



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2013, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
“Agricultural development within the rural-urban continuum”

The Influence of Insecure Land Tenure on Upland Agriculture in the Philippines

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Abstract

In the Philippine uplands the government started issuing land tenure agreements to individual forest residents and to communities in the mid 1980's. These land use rights are aimed at increasing land tenure security amongst the farmers and thereby promoting the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. This issue is of crucial importance in the Philippine uplands, where deforestation and agricultural expansion have led to environmental degradation. Using primary quantitative and qualitative data collected in the provinces of Leyte and Southern Leyte in 2012, this study investigates the influence of land tenure agreements on upland farming practices, especially on the extent of trees on agricultural plots. Furthermore, problems in land administration processes at the policy level are investigated.

A total of 104 farm households was interviewed. A plot-level econometric analysis of determinants and constraints of tree keeping suggests that, *ceteris paribus*, the possession of a tenure agreement nearly triples the number of trees on a plot. Other important influencing factors are the reception of material support and farmers' perceived access to extension services. The wealth level of the farming households, proxied by the calculation of a relative poverty index using principal component analysis, does not show to have a significant impact on the number of trees on a plot. Nonetheless, significant differences between the wealth levels of sampled households that have a tenure agreement and those households without any agreement exist. At the policy level, expert interviews revealed that unclear responsibilities between different departments involved in land administration lead to conflicts. Thus, although the issuance of land tenure agreements shows positive environmental effects, challenges at the policy level remain.

Keywords: Agroforestry, CBFM, forest land, land tenure security, sustainability