

Land Consolidation in a Northern Vietnamese Village

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Fieldwork location: Vietnam

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Research background and purpose

Land consolidation (LC) is a land use policy that aims to remedy agricultural production inefficiencies caused by land fragmentation. Land fragmentation, in which a single farm consists of numerous parcels that are often dispersed over a wide area, is characteristic of farms in many countries, especially developing countries. In Vietnam, land fragmentation is widespread, particularly in the Red River Delta, where collectivized land was equally reallocated to individual households after the demise of collectivization in the 1980s. Because land fragmentation is considered an obstacle to the adoption of modern technologies for crop production, the Vietnamese government has implemented policies encouraging land consolidation since 1998. Such policies, however, have brought about different outcomes, depending upon the socio-cultural aspects of particular land areas. The aim of this study was to shed light on the procedures and effects of a land consolidation project from a village perspective, focusing on choices made by villagers and constraints related to the choices the villagers were faced with.

Fieldwork results

The Mo Dao village in the Bac Ninh province of Vietnam was chosen for this study for two main reasons. First, the village is an agriculture-based community that resembles many other villages throughout the Delta. Second, this village successfully implemented a land consolidation (LC) project in 2009, and offers a good opportunity for understanding LC project goals as well as land-related issues. My fieldwork in this village aimed to accomplish two important tasks. First, I acquired knowledge concerning technical aspects of the LC project, by direct discussions with members of the village's LC committee. Second, I interviewed 100 of the village's nearly 400 households, using a random sampling approach, to better understand the effects of the LC project on agricultural production.

Before land was consolidated, a typical village household cultivated more than 9 parcels, with a total area of 0.3 hectare. The village's LC project was designed not only to combine scattered parcels, but also to reconstruct field roads and upgrade irrigation systems. After implementing the project, the number of parcels per household was reduced to less than 5, on average, while

maintaining the same total area under cultivation. Overall, the villagers have benefited in three main ways. First, by enlarging the parcel size, farmers can greatly reduce the time spent traveling between their parcels, especially during transplanting, harvesting and the spraying of pesticides. Second, the reconstructed field roads enable agricultural machines to access most parcels in the field, reducing the extent of farming tasks that must be performed manually. Third, upgraded irrigation systems allow most parcels to be sustained without having to water crops manually, reducing both production costs and farmer workload.

Implications and future research

In the future, data collected during fieldwork will be further analyzed to develop a more detailed understanding of the LC project. Also, maps of land use before and after the project will be illustrated.



Photo 2: Before the project: heavy workload for watering crops



Photo 3: After the project: harvest machine used in village field