

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Highlands in Thailand include the areas elevating from 500 m above sea level upwards, covering 9.12 million hectares, populating 15 indigenous tribes. The major problem occurring in the highlands has long been forest invasion due to slash and burn agricultural system of the hill tribes. The on-going of such cultivation of vegetables and maize leads to the conflict between the highlanders and the government. Highland Research and Development Institute (HRDI), a public organization, was established in 2005, dealing with highland development, aiming at harmonious and sustainable coexistence of people and forests. HRDI collaborates with 616 communities in 8 northern provinces including 67,327 households of 256,955 people. Area approaches are determined by integrated collaboration among several governmental agencies complemented by community participatory. The work scheme, concluded by the Royal Forestry Department, state local administration and communities, under HRDI's supervision, composes land use planning, GIS forest border marking and residential area mapping. In practice, suitable agricultural systems are designed for highland farmers in different areas by designated field staff. The cultures of growing maize and upland rice are modified to integrated outdoor farming of subtropical fruits, such as peach, plum and persimmon, coffee, annual vegetables, such as lettuce, pak-choi and kale. For less elevated lands, being classified as the uplands, greenhouse culture is appropriate while in the lowlands paddy field rice cultivation is suggested. Apparently, modifications of agricultural systems as mentioned earlier can reduce the problems of smog and pollution caused by burning to some extent. The hot spots in our responsible areas were 30% declined, i.e. from 7,322 in 2020 to 2,187 in 2021. Apart from those attempts stated above, we also created connections between farmers and markets. In 2020, the farmers made their income worth 402.16 million baht from vegetables, fruits, coffee, livestock and so on. The key success to the whole scheme is the hand joining among working sectors, stakeholders and communities, on the basis of knowledge sharing, appropriate supports and participation. Above all, community's choices count.