

Impacts of Forest Policies on Swidden Agriculture

in Champasack province

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1. OBJECTIVES AND BACKGROUND

This paper examines and discusses on impacts and changes on swidden agriculture caused by forest policies in Champasack province, Lao PDR. Swidden Agriculture had sustained so long in tropical regions, however the governments began the regulation to stop deforestation in 1980s. The Lao government also has regulated swidden agriculture for protecting forests for more than 20 years (Takeda 2008).

2. STUDY SITE AND METHODS

T-village, in Champasack province, was selected for study site. The author stayed in this village 2 months totally, and conducted interviews, field works, and questionnaire. Interviews for staffs of provincial office was also conducted.

3. RESULTS

Forest Policies in this area were clarified. In 1980s, provincial agriculture and forestry office (PAFO) encouraged villagers to own teak plantation in our study site with incentives of tax. In 1993, the government established “National Biodiversity Conservation Area” (NBCA), for the preservation of forest ecosystem and biodiversity. 20 NBCAs were put in national land, three of which were in Champasack province. NBCA affected the village in our study site to make a rule about logging among villagers. The rule banned logging for business and opening lands adjacent to water source. In 1996, a concrete policy of “Land Forest Allocation” (LFA) was launched following Forestry Law. The law classified the nation’s forests into 5 types and encouraged forest utilization by rural inhabitants. LFA aimed implementation of the law and poverty reduction by distribution of farm lands to those who doesn’t have enough.

Spatial analysis revealed existence of swidden agriculture and extension of teak plantation. The cycle of shifting cultivation disappeared because the lands, after cultivation, would be converted for teak plantation.

4. DICUSSION

In Champasack province the goal of forest policies was not achieved. Swidden agriculture continues nowadays and forests are opened continuously. The cause of failure was mismatch of policies between national level and provincial level. As the results of teak forests extension in village forests, they had lack of fallows in which they would open next land for swidden agriculture. Teak plantation required more than 20 years before foresters obtained the benefits. Incomplete policies impacted land use patterns and crop calendar of swidden agriculture in this area.

1. REFERENCES

Takeda, Shinya., 2008, Non Timber Forest Products and Swidden Agriculture, Studies on Rural Region of Laos., Mekong, pp.267-299.