



Performance and livestock producers' integration into cattle and pig farmer groups in NWH Vietnam

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Introduction

- ▶ The recent transformations of cooperative laws in Vietnam have led to the disintegration of old cooperative models, giving way to new associative schemes for agricultural production that are yet to be explored.
- ▶ Within an economy in constant evolution and open to international markets, the associative model offers an opportunity for the social organization of agricultural production to respond to market demands of quality and volumes, as well as to generate economies of scale, connecting small producers with input networks, extension services, capacity building, and credit.
- ▶ This approach promises to be an alternative for strengthening livestock production (cattle and pigs) in the Northwest Highlands in Vietnam due to the opportunities for sustainable market connections in a scenario of cattle oversupply that has dropped the prices and has increased uncertainty among small producers.
- ▶ Public policies and previous interventions have promoted the establishment of farmer groups to generate economies of scale. However, the functioning and cohesion of these groups are still weak and highly dependent on external support and the functioning of the beef and pork market.

Results

- ▶ In general terms, the formation and functioning of farmer groups highly depend on the support of development programs and market dynamics.
- ▶ Strong cooperative dynamics based on communal and ethnic ties are identified, especially within producers located in the most remote and mountainous areas of Hmong ethnic minorities. The links around livestock productivity are manifested in the joint purchase of inputs for production due to the high costs of mobilization, the free grazing production system that makes it difficult to control and monitor the animal's consumption of resources, the use of joint funds to support members when facing calamities such as bovine deaths, and the tradition in which the elderly people of the villages play an essential role in monitoring and evaluating the functioning of the groups.
- ▶ The weakest components of the groups of farmers correspond to (Figure 1)
 - ▶ **Economic and financial sustainability:** Most farmer groups do not have the economic resources necessary to carry out their activities.
 - ▶ **Service offers and capacity:** Neither group offers any service support to its members. However, it is possible to identify cooperation efforts in the joint purchase of inputs and information exchange network. The latter is particularly notorious in those farmer groups where some members implement genetic improvement.
 - ▶ **Market connections and trading capacity:** Despite the farmer groups are an alternative for sustainable connection to markets, none of the groups have had the opportunity to establish alliances for the commercialization of cattle. The macro situation of the beef market deepens the crisis since groups recently formed through development projects based their activity plans on the expectation of a thriving market that, in the last two years, has changed, leading producers to retain cattle or even migrate to other production systems.

Objective

Assess the functioning and capacities of farmer groups engaged in cattle and pig production in the Mai Son district, Son La Province of Vietnam.

Methodology

- ▶ 9 farmer groups of all types (cooperatives, farmer clubs, common interest groups, etc.) in Mai Son district currently active in cattle and pig production were identified and evaluated.
- ▶ **Sample size:** Depending on the nature and scale of a farmer group, the management board can contain from 3 to 7 members. For each farmer group, one FGD has been organized with between 2-3 of these members, with consideration of gender, age group, and ethnicity.
- ▶ The collected information was filled in a semi-structured questionnaire.
- ▶ A Likert Scale was used to measure the functioning of the groups based on five components, as well as open questions to provide greater detail on the topics. The topics included were: 1) democratic, inclusive, and participatory management, 2) service offer and capacity building, 3) economic and financial sustainability, 4) managerial and administrative capacity, and 5) market connections and trading capacity.

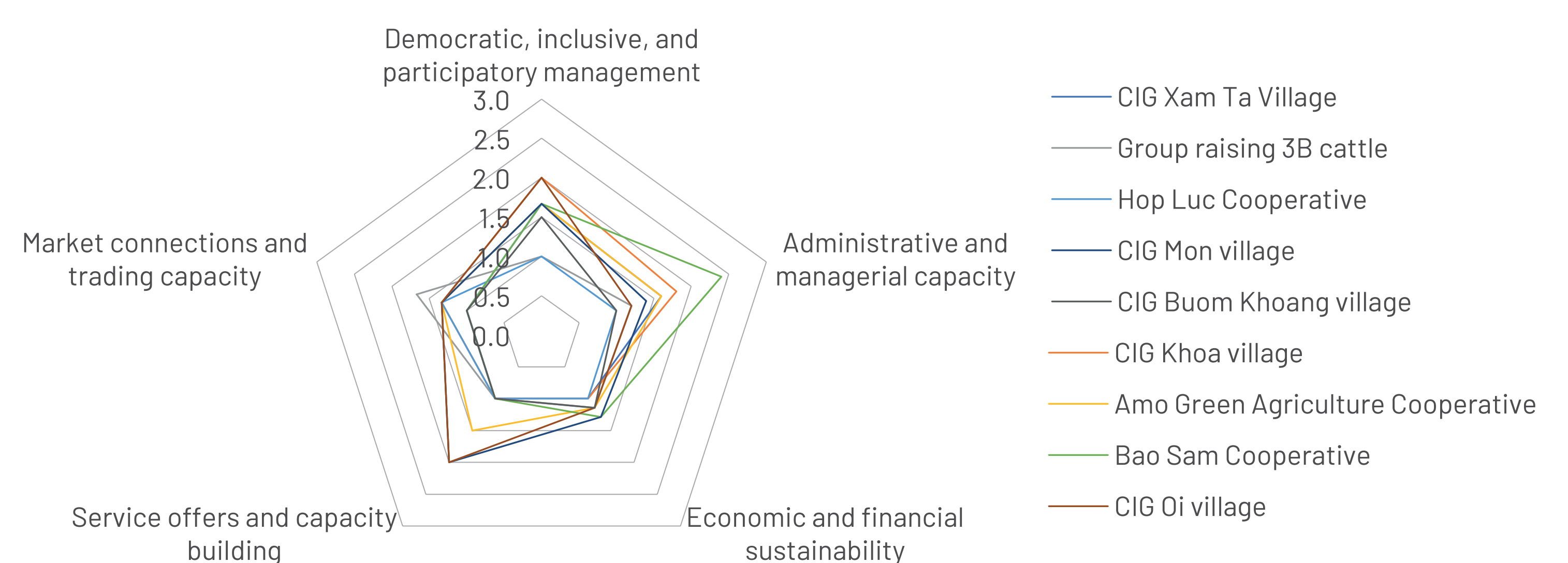


Figure 1. Farmer groups assessment summary

Conclusions

- ▶ Farmer group improvement and formation still require institutional support to strengthen the foundational bases of resources management and administration and to make alliances with key partners to support activities and capacity development of the cattle and pig producers.
- ▶ Strengthening the marketing network within farmer groups is essential, especially in facing macro situations in the beef market. It is possible to take advantage of the links established with traders who are members of the groups so that information about market conditions and prices will spread and allow producers to organize themselves in terms of quality, breeds, and volume requirements.
- ▶ Adapt and integrate social cohesion tools for groups of producers in the most remote areas. Likewise, rely on the lessons learned from the operation of other groups, such as the Women's Unions, that have successfully offered services and support to community members.

References

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