

Climate-Smart Agriculture: capturing the synergies among mitigation, adaptation and food security

EMERGING ISSUES IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIET NAM

In Viet Nam the project is focusing in the three provinces of Yen Bai, Son La, and Dien Bien). These are all located in the Northern Mountainous Region (NMR), one of the poorest of Viet Nam. The evidence available for Viet Nam for the project until today relies on previous research and policy documents, given the delayed start in the country. The following provides some key information on the NMR to highlight the importance of climate change, agriculture and food security in the region.

The NMR is identified as **the poorest region** of Viet Nam: The poverty rate is 33% in the Northwest and 21% in the Northeast provinces, compared to a national average of 9.6% in 2013 (MOLISA report 22 April 2013). Research indicates that in this area, **food shortages and food insecurity due to climate shocks** (floods, droughts, low temperature, etc) are already an issue (Fischer and Buchenrieder, 2010).

Some preliminary descriptive statistics from the VARHS (Viet Nam Access to Resources Households Survey) reported below, shows that an increasing share of plots is experiencing problems of dry soil, land slide and stony soil in 2010 as compared to 2008. The share of plots experiencing these problems in the northern region is higher than in the rest of the country.

Percentage of plots that experienced selected problems

ailba	Northern		Non-northern	
	2008	2010	2008	2010
Dry land	14.4	38.4	21.0	16.8
Land slide	1.6	6.1	0.0	0.5
Stony soils	6.0	5.3	1.0	1.5

Likewise, the same data source suggests an increase over time and a larger share in the north of households that suffer from climatic change' shocks such as drought and landslide.

Percentage of Households Affected by climatic shock

	Northern		Non-northern	
	2008	2010	2008	2010
Drought	2.6	18.8	4.2	8.7
Landslide	1.5	3.7	0.6	0.5

These problems are exacerbated when one considers that the NMR has a significant area of upland cultivation of food crops (maize, rice, cassava, etc) on **very steep slopes subject to soil erosion and landslides**. Soil erosion is seen, indeed, as one of the major problems for sustainable agriculture development in sloping areas, especially in Son La province, which is the largest maize production area (130,000ha in 2010) of the country.

Focus areas for the project. Through interactions with relevant stakeholders, literature review and feedback received at the inception workshop, the project is, thus, focusing on Sustainable land management practices on sloping lands including mini-terracing, legume-crop rotation, minimum soil disturbance and other measures of soil and land erosion control. Diversification into coffee, tea and rubber, and agro forestry are also key options taken into consideration.

Some of these good agricultural practices are already part of the provincial policies or local initiatives but are not widely adopted likely due to a number of **barriers** which the project aims to understand and figure out way of overcoming.

Through government and donor-funded projects/programs, a number of **sustainable farming practices** (intercropping, mini-terracing, mulching, agro-forestry, etc) have been developed and disseminated, however, these are mostly at **small scales and have slow adoption rates**, underlining the importance of understanding and overcoming the barriers to their adoption.

Another major limitation which emerges from background analysis is linked to awareness and information. Local farming communities in the NMR (mostly ethnic minority groups) have limited **knowledge and awareness** of climate change, mitigation and adaptation strategies, underlining the importance of extension and information dissemination to fit the needs of these three provinces.

Land holding also represents a crucial aspect to take into consideration in analysing options for the adoption and up scaling of CSA. Land tenure is indeed highly fragmented as a result of a land allocation policy that distributed land so that there was equitable quantity, but inequitable quality, of land allocated to households.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that all three provinces developed their Action Plans to Respond to Climate Change, in which they provide actions to be undertaken by the agricultural sector. However, these are mostly in general terms without concrete action plans suggesting the importance of creating evidence base for future development plans.

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