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How to Benefit the Upland Poor in Central Vietnam from Forest Devolution

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Abstract

The research focuses on the practice of forestland property rights in the process of forest and forestland transfer from state to community and household property after reforming the state forest enterprises. The research community is one upland commune in Aluoi district of Thua Thien Hue, Vietnam. The population is constituted from the Kinh people who migrated from the lowland of Thua Thien Hue province, and of neighbouring Paco. Household interviews, key informant and group discussions were applied for data collection. Qualitative and quantitative data were explored, and statistical analysis included bivariate correlation, t-test, cross tabulation and binary logistic regression to determine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The results showed that the two ethnic groups showed differences in land use and market access. The process of nationalisation of land in previous times had not recognised the management rights of the local people on forestland and natural forests. In fact, people have practised crop cultivation on the forestland since long time ago. These rights are recognised by the community and it exists in parallel with the legal rights. The process of transferring forestland from the state forestry agencies to the community, combined with the impact of the market, has spurred the process of strong and increasingly complex land possession in the area. With the slow and weak enforcement as well as capacity of the local authorities, impact of policies on forestland allocation and regional economic development is not large. The forest continues to be destroyed and converted for other use purposes. Therefore, the process of land use planning and land allocation needs to be promoted because with weak implementation this process will be more complex, and forestland allocation policies of the state will not fully be enforced. Simultaneously, it will be increasingly challenging to work towards poverty alleviation and protection of the remaining forest resources in the region.

Keywords: Common property, forestland allocation, forestland encroachment, non-timber-forest-products, property rights