



Tropentag, September 16-18, 2015, Berlin, Germany

“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:  
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

## Land Policies for Upland Cambodia: Historical Perspective and Impacts on Land Use

ASIKIN YOEU<sup>1,3</sup>, DIDIER PILLOT<sup>2</sup>, JEAN-MICHEL SALLES<sup>3</sup>, MALYNE NEANG<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Royal University of Agriculture, Graduate School, Cambodia*

<sup>2</sup>*SupAgro Montpellier, Institut des Régions Chaudes, France*

<sup>3</sup>*Montpellier SupAgro - INRA, Laboratoire Montpelliérain d'Economie Théorique et Appliquée, France*

### Abstract

Rural Cambodia is often described as a demographically saturated “inner country”, on the alluvial plains of the Mekong and the Tonle Sap Lake, surrounded by upland “empty Cambodia” where the population density is ten times lower. This dual land situation is likely to generate important migrations in the process of development, with an important impact on the deforestation and land use in general. This situation is also a product of the institutional reforms promoted since early 2000 (Land Law, Forestry Law, following directions and regulations). Based on field surveys from 2011-2013 done in Mondulokiri, one of the provinces of so-called empty Cambodia, this article analyses the major changes in the land use as a result of the successive public land policies in upland Cambodia. Considering the diverse strategies of local stakeholders previously identified in the province, the communication also elaborates on four scenarios of further transformations foreseen in the next ten years. The findings show that the policy favoring large scale concession may result in several positive effects, but only when rubber prices are high. On the contrary, policy more favorable to the rights of indigenous communities and of individual immigrants lead to higher employment creation and better balanced food security. Based on the findings the paper offers a critical discussion of Cambodian land concession policy arguing that the multifunctionality of rural areas should be taken into account by Cambodian policy-makers and planners as a viable strategy to achieve rural development targets.

**Keywords:** Cambodia, employment opportunities, indigenous people, land concession, land strategy and policy