

**Feature and Functions of Homegardens:
A Case Study in Central Vietnam**

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FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS OF HOMEGARDENS:

A CASE STUDY IN CENTRAL VIETNAM

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1. BACKGROUND

Homegardens are integrated small scale-farming systems found in house compound. In Vietnam, they were promoted by the central government with the purpose of enhancing family nutrition (Giay, 1998). They are still playing a major role in Vietnam since almost 70 % of the population lives in rural areas (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2011). The scientific community has neglected them, and comprehensive books and reports focused on it are rare (Nair and Kumar, 2006). The purpose of this research was to characterize features and functions of homegardens through a case study in a flood-plain commune in central Vietnam, in order to contribute to the understanding of those multifunction systems in addition to discuss about their development perspective in the commune.

2. SURVEY AREA AND DATA COLLECTION

Huong Van is a flood-plain commune with 6,887 inhabitants distributed along 6,211 ha. It is located in Huong Tra District, Thua Thien Hue Province in Central Vietnam. Major livelihood activities include paddy rice cultivation, upland cash crops such as peanuts and cassava, raising of small livestock and homegarden cultivation such as banana and pomelo. Research was based on participatory appraisal principles and supported by native speakers. Procedures included getting permission from local leaders, group discussion, transect walks and taxonomical identification of homegarden components. Additionally, 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted, from which 13 became case studies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In total, 7 types of livestock and 95 species and cultivars, including 9 varieties of banana were identified. Homegardens occupied 89.1 % of the total residential area and the average mean size was 1, 271 m² with 39.6 species/garden. Concerning development of homegardens main challenges included insufficient information on the differences of microenvironments within the commune and management of components such as proper treatment of diseases, selection of befitting species and cultivars and utilization of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Main functions comprised the provision of food material, supplemental income “20.3% by plants and 13.1 % by livestock”, sanitation, and firewood in addition to a variable range of amenities like the reinforcement of cultural identity and benefits to greater society, such as conservation of biodiversity and environmental services. Nevertheless, homegardens may not be seen from a generic point of view since characteristics differ greatly according to individual farmer’s living preferences and socioeconomic conditions. In respect to local traditions and family needs, the development of homegardens in Huong Van commune relies on the understanding of different realities and the provision of appropriate training for gardeners.

CITATION

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