

Research Project

Foreign aid shaping agricultural development in Southeast Asia: Interrelationship of social, economic and environmental factors. An analysis of four case studies of the CORIGAP project: China, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam

Project funded by own resources

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Paradigms of development assistance have shifted depending on several economic, cultural and historical aspects. Today's paradigm focuses on changing poverty-causing structures such as low access to health care or education. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set goals which tackle poverty, inequality and environmental degradation by urging governments to invest into areas which minimize malnutrition, increase access to health care and education. Regarding agricultural development, tremendous efforts were made during the Green Revolution from the 1950s to the 1980s when new farming methods and technologies were introduced to the developing world. However, today environmental degradation and remaining food insecurity have led to unequal development levels.

In this context, the CORIGAP project (Closing rice yield gaps with reduced environmental footprint) aims to reduce yield gaps and optimize productivity of lowland intensive rice cultivation to improve food security for rice farmers. Farmers in six Asian countries, namely China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam participate in the project. In the second phase of the project – CORIGAP-PRO – from 2017 to 2020, the main objective is to introduce best management practices (BMPs) and scale them out. This objective is aligned with the SDGs 2, 12 and 15, which serve as a conceptual framework for the project.

The present PhD thesis will give a theoretical background on the paradigms of development assistance and the evolution of agricultural development while analyzing the effects on output, productivity and adoption of BMPs of the CORIGAP project in China, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam. The first objective is to investigate if and how the socioeconomic structure of the farmers makes a difference in output and productivity levels. The second objective is to analyze the farmers' perceptions and expectations on adoption of BMPs regarding their socioeconomic characteristics. The farmers will be surveyed on long-term benefits, environmental footprint and sustainable impact as well as trade-offs and difficulties encountered while participating in the project. The data to be analyzed comes from household surveys and a survey on perceptions of economic and social change. Furthermore, a new survey questionnaire will be created in order to gather information on the farmers' perceptions on the project. Through a descriptive and statistical quantitative analysis, the farmers' socioeconomic characteristics and agricultural

practices will be examined. Furthermore, a comprehensive picture will be put together by quantitatively analyzing the farmers' perceptions on BMP adoption. Finally, conducting expert interviews will give a broader perspective on the project's development and objectives reached. This will lead to a multifaceted analysis on a sociocultural-political, environmental-geographical and social-behavioral level.

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