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Contribution of Livestock to Household Income and Food Security — Comparison of Smallholder Systems of Different Production Intensity in North Viet Nam

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Abstract

In mountainous areas of Viet Nam, livestock is an important component of integrated smallholder agricultural systems. Livestock contributes to cash income, consumption, has religious, socio-cultural, and cropping-related functions (manure, draught).

This contribution aims to evaluate the relative importance of livestock in general and of different species in particular for cash income and food safety of smallholder households in the mountainous areas of NW Viet Nam. Fieldwork was conducted from 1/2002 to 8/2002 in four villages of ethnic Black Thai, and from 3/2004 to 5/2004 in three H'mong villages, Son La province. Villages cover a gradient from valleys near town with improved infrastructure and market access (2 Thai villages) via upland areas further away from town (2 Thai villages) to remote hillsides with less developed infrastructure and restricted market access (3 H'mong villages). Structured household interviews focused at socio-economic conditions, output from animal production, and consumption of animal products, in a total of 109 households (HH).

Total yearly output from livestock in monetary terms (sale, consumption) was 6.8 and 11.4 million Viet Nam Dong (VND) per HH (near town), 7.5 and 4.5 million VND/HH (intermediate location), and 1.9 to 2.3 million VND/HH (H'mong villages).

Pigs yielded a cash revenue in 90 % of Thai households, fish and chicken only in Thai households near town. The annual revenue from pigs was highest. In H'mong villages, 20 % of households sold pigs, 29 % sold chicken and 8 % sold ruminants; ruminants and pigs yielded the highest revenue. Total yearly revenue from livestock was 5.2 to 8.2 million VND/HH (near town), 1.4 to 1.6 million VND/HH (intermediate location), and 1.0 to 2.0 million VND/HH (H'mong villages).

Main species consumed were pig, fish and chicken. Monthly consumption of farm-raised animal products in H'mong villages was considerably lower (pork 0.1 kg/capita, chicken 0.04 kg/capita, fish 0.05 kg/capita) than in Thai villages (pork 0.9 kg/capita, chicken 0.6 to 0.9 kg/capita, fish 1.3 kg/capita). In Thai villages, frequent market purchase contributed additionally to animal product consumption.

Results show that output, cash revenue and food supply from livestock production decrease with increasing remoteness and altitude. Farmers production objectives, and the meaning of livestock for daily consumption, nutrient supply, and consumption in the frame of religious/ritual ceremonies are discussed.

Keywords: Food security, household income, smallholder livestock production, Viet Nam