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Demographic change and farmland holdings in a rural village of Laos*Satoshi YOKOYAMA (Japan)*

The purpose of this study is to clarify the interrelationship between demographic change and farmland holdings at the household level in a rural village of Laos. Most of the villagers are engaged in rice farming, and gained cash income by selling surplus rice. As of the end of 2014, the study village has 119 households, of which 85 households have paddies. An average paddy holding size per farm household is 28,105 square meters, and the sufficient area of paddy can be secured. In the study area, the inheritance of land is divided equally among the children. In case of increasing population, therefore, the land is inevitably subdivided, and paddy size to support household members cannot be ensured. The study village has adapted the following three strategies to secure necessary paddy area: First, villagers purchase paddies from the neighboring villages. Second, since society of ethnic Lao has a maternal descent system, heiress buys back paddies from men who left the village. Third, villagers develop irrigated paddies to ensure a stable yield. Area of irrigated farmlands in the study village covers as small as 37,567 square meters, so that to cope with paddy shortage caused by land subdividing, villagers purchase paddies from another person including sibling. Most households have at least one member who work temporary in Thailand, and save money. At present about 40 percent of paddies are not acquired by descent but purchased. As a result, food security was achieved by not merely agricultural intensification but temporary transnational migration.