

ABSTRACT

POPULATION GROWTH, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND DEFORESTATION IN THAILAND

by

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This study attempted to investigate the relationships between deforestation, population growth, and social and economic development. Emphasis was being placed on the study of demographic, economic and social factors affecting the forest encroachment of the agricultural households residing in the forest reserves.

In carrying out this research, two levels of data, the provincial data and the household data were collected and analysed. Cross-sectional analysis of provincial data was performed. A multi-stage sampling was used to select a sample of 235 agricultural households in the 6 sample villages in the North and the Northeast. The samples could be considered to be the representatives of the rural settlements encroaching the forest reserves. By using an interviewing questionnaire, the respondents were asked questions regarding their history of settlements and forest encroachment, as well as their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. A multivariate statistical technique was employed for the analysis of both the provincial and the household data.

Results from analysis of provincial data showed that the provincial deforestations essentially involved, not only the availability of agricultural land in the provinces but also some selected demographic, and socio-economic development characteristics of the provinces. The provincial deforestation rates were positively related to the agricultural gross provincial products, the percentage of the agricultural households in the provinces, the rates of migration to Bangkok, and the rates of migration between provinces.

On the contrary, the rates were negatively related to the percentage of population who attained higher than the compulsory education. These confirmed that the growth of agricultural population and its movement, and the increasing agricultural provincial products contributed to the depletion of the forest resource.

Multivariate analysis of household data revealed that, the extent to which the agricultural households encroached the forest reserves, were positively associated with the farm income, the parent agriculture density, duration of forest encroachment the regions, and the education factors; while the distance from the previous domiciles was negatively associated with.

The analysis further revealed that the demand for additional farmland of the new settlements, and the poverty were the underlying causes of forest encroachment among the rural inhabitants. Although the present farmland holding areas were increasing, compared to those at first settlements, a high proportion of the respondents showed the attitudes of further expansion of their farmland holding areas, which would inevitably result to the depletion of the forest land.

The study concluded that the growth of the agricultural population and its socio-economic development factors essentially involved the depletion and deterioration of the forest land. It is therefore recommended that the sustainable rural development and forest management should be planned and put into practice at the provincial level. Emphasis should be placed on the promotion of off-farm income generating activities, as well as the provision of educational services for the communities to reduce the pressure on the forest land. Family planning programs should also effectively be implemented, particularly in the remote forest reserve areas.