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**Socio-Economic Assessment of Farming Systems of Different Ethnic
Groups — a Case of Northern Thailand**

JIRAWAN KITCHAICHAROEN

*University of Hohenheim, Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences in the Tropics and Subtropics,
Germany*

Abstract

Rural development of Northern Thailand from both, highland and lowland sites generated different processes of natural resources degradation that question the sustainability of the rural development and security of living standard. The study aims to examine how the differentiation of resource availability, environment and ethnic groups lead to differentiation of resource use, management and living standard of farm families, and analyses the impacts of natural resource use according to differentiation of farming systems on socio-economic situation of farm families.

There are two different ethnic groups, Thai and Yao, living in different altitudes. The primary information for the analyses was collected in 1999/2000 in a socio-economic family survey in 22 Thai families, 22 Yao families at the middle altitude (Yao-mid) and 20 Yao families at the higher altitude (Yao-high).

The research is still in the process. Only preliminary results can be presented in the poster. The result shows that there is a difference in farming systems according to land and water availability. The farming system of Thai families is based on both rainfall and irrigation whereas the Yao-mid families applied mostly irrigation for fruit trees, which are the main crops. No irrigation system exists in higher altitudes. The highest of farm and family income are in the Yao-mid families due to high value lychee production with an environment favorable for lychee. According to the result of regression analysis, farm size, input intensity and access to water are the significant factors affecting the family income. In the study area, ethnic differences alone do by no means define the living standard.

Keywords: Ethnic differences, farming system, living standard, Thailand