. India also plays a significant role in the export of Ayurvedic raw materials and herbal extracts.

Vietnam has emerged as a promising supplier of medicinal plant resources in Southeast Asia. The country possesses high biodiversity with more than 5,000 recorded medicinal plant species, many of which have long been used in traditional Vietnamese

medicine. This rich resource base provides strong potential for the development of herbal products and export-oriented value chains.

Despite this potential, several challenges still limit the growth of Vietnam's herbal medicine sector. These include fragmented cultivation systems, inconsistent quality control, limited application of Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP), and insufficient processing technology. Furthermore, international markets increasingly require strict standards related to product traceability, safety, and standardized phytochemical composition.

Strengthening the medicinal plant value chain—from cultivation and harvesting to processing and export—will therefore be essential for improving the competitiveness of Vietnam's herbal medicine industry. Investment in biotechnology, quality assurance systems, and sustainable cultivation practices will play a key role in promoting the global

3.3. Chart showing export performance

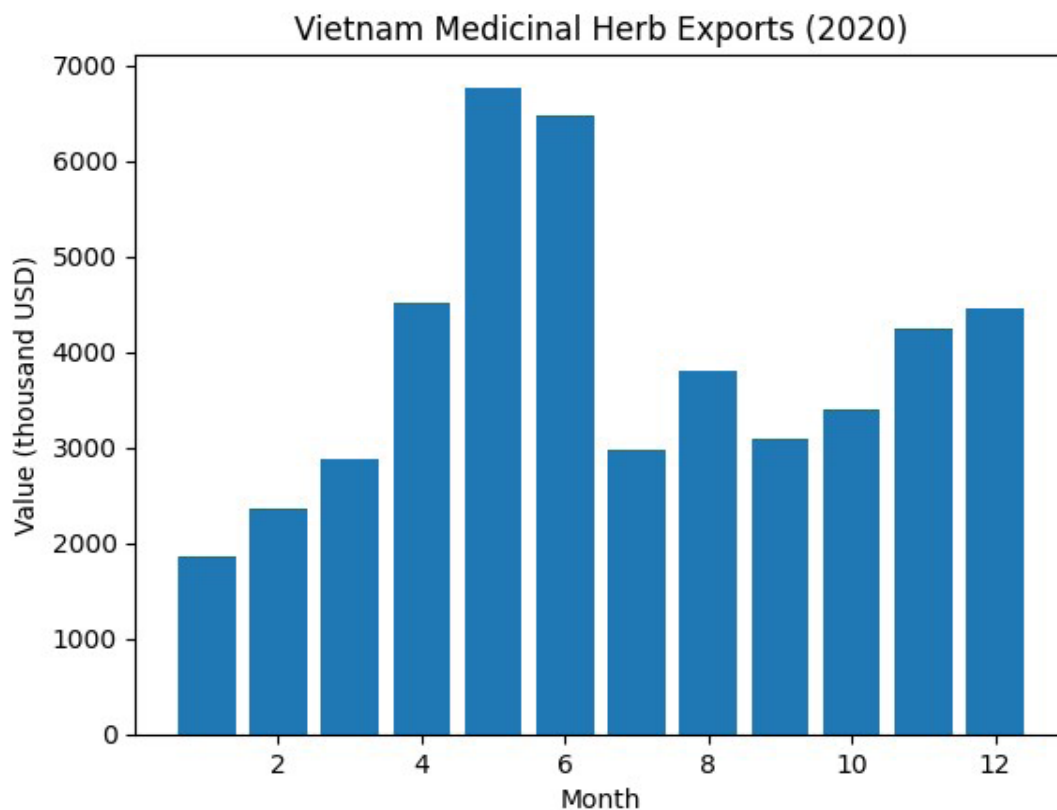


Fig 2. Medicinal Plant Export Value /year

Medicinal Plant Value Chain

Genetic resources → Cultivation → Harvest → Processing → Extraction → Pharmaceutical / Functional products → Distribution → Consumers

Vietnam's herbal medicine sector has strong potential due to high biodiversity and traditional medical knowledge. Nevertheless, challenges remain in large-scale cultivation, quality control, and international market integration.

4. Discussion

The global herbal medicine market has experienced significant expansion over the past two decades, reflecting the increasing demand for natural health products and plant-based therapeutic agents. The results of this study indicate that the global market value of herbal medicines has increased rapidly, from approximately USD 71 billion in 2015 to a projected value of nearly USD 550 billion by 2030. This remarkable growth highlights the increasing role of medicinal plants in global healthcare systems and the expanding bioeconomy associated with plant-derived pharmaceuticals and natural health products.

Several factors contribute to this rapid market growth. The increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer, has led many patients to seek complementary and alternative therapeutic approaches such as herbal medicines. In addition, the rising cost of conventional pharmaceuticals has encouraged consumers to explore more affordable natural treatment options. Scientific studies have also demonstrated that many plant-derived secondary metabolites, including flavonoids, alkaloids, terpenoids, and phenolic compounds, possess significant pharmacological activities such as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and anticancer effects.

Comparative analysis shows that China currently dominates the global herbal medicine industry. The country has successfully integrated traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) into its national healthcare system while simultaneously modernizing cultivation, processing, and pharmaceutical manufacturing technologies. Large-scale medicinal plant cultivation, standardized extraction technologies, and strong research investment have enabled China to become one of the largest exporters of herbal raw materials, extracts, and finished herbal products.

India also represents a major global center for herbal medicine production. The country's herbal industry is closely associated with the Ayurvedic medical system and is supported by national policies promoting medicinal plant cultivation and sustainable harvesting. The development of research

institutions dedicated to traditional medicine has improved product quality and strengthened the international credibility of Indian herbal products. As a result, India has become an important exporter of herbal raw materials and phytopharmaceutical products.

Compared with China and India, Vietnam possesses significant natural advantages but remains at an earlier stage of industrial development in the herbal medicine sector. Vietnam is recognized as one of the most biodiverse countries in Southeast Asia, with more than 5,000 medicinal plant species distributed across diverse ecological regions. Many of these species have long been used in traditional Vietnamese medicine and possess considerable pharmacological potential.

However, several structural challenges continue to limit the development of Vietnam's medicinal plant industry. Medicinal plant cultivation is often fragmented and conducted on a small scale, which makes it difficult to ensure stable supply chains and consistent product quality. In addition, the application of standardized cultivation practices such as Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP-WHO) remains limited. The country also faces constraints in processing technologies, as many medicinal plants are exported primarily as raw materials, resulting in relatively low added value.

Despite these challenges, Vietnam's herbal medicine sector holds considerable development potential. Strengthening the medicinal plant value chain—from sustainable cultivation and standardized harvesting to advanced extraction and pharmaceutical manufacturing—will be essential for improving product quality and increasing international competitiveness. With appropriate investments in scientific research, biotechnology, and industry collaboration, Vietnam could become an increasingly important participant in the rapidly expanding global herbal medicine market.

5. Conclusion

The present study highlights the rapid growth and increasing global importance of the herbal medicine industry. The analysis of market trends indicates that the global herbal medicine market has expanded significantly over the past decade and is projected to continue growing, potentially reaching more than USD 550 billion by 2030. This growth is largely driven by increasing consumer demand for natural health products, the rising prevalence of chronic diseases, and growing interest in preventive healthcare approaches.

Comparative analysis shows that countries such as China and India currently dominate the global herbal medicine industry due to their well-developed medicinal plant cultivation systems, strong research infrastructure, and advanced processing technologies. These countries have successfully integrated traditional medical knowledge with modern pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, enabling them to achieve a competitive advantage in the global market.

Vietnam possesses considerable potential for developing a competitive herbal medicine industry due to its rich biodiversity and long-standing tradition of medicinal plant use. However, several challenges remain, including fragmented cultivation

systems, limited application of standardized agricultural practices, and insufficient processing technologies. Addressing these limitations will be essential to enhance product quality and increase the added value of medicinal plant products.

Strengthening the medicinal plant value chain from sustainable cultivation and standardized harvesting to advanced extraction and product development will be crucial for improving the competitiveness of Vietnam's herbal medicine sector. With appropriate policy support, scientific research investment, and industry collaboration, Vietnam could become an important contributor to the global herbal medicine market in the future.

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THỰC TRẠNG SẢN XUẤT VÀ THƯƠNG MẠI DƯỢC LIỆU TẠI VIỆT NAM
GẮN VỚI THỊ TRƯỜNG DƯỢC LIỆU THẾ GIỚI
VÀ XU HƯỚNG PHÁT TRIỂN ĐẾN NĂM 2030

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Tóm tắt:

Nghiên cứu này nhằm tổng hợp và phân tích xu hướng phát triển của thị trường dược liệu trên thế giới trong bối cảnh nhu cầu sử dụng các sản phẩm có nguồn gốc tự nhiên ngày càng gia tăng. Dữ liệu được tổng hợp từ các báo cáo thị trường quốc tế và các tài liệu khoa học liên quan. Kết quả cho thấy khoảng 80% dân số thế giới đang sử dụng thuốc có nguồn gốc từ dược liệu trong chăm sóc sức khỏe. Quy mô thị trường dược liệu toàn cầu được ước tính khoảng 83 tỷ USD năm 2019 và có thể đạt tới 550 tỷ USD vào năm 2030 với tốc độ tăng trưởng cao. Các khu vực tiêu thụ lớn bao gồm châu Á, châu Âu và Bắc Mỹ. Sự gia tăng các bệnh mãn tính, xu hướng sử dụng sản phẩm tự nhiên và sự phát triển của ngành thực phẩm chức năng được xem là các yếu tố thúc đẩy chính của thị trường dược liệu toàn cầu. Kết quả nghiên cứu góp phần cung cấp cơ sở khoa học cho việc hoạch định chiến lược phát triển ngành dược liệu tại Việt Nam.

Việt Nam là quốc gia có nguồn tài nguyên dược liệu phong phú với hơn 5.000 loài thực vật làm thuốc. Nghiên cứu này nhằm đánh giá thực trạng sản xuất, tiêu thụ và thương mại dược liệu tại Việt Nam. Kết quả cho thấy nhu cầu sử dụng dược liệu tại Việt Nam khoảng 60.000–80.000 tấn mỗi năm, tuy nhiên sản xuất trong nước chỉ đáp ứng khoảng 30% nhu cầu. Ngành dược liệu đang có tiềm năng lớn trong phát triển kinh tế và chăm sóc sức khỏe cộng đồng.

Từ khóa: Dược liệu; Cây thuốc; Y học cổ truyền; Thị trường dược liệu, Xu hướng phát triển.