

Forest Policy and Swidden Agriculture in Laos



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Forest in Laos

Decreasing Forest

Forest cover: 70% in 1950s → 42% in 2002

Reasons

- Swidden Agriculture
- Rapid population increase
- Illegal logging
- Wide-spread poverty
- Weak law enforcement



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Implementing the Land and Forest Allocation Program (LFAP) for forest conservation and poverty eradication as well as a clarification of property rights

Forest policy concerning swidden agriculture (1)

1989: The National Forestry Conference
 To stabilize swidden agriculture and to allocate land to swidden farmers

1993: The Prime Minister's Decree No.169 (No.169/PM) "The Management and Use of Forest and Forest Land"

Forest lands were classified into 5 categories

1. Protection forest, 2. Conservation forest,
3. Production forest, 4. Regeneration forest,
5. Degraded forest

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Swidden fallows

Any development and forestry activity were prohibited

Forest policy concerning swidden agriculture (2)

1994: No.186/PM "The Allocation of Land and Forest Land for Tree Plantation and Forest Protection"
 Basic framework for the allocation of land and forest land (degraded forests)

1996: "Forest Law" and 1997: "Land Law"

Agricultural Land and Forest Land

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Swidden field swidden fallows

To be allocated to individual household by LFAP, and giving land title

-Swidden agriculture-

LFAP implementation and its problem

LFAP implementation

1. 1990-1996: Pilot implementation to develop allocating process (No.822/MAF in 1996)
2. After 1996: Legally implementing

Problems of LFAP implementation


Monitoring and evaluation has not often been completed

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We have little known as to what agriculture the farmers have switched what effect and impact farmers have had

There are few studies comparing the land use before and after the LFAP

Study areas

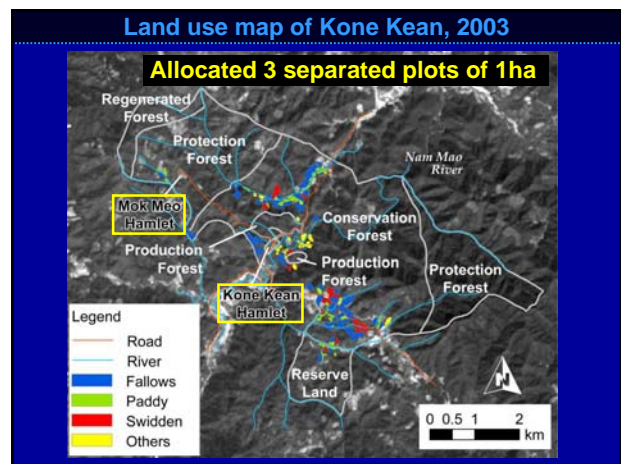
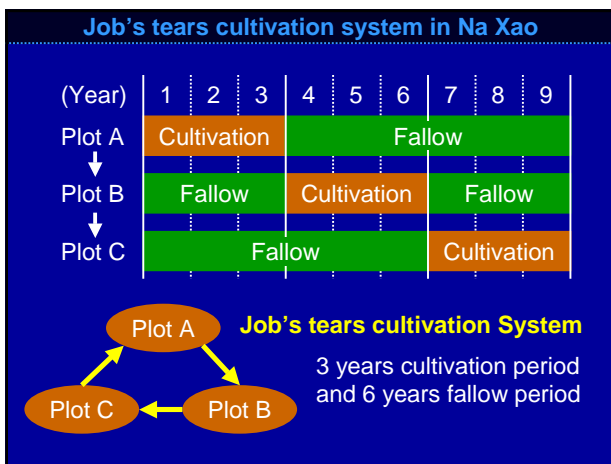
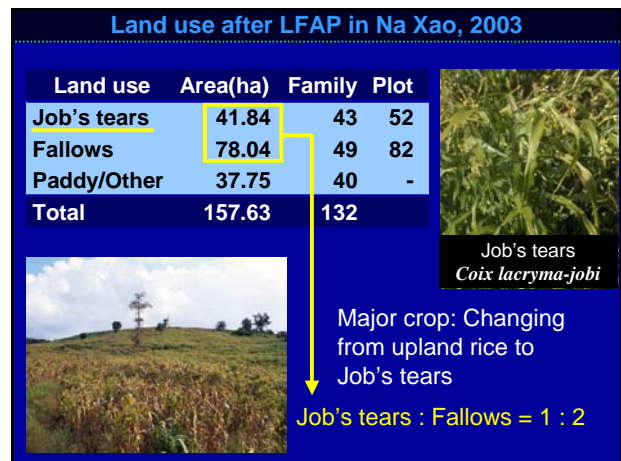
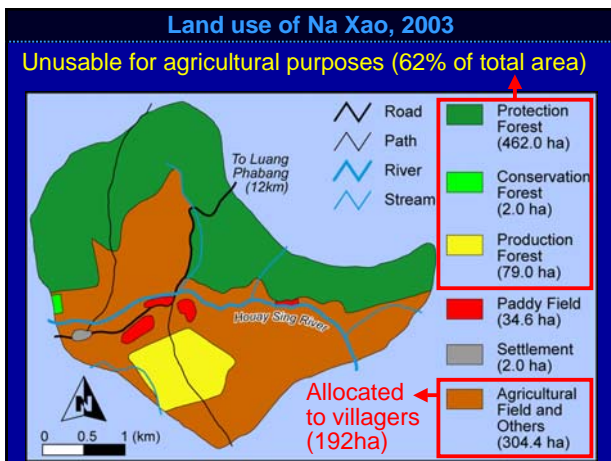


a. Na Xao village

Ethnic group: Lao
 Population: 365
 Family (HH): 85 (74)
 LFAP Year: 1999
 LFAP Area: 192.23 ha

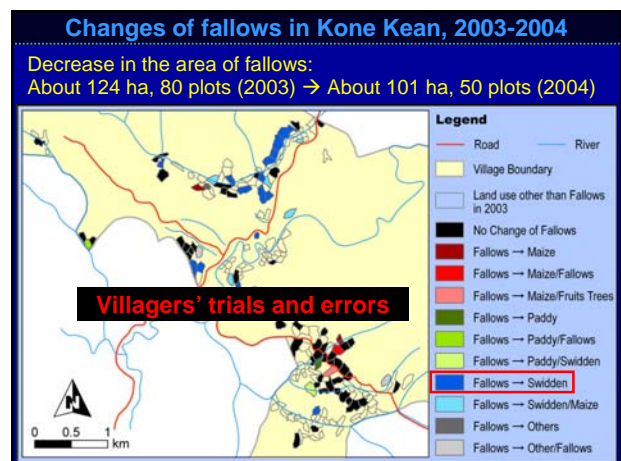
b. Kone Kean village

Ethnic group: Khmu
 Population: 372
 Family (HH): 60 (56)
 LFAP Year: 2003
 LFAP Area: 201.43 ha




Land use in Kone Kean, 2003

Land use	2003	Land use	2003
Paddy (P)	24.43	Fish Pond (P)	1.22
P+Fallows	2.42	P+Fallows	0.13
P+Mix cropping	1.04	P+Swidden	0
P+Swidden	1.70	Fruits trees (F)	6.63
Under developing	1.39	F+Fallows	1.35
Swidden (S)	24.25	Others (O)	0.26
S+Fallows	1.81	O+Fallows	1.79
S+Fruits trees	1.03	Fallows	123.57
S+Maize	1.19	Mix cropping	0.88
Maize (M)	3.92	Non-agri.	1.13
M+Fallows	0	Total	201.43
M+Fruits trees	0		
M+Mix cropping	1.29		




Mok Meo hamlet



Mok Meo Hamlet

- Not use the allocated land
- The LFAP has forced the Mok Meo residents in the mountainous are to move to the lowland




Engaging swidden agriculture in protection forest

- Inexperience of sedentary farming
- No recommendable crops or technical supports

What happens after LFAP (Positive aspects)

Positive aspects

1. Increasing farmers' income: an average yield and also the selling price of Job's tears are higher than these of upland rice (Na Xao)
2. Stabilizing the swidden agriculture (Na Xao)
3. Reducing by half the total area of swidden field within a year (Kone Kean)




What happens after LFAP (Negative aspects)

Negative aspects

1. Fluctuations in the price of Job's tears (Na Xao)
2. Untried agricultural land use: a rotational cultivation containing of 3-year growing and 6-year fallowing cycle (Na Xao)
3. Facing difficulties living on commercial crops because of the lack of market information (Kone kean)
4. Resettlement of Mok Meo residents (Kone Kean)

Year	2004
1999	4,000
2000	500
2001	3,000
2002	1,500
Average	2,250



Conclusion

LFAP implementation in the mountainous region

Geographic village locations might be more influential than the contents of LFAP itself

- Accessibility to local markets
- Availability of intermediate merchants

Many mountain villages still remain in the premature condition to accept the LFAP.

Recommended LFAP implementation

Standardized and Uniformed
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Flexible and Location-specific

Thank you very much for your kind attention