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The Security of Land Tenure in Rainforest Margin Areas: the Case of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

The objective of our research in four villages in the vicinity of Lore Lindu National Park, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia was to

1. Identify factors that facilitate or impair tenure security.
2. Evaluate the relationship between land use and tenure security and its consequences on the stabilization of the rainforest margin.

We categorized the main factors influencing tenure security according to the level of decision making. If these decisions result in the desired outcomes depends on the socio-cultural structure of the community concerned.

The state provides the framework of formal proofs of ownership in the form of tax letters and certificates. Whereas the former is implemented in a very efficient manner in the research region the latter does not meet the demands of the local population, due to high costs and limited capacities of the land affairs offices involved.

The local administrative and political institution's impact on tenure security depends on power structures that do or do not allow the village head to sell land to migrants at will and to deny certain groups from access to conflict resolving institutions. Enforcement of state and customary law is stronger in villages with a high level of social cohesion.

On the household level, land security is primarily enhanced by permanent cultivation and land registration. The biggest number of land conflicts was caused by land sales that did not follow the procedure provided by the state.

We assessed the overall security of tenure as sufficient. Most respondents claimed their land to be secure and only few had lost any plots.

However, the forest cover in the research area has decreased considerably within the last five years. We therefore conclude that tenure security is a necessary condition for the stabilization of the rainforest margin but it is not a sufficient one: If access to forest is not efficiently restricted either by local institutions or the state, population increase will lead to further conversion of forest into agricultural land.

Keywords: Deforestation, Indonesia, land tenure, security, tropical rainforest