

## 베트남의 농업-공동체 임업정책 성공 제한요인을 중심으로

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### **Agro-and Community Forestry Policy in Vietnam with Emphasis on Constraints Limiting Success**

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#### **Abstract**

농업-공동체 임업은 토지-나무-인간 사이의 관계를 폭넓게 포함하고 있으나 이 논문에서는 농업-공동체 임업활동이 베트남의 산지의 지속가능한 이용에 초점을 두고 있다. 농업-공동체 임업(AF와 CF)은 베트남에서 시급한 국가우선사항이 된 개발과 보전을 함께 고려할 수 있는 기능을 지닌 것으로 받아드려지고 있다. 베트남에서 AF와 CF를 동시에 지원할 수 있는 자원은 한정되어 있으며, 제약 사항은 위협적이고 시급한 상황이고, 황폐화가 진행될수록 복원은 어려워지는데, 농업의 생산성 감소에 따른 산촌주민들의 가족 부양을 위한 생태계 파괴도 가속화되고 있는 것으로 조사되었다. 이 연구는 농업-공동체 임업활동이 베트남의 산지 자원의 지속가능한 이용에 있어서의 연관된 문제들, 발전에의 제한요인, 특히 정책 제한요인을 분석하고 베트남 농업-공동체 임업 개발의 방향을 제시하고자 하였다.

**주요어:** 농림업, 공동체 임업, 지속가능한 이용, 베트남

**Key word:** Agro-forestry, Community forestry, Sustainable use, Vietnam

# I . Introduction

## 1. Background

Vietnam is engaged in a struggle to restore forest lands and resources seriously damaged by decades of war and over-exploitation. Millions of people depend on these region ecosystems for livelihood. The Government of Vietnam (GoV) is committed to ensuring that these people are included as beneficiaries of the nation's current rapid economic development, and has enacted policies transferring farm and forest land to rural households to encourage productive and sustainable resource management. It is also hoped that the new polices will galvanize collaboration between government and rural people in efforts to rehabilitate damaged forests, and safeguard the integrity of watersheds vital to Vietnam's economic and social development. Agro-and community forestry (AF and CF) are among the methods currently seen with the most potentially effective for accomplishing forest conservation, sustainable resource use and rural development goals.

As traditional resource management systems, AF and CF are still practiced by millions of Vietnamese farmers and communities. Agro forestry's effectiveness for productive and sustainable use of fragile lands has made it popular among farmers and is being well supported during the past decade of considerable external development support. Efforts to assist community forestry development on the other hand are more recent and are being undertaken nearly exclusively by foreign donor-assisted programs. Less is known of the nature of traditional community-based resource management arrangements, and government policies and programs do not yet explicitly support such activities.



Map1: Vietnam region ecosystems

The resources available to support development of AF and CF in Vietnam are extremely limited compared to the land area coverage and the number of farmers that could potentially benefit from their application. It is particularly important, therefore, that the available resources be-targeted as effectively as possible to achieve their greatest possible benefit to he people and the communities.

The status, problems associated with prior approaches, constraints on development, supportive factors and opportunities were examined with respect to upland development and conservation. Insights of involved professionals as well as farmers was sought regarding what now is required to fill remaining policy gaps, respond effectively to priority need, and maximize the potential of AF and CF to contribute to achieving Vietnam's integrated conservation and development goals.

This paper deals with only some aspects in which Agro-and Community Forestry activities that can contribute to sustainable use of land resources in the highland areas of Vietnam. The paper focuses on the analysis of policy constraints in Agro-and Community Forestry activities and examines conditions currently supporting or obstructing development of agro-and community forestry in Vietnam.

## 2. Research methodologies

Case studies were undertaken through in-depth interviews with social NGOs working on the field of rural development and farmer associations, Communes, village administrative bodies, farm households taking part in poverty alleviation programmes, policy-makers and professionals. Information collection on related Government policies and the relationship of the Government with NGOs was also employed. Focused discussions with policy-makers concerning promotion of rural development and was a third method followed.

Collection and assessment of secondary materials relating to community management, maps, legal

regulations and policies related to community forest management and agro forest, as listed in the references, was also undertaken.

Semi-structured interviews involving guided conversations with community and Ngo were also employed and where broad questions are asked in 2004~2005, which do not constrain the conversation, and new questions are allowed to arise as a result of the discussion. This is different from questionnaires and surveys where there are very structured questions that are not deviated from. A semi-structured interview is therefore a relatively informal, relaxed discussion based around a predetermined topic. It is usually best to conduct such interviews in pairs with one person doing the interview and one taking detailed notes.

## 3. Results and discussions

### A. Land and forest resources of the highlands are diverse and limited.

The change of forest area by year given in the following table:

<Table 1> Change of forest cover over time

(Unit: 1000ha)

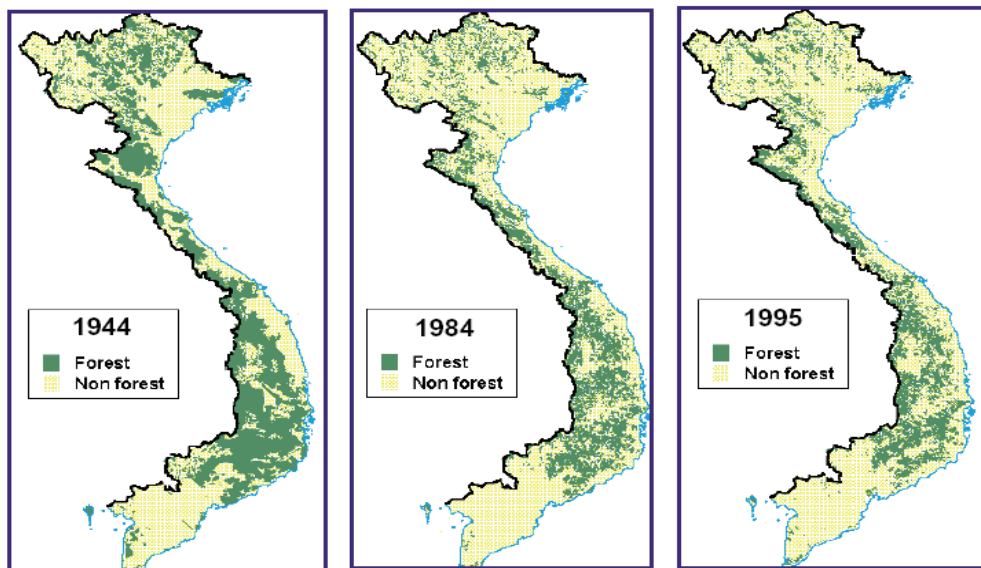
Year	Natural forest	Plantation forest	Total	Forest cover (%)
2003	9,444	1,471	10,916	33.2
1995	8,252	1,050	9,305	28.2
1990	8,430	745	9,175	27.8
1985	9,308	584	9,892	30.1
1980	10,486	422	10,908	32.1
1976	11,077	92	11,169	33.8
1943	14,300	0	14,300	43.0

As is evident from Table 1 and Map 2, there exists a change in the current forest cover in the

selected areas studied. The land and forest resources are diverse and limited. Land resources

in the highlands are one of most important components of the agro-ecosystems in the country not only because of their large acreage (covering 3/4 of the territory) but also due to their high diversity. Developed on a complicated topography, locally fluctuating climate and different exploitation history, land uses are highly heterogeneous incl-

uding a great number of types, sub-types and variations. In the last decades, studies on land use patterns were very limited and in certain cases they were simply regrouped in one big unit and referred to as “forest soils”, “mountainous soil complex” or “abandoned land”.



<Map 2> A change in the current forest cover

For decades, due to food shortage, land resources were used mainly for food production, chiefly through the growing of annual crops on any types of lands including those steep lands which are by nature unsuitable for short term crops given their being prone to erosion. Such an abuse of lands without maintenances made the soils exhausted and reduced their productive potentials.

Simply understanding the land types and over-emphasizing food production on the sloping lands led to misuse of lands in general and forest lands in particular. In the past, most of the highland areas including both agricultural and

forest lands, forested lands and bare lands were under the management of the State Forestry Farms. As the main function of the forestry sector is to exploit forests for wood rather than land management, agricultural lands in its administrative vicinity were generally under valued and in many cases were wrongly used.

Land shortage became acute only in the agricultural sector but not felt in the forestry sector where land farming actors were waged workers. The limit of land resources was recognized only when the population tripled during a half century and forcedly growing annual food crops on sloping

lands have apparently exposed its disadvantages.

Nowadays, food security has been attained nationwide. However, it still remains problematic for various highland areas where lands have been drastically deteriorated. Therefore, Agro-and Community Forestry should focus on enhancing awareness of the users on the limitations and diversity of the land resources. Policies and decisions relevant to land management should be refined to fit local conditions highlanders' demand and tapping also their experiences to conserve the diversity and appropriate utilization of the limited land resources that is available.

### **B. Protecting highland land and soil resources**

Massive land opening for growing food crops, damages caused by the use of heavy machinery, concentrating / promoting monocultures of commercial trees etc has led to much soil losses through soil erosion from some tons under forested areas to hundreds ton per hectare per year under the newly opened areas. This human induced soil loss is disastrous if keeping in mind that in the natural conditions it takes some hundreds years for restoring a 1 cm<sup>2</sup> soil surface layer.

Aggravating of the losses in forest, land and water are more and more evident regarding to the increasing frequency of floods, land slides, reservoir situation and rapid decrease of cultivable land in the valleys (0.5-1.0% reduction annually)

In this regard, investment for reforestation, land restoration and sustainable agriculture and forestry in the highland areas will not only bring economic benefits but also positive social and environmental dimensions which can contribute to the livelihood for more than 50 ethnic minorities, including preserving biodiversity and for protecting the downstream plains. Therefore, impacts of the

policies and the effects from the inputs for the highlands should not just be accounted only from the crop yield and primary production dimension but also regards long term benefits such as sustainability of the ecosystems, watershed forests.

### **C. Land user rights**

It From the perspective of the five land rights (which includes land use, land transfer, land lease, heritage and mortgage) and land use duration (50 years) farmers in Vietnam have a land tenure similar to that of private land ownership. Where lands and forests are located, the impacts of the land policies are quite positive. However, the transfer and implementation of these good policies on land and forest management from central level to the local level of the highlands are facing a number of difficulties that impede the Agro-and Community Forestry activities. In many highland locations, highland farmers are feeling unsafe with their rights on land tenure and the security of profits to be earned from land.

The process Implementing of Land allocation and forest contract are going on too slowly. The procedures (land mapping, plot measuring, boundary definition and so on) for issuing the "red book" are so complicated that it will take decades to complete the entitlement allocations. To accelerate the process and ensure the appropriateness of land allocation, it is imperative to decentralize the work calling for better participation of local authorities and farmers. Negotiation among farmer communities and households in the framework of the relevant laws seems to be the right way to solve the problem.

As land allocation is a one type affair once for ever, there is no opportunity for the newly families to receive land. Because of this fact, some localities want to keep part of their lands as reserves for future. There is a real fact that

few wealthy and initiative households have received large areas (from tens to hundreds of hectares) for at least 50 year, whereas poor families who have less initiative, lack information and capital and thus have no opportunity to have access to these land allocations.

Certain land areas are placed under community management as reserves and are available for periodical adjustment of the land tenure when deemed necessary. Such reserves will enable land availability for future generations.

#### **D. Gender issues in land and forest management**

It is common in Vietnamese families for the men to undertake heavy work such as, hole digging, transport, tree felling, carpentry, house constructions/building and off-farm work etc., while women do the frequent work that are close to the production fields and to the homes such as crop/tree planting, weeding, harvesting, drying, processing, cooking etc. These jobs are commonly seen as miscellaneous operations that do not generate profit and, consequently, do not contribute much to the family income.

In fact, women's roles involve almost every activity in the family and their role is much more important than they are given credit for. Being involved daily to the fields, women have very important knowledge about many things such as soil fertility, crop diversity, crop value and uses, plant growth performance, profitability of farming systems, processing etc. They take care of their families' food security, family expenses and finances and thus they understand better the status of the family economic situation including the market situation better than men.

However, their continuous work in and around their homes keeps women busy rendering them limited time and opportunities for making contacts,

exchanging information and learning about happenings outside their homes and circles.

Equity between men and women in land tenure is officially fixed in Land Law. However, this does not mean that the rights of women regards land use are ensured in practice. By tradition, married women usually live in the husbands' villages and share the allocated land with their in-laws. The problem arises when women get married far from their villages and can not sell the plots allocated them especially when these plots are also no longer used by them for cultivation purposes. The profit they are capable of earning from the allocated plots is totally dependent on arrangements within each family. The voice of daughters-in-law regarding land tenure is usually not as influential as that of other family members.

Families having many sons are more critical regards land ownership of land whereas those having only daughters possess large land areas. So, besides the law, local tradition seems a strong influence on the rights of women regards land tenure matters.

#### **E. Agro-and Community Forestry and forest resources**

Vietnamese people say that "Forest is gold and sea is silver" to emphasize the value of forests and waters. Unfortunately, this comparison often leads to wrongly accept land and forest as resources of unlimited availability and potential. As highland flora and fauna are seen as wild objects, it is consequent that they should be "tamed" rather than protected and exploited for personal and community benefits. For long time, forests have been regarded as threatened from outside forces.

Under the land and forestry development programs by GoV, attention is usually paid on

vegetation cover and timber products, not on non-timber ones. However, for the highland people, especially the poor families, targets are those products bringing them immediate income such as bamboo shoot, firewood, medicines, fruits, etc. Therefore, short-term profit should be considered in land use planning schemes. Forest lands also serve as sources of fodder, places for cattle grazing, for hunting and as sources of traditional medicine. Strict prohibitions for local people to access forests, even to the protective areas, seem to be unrealistic. Moreover, such actions are unfriendly and will dampen highlander cooperation in conserving land and forest resources.

Forest for long time is regarded as some threatening forces for the outsiders. So, once approaching to forest the first action of new comers is to clear vegetation and kill wide lives. This unfriendly attitude is common among the lowland people rather than the highland people and more prevailing in the non-agricultural sectors than in the agricultural sector.

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#### **F. Development of different forms of social forestry**

At present, boundaries between the three main kinds of forests, viz. special, protective and productive ones, are not clearly defined on a scientific and practical basis. In many places, the meta-physical division based on geographical boundaries has prevented or isolated local habitants from national parks, from special use forests and from protective forests. At the commune and village level, these areas are not allocated to villagers and accessibility is forbidden. Such restrictive allocations and attitudes places local settlers opposite to the resources to be protected.

It is imperative to clarify as soon as possible what farmers earn from the contracted forests and planted forests in the allocated lands as well as in the contracted forests. Transparency regarding profits to be shared between the parties is the main concern of highland farmers. When they are not sure about profits due to them and when they have to follow complicated procedures to share the benefits from the forests, violence and extortion are resorted to and are unavoidable.

While the Kinh families tend to form individual forestry farms, the ethnic minorities prefer maintaining both individual forests and community forests including special forests. Joint forest management is one of the successful models which should and can be promoted in the highland areas.

In the past, Vietnamese villages were characterized by a number of special features in structure, relationships and tradition. Each village had its own charter, verbal and/or non-verbal regulations, village lands and assets. Parallel to the administrative apparatus, there were clan relationships which joined families together and regulated the behaviors of the members. These traditional linkages as well as mass organizations

set up by villagers should be encouraged in managing and protecting forest resources.

Plans for land and forest development are often formulated with top-down approaches from central levels to district levels without the due participation from the lower levels. The linkages between district development plans and commune plans (the lowest administrative unit) are also very weak. To make the plans effective, it is necessary to start planning work from commune, village and household levels.

### **G. Primary produce and market economy**

Threatened by continuous food shortages in the past, national planners usually placed food security and production of primary products as the top priority in the (national?) development plans. Some commercial plantings (such as of mangletia, styrax, cinnamon, coffee, plum, etc.) were planted in large areas in upland). These primary produce quickly flooded the local markets and prices plummeted to unacceptable level. The first people to be affected from such kinds of businesses are the poor who had borrowed from the banks. This option is opposite to the highland farmer strategy in which commercial tree production is gradually expanded following market demand. For the mountain areas, product sale can not be solved only with new openings of new markets. To promote agro-business, it is necessary to help farmers to adapt to the market economy from their production. Business promotion should be practiced in every stage/or aspect of the production processes: choosing crops and species highly demanded by local markets, appropriate crop varieties, spreading the harvest period, storage, on-farm processing, validation of products, timely sales etc.

At present, extension activities are on the incline to transfer new techniques from outside

while indigenous knowledge and local resources regarding local crops and livestock farming systems, crop varieties, technologies etc. are not fully evaluated and promoted. In many cases, a new but inappropriate technique has led to losses for the farmers due to the inappropriateness of the new varieties, new species and technologies introduced into highland areas. These should first be evaluated by the local farmers'. In the highlands, farmers' adaptation and adoption of new options vary from place to place depending on a number of factors, including their education level, technical skills, input capacity, local traditions, their ethnic origins, etc. Such features need be taken into account in land use planning and extension.

The high diversity of the highland settlements in terms of natural conditions, socio-economic status and cultural life requires respective diversification of production structure, and the crop and animal farming systems. Beside technology transfer, a number of non-technical factors should be considered including capital and rural credit, land use planning at household levels, human resource availability, labor arrangements and others).

## **4. Conclusions**

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1) Rapid economic and social change pose many challenges for managing and mitigating impacts which affect all sectors of Vietnamese society and economy. Elsewhere in Asia, rapid development has brought many positive as well as undesirable environmental and social side-effects. These negative impacts include accelerated resource exploitation in response to growing industrial and consumer demands. The resultant degradation of the rural resource systems has, in many cases, exacerbated rural poverty. 2) The complex and



closely associated problems of forest conservation, rural land and resource management and development present the Government and people of Vietnam with daunting challenges that must be addressed in the coming decade. The GoV has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt rural land and resource management policies incorporating lessons from national and international experience. These policy changes are best represented by the shift from State-owned to people-owned/managed forestry, and the integration of efforts to achieve rural development, sustainable resource use, and ecosystem conservation. 3) Agro-and community forestry have a clear role to play in helping to mitigate and to avoid the negative repercussions of resource management and utilization. When effectively combined to form integrated conservation and development systems, AF and CF can provide improved income earning opportunities for poor farmers while helping to restore “damaged” forests and to reduce pressures bearing on critical watersheds and protected areas. When designed in a manner responsive to local needs and environments, AF/CF systems can enlist the enormous potential contribution of millions of rural families in helping to maintain the integrity of nationally critical ecosystems. 4) There is, at present, a level of confidence that policies in Vietnam will continue to respond to exemplary AF/CF project implementation and effectively target incentives encouraging farmers to invest in sustainable management and conservation. The test of these policies rests with the will to support their implementation with the required resources, and upon the ability of extension personnel to facilitate farmers' combination of best-practice techniques from modern and traditional resource management science to progressively improve rural living standards, rehabilitate damaged ecosystems, and conserve forest biodiversity. be effectively met, it is impe-

rative that the number of persons helping to address it at the village- level, in possession of the full complement of required skills and sensitivities, be vastly increased. 5) Vietnam is fortunate to possess a number of extremely gifted integrated rural development and conservation specialists. But their number is presently inadequate to accomplish the enormous task before them. If the challenge is to be effectively met, it is imperative that the number of persons helping to address it at the village-level, in possession of the full complement of required skills and sensitivities, be vastly increased.

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