A Farming Systems Analysis in Bang Ca Commune of the Yen Lap Watershed

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Preface

The particular environment of Bang Ca commune provides an interesting perspective on the adaptations that mountainous environments may go through if they are within reach of the larger economy. Current local lifestyles of the inhabitants all of the Dao (Thanh Y) ethnic group, demonstrate clearly that access to and interaction with other population groups has a great impact on the evolution of the local traditions and development of local income sources. At the same time aspects of the local cultural identity stand firmly and do not seem to hamper in making relatively large strides towards integration of the household economic base into a market guided economy.

Throughout the consultancy, the community assured presence of local informants and guides. Without this valuable support the consultant could not have achieved the depth of insight and information on specific local details. The consultant wishes to thank all the local inhabitants who shared their information and ideas, with special words of thanks to Mr. Hai and Mr. Bang.

During the consultancy the project staff also provided active support through consultations and by accompanying the consultant in the field. The district authorities were very helpful in providing necessary statistics, introductions and a wider insight in the local economy.

Lastly it needs to be stressed that the analysis is the sole responsibility of the consultant. Any omissions or mistake therefore rest with him.
Executive Summary

Bang Ca has social and economic features that resemble delta lifestyles, mixed into a mountainous environment. People’s perceptions are strongly influenced by financial and economic benefit, rather than cultural traditions. The population lacks a strong sense of organization, as well as the way a way to process and mitigate external pressures. Within the commune, villages and constituent hamlets vary considerably in access to markets, access to and use of natural resources.

Land allocation by the cooperative to the household only took place recently, attracting labour back into agriculture from strong forestry exploitation. The implementation of the 1993 land law is awaiting positive support from outside and an appropriate organization structure inside.

The agricultural production pattern has already transformed from swidden-based into paddy-based. Recent changes in land tenure, pig husbandry and forest planting opportunities have illustrated a trend towards intensified production Pig raising moved from range husbandry to penned husbandry. Fruit trees became income earners. Forest plantations were made on the lower hills, changing grazing patterns and further swiddens. Thanks to private entrepreneurs agricultural inputs, implements, seeds piglets, etc. are easily available.

Four main type of land are distinguished: valley bottom land, which can be irrigated twice a year; perennial dry land, which is essentially the same type of land but the irrigation facility; orchards and home gardens and forest sites where upland farming is practices.

The interaction between the main land use types is mostly through livestock. This uses areas for feeding (grazing and pig roughage, production) and supplies manure. Buffalo provide the draught labour necessary to till the land, while both buffalo and pigs contribute to household incomes.

The main crop is rice, cultivated mostly on double cropped land. Land which is not irrigated in the spring is planted with maize, beans or peanuts. Rice is for consumption, partially so and otherwise intended for livestock feeds. Deans and other legumes The near future is likely to see a higher level of input use and larger volumes of marketable crop produced Farmers, producing more intensively and productively, will come more commercialized in their outlook. The benefit most sought after for Bang Ca inhabitants is the financial return on labour.

Project interventions proposed here aim to increase the recycling of resources and invest in long term, low cost recommendations. The recommendations are to increase lime Phosphate dosage for rice and dry crops, to increase the production and use of liquid manure, to start using improved varieties that are more productive but resilient enough, introduce small scale mechanization and assist in expansion of the orchards. Management advice will be provided to increase the degree of local organisation.

Introduction

FAO Project Participatory Watershed Management provides support to participatory and integrated watershed management in a selected pilot area in Quang Ninh province, representative of vast mountainous areas in Northern Viet Nam. The immediate objectives are: 1) Development of appropriate participatory methods and techniques of integrated watershed management for the particular ethnic, cultural and socio-economic conditions in northern Viet Nam; 2) Improved ecological condition of natural resources in selected pilot watershed area and secured hydrological functions, as a result of water and soil conservation measures, multi-purpose forest management and improved land husbandry practices, which will increase food security and enhance living conditions in the watershed itself, and also increase the expected life span of the Yen Lap reservoir; and 3) Contribute to information and dissemination, transfer and replication of approaches, methods and techniques on participatory and integrated management of upland catchment areas.
The consultancy objectives (See annex Consultancy terms of reference) were to collect information on the current farming systems and on the linkages between farming and forest resources in the Project area. Work was envisaged to be based on close consultation with local sources and in dialogue with other relevant ongoing project assistance (specifically PRA and extension oriented). In the course of the mission, the main focus shifted towards studying the inner dynamics of the farming components and the influence of labour on household decision making processes. Linkages between farms and the surrounding forest environment were explored on a somewhat lower intensity than indicated in the TOR.

The consultant traveled directly to the project area and met there with the local leadership. During the mission, several present and past commune leaders, all village leaders and several other villagers were interviewed. The leadership interviews focused on quantitative data and trends in community development, land use, crop and livestock husbandry issues. The household interviews were used to collect information on household economics and to provide in-depth coverage of specific topics. One farmer of long standing familiarity with the area and detailed technical knowledge provided most of the specific labour data. Extensive walks covering almost the entire commune territory produced insight in spatial land use patterns. Project staff supported in the collection of data through guided interviews, obtained quantitative data on compost production, pig raising and fruit production in a number of households…

The report starts with a background chapter as an introduction in the wider influences that farming in the project area. The following section covers the farming system components as identified in the project area with a subsequent section on the related husbandry practices. These include annual cropping, orchards, and livestock production. The report then analyzes the potential changes in the farming system which might be pursued with project assistance and their expected impact. The report finalizes with a chapter on conclusions and recommendations.