

Role of Women in Organic Rice Production System: A Case Study in Phoukout District, Xiengkhouang Province, Northern Lao PDR

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Abstract

The qualitative study was applied to study to the Role of Women in Organic Rice Production System: A Case Study in Phoukout District, Xiengkhouang Province, Northern Lao PDR, with the objectives to describe the existing organic rice production system and role of women, and identify impacts on the organic rice production. Primary and secondary data were collected in May 2014. Semi-structure interview method was used to collect primary data. Data were collected from six (6) village committees, six (6) committees of organic rice production groups, one (1) officer (field staff of project), and 15 households (members of organic rice production group).

The result of the study revealed that the organic rice production system is similar to traditional agriculture, but differ in farming techniques to avoid using chemical fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide. The group members have to follow standard principles organic agriculture. Organic agriculture is considered a new production method which many farmers are unfamiliar with as it has many steps, especially an internal control system and process of certification. However, all of farmers still have practice problems due to the complex process of organic rice production system. There are many steps, and new unfamiliar techniques. Some members did not properly follow the standard process, such as recording farm activities using chemical fertilizer.

Results further show that women participate more in organic agriculture than in traditional agricultural practice. However, the role of men in the organic agriculture project implementation is higher than women due to their culture and traditional way of life. Women's involvement in terms of time in organic rice farming activities are much lesser than men (70% by men and 30% by women). Most women spend more time in field work than men (80% by women and 20% by men). But family decision-making is shared equally between spouses.

Research findings show that beneficial aspects of organic rice production are reduction cost of production that increases income margin, food safety and sufficiency, ecological and environment security, and restoration of soil fertility and rice yield.