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Developing Climate-Smart Agriculture Indicators for SDG 1 and Environmental Implications in Northern Thailand

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Abstract

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of eradicating poverty in all its forms and ensuring zero hunger by 2030 remain among the main challenges facing humanity. Farmers in many developing countries face poverty and food insecurity. Food production in 2050 must increase by 70% from current values to meet the needs of population extension. This article uses participatory tools in food security (FS) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) indicator development as a method for organizing and analyzing complex decision for highland smallholder farming communities in Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai Province. The study showed that developing indicators using diverse participatory tools and questionaries of 196 Karen and Lawa households. The overall indicators were composed of three main topics, nine dimensions, 27 indicative components, and 76 indicators. The overall composite indices of the Karen and Lawa were 0.5485 and 0.5409, respectively. There were 76 plans for smallholder farming in the highland areas to achieve food security. This action could assist in partially achieving SDG 1 (No poverty), i.e., the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters.

Keywords: Climate change; Adaptation; Mitigation; Highland agriculture; Smallholder farming

1. Introduction

Nowadays, food security is vital to livelihoods in less developed countries. The global population is projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050 (UN, 2019). Food production must increase by 70% to cater to the increased demand (FAO, 2013; Rojas-Downing *et al.,* 2017). Global food security is a serious challenge and has become an issue of national policy as well as a public concern (Bala *et al.,* 2014). In the highlands, people's livelihoods are closely attached and highly dependent on the ecosystem and services. Climate change is expected to affect highland smallholder farmers with poor and limited resources (Birner and Resnick, 2010). More frequent droughts, floods, or extreme weather events, put more pressure on ecosystem services losses, plant diseases, and insect outbreaks (Klenner *et al.,* 2009). The problems worsen the livelihood and food insecurity situations. These problems impact ecosystem imbalance and increase agricultural investment costs and chemical contaminations in soils and water. Besides, the shifting cultivation rotation is shorter than in the past, and there have been intensive farming and soil erosion from corn crops (Wangpakapattanawong *et al.,* 2010).

In some years, there was no cash return from crops, and debts were increased, forcing households to open new forest areas for farming. It also has to bear the burden of high agricultural costs such as chemicals, fertilizers, and insecticides. In addition, agricultural management in the highland is difficult (Pitakpongjaroen, 2015). The impact on agriculture, livestock, and the loss of organisms are important for living in highland areas (Phungpracha *et al.,* 2016). Land use intensification is accompanied by a reduction in the use of traditional methods of pest management, and an increase in the use of synthetic pesticides resulting in health problems related to pesticides (Riwthong *et al.,* 2015).

Moreover, there were 18 key indicators associated with community food security in three highland villagers in Chiang Mai province, northern Thailand, using the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) food security framework. The community's self-assessment showed that each village had reached different levels of food security, and many communities have practical implications for enhancing their food security (Limnirankul *et al.,* 2015).

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is an important component of the decision-making process. It is flexible in developing processes and can be used for many different objectives (Dos Santos *et al.,* 2019). The AHP was used to develop an ethics-based approach of sustainable agriculture indicators. The risk and vulnerability and coping capacity indicators; water, safety, transportation, and infrastructure indicators were awarded high weighting scores of 8.5%, 7.9%, and 7.8%, respectively (Ameen & Mourshed, 2019). Chavez *et al.* (2012) reported obtaining weights of farming activities showing that especially livestock activities and spring-summer crops are important alternatives for tobacco production.

However, the knowledge of indicator development for SDG 1 for highland agricultural plans using AHP and suitable alternatives is still limited. Hence, indicator developments of agriculture for smallholder farmers are important to improve farm management in the highland, which should lead to increased productivity and income. This research aims to establish and list criteria used in the decision-making analysis process using AHP and identify the most appropriate options to solve the problems of food insecurity and income for achieving SDG 1.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study site

The study site was selected as four villages in Pang Hin Fon and in Ban Tap sub-district, Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai Province (Figure 1). Mae Chaem district is located 105 km southwest of Chiang Mai Province, with 2,713 square kilometers. The Karen and the Lawa tribes farm in the mountains using the slash and burn method to grow rice, corn, cabbage, and beans (Junsongduang *et al.,* 2014).

2.2 Methodological framework

A six-step participatory process centering on stakeholders' involvement was employed (Figure 2). The data collection methods included five steps as follows:

2.2.1 Assessment of area contexts and indicator development

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools following Chambers (1994) were applied to understand the context of the highland social-ecological system. This research included semi-structured interviews (SSI) and focus group discussions (FGD). Results were used to guide and support the questionnaire design to obtain detailed quantitative evidence. Current risks and vulnerability to climate change were assessed through in-depth interviews with village headmen, sub-district heads, and health volunteers (Berti *et al.,* 2016). Three dimensions of CSA were assessed: food security, risk, vulnerability, and coping capacity, and CO_2 emission. FGD were conducted with the farmers to understand their opinions and experiences in food security and climate change. Farmers were invited to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions related to food security and the impact of climate change on farm production. Gender divisions were male and female, with age range from 20 – 69 years, which were divided into five age groups with three people in each group (Limnirankul *et al.,* 2015).

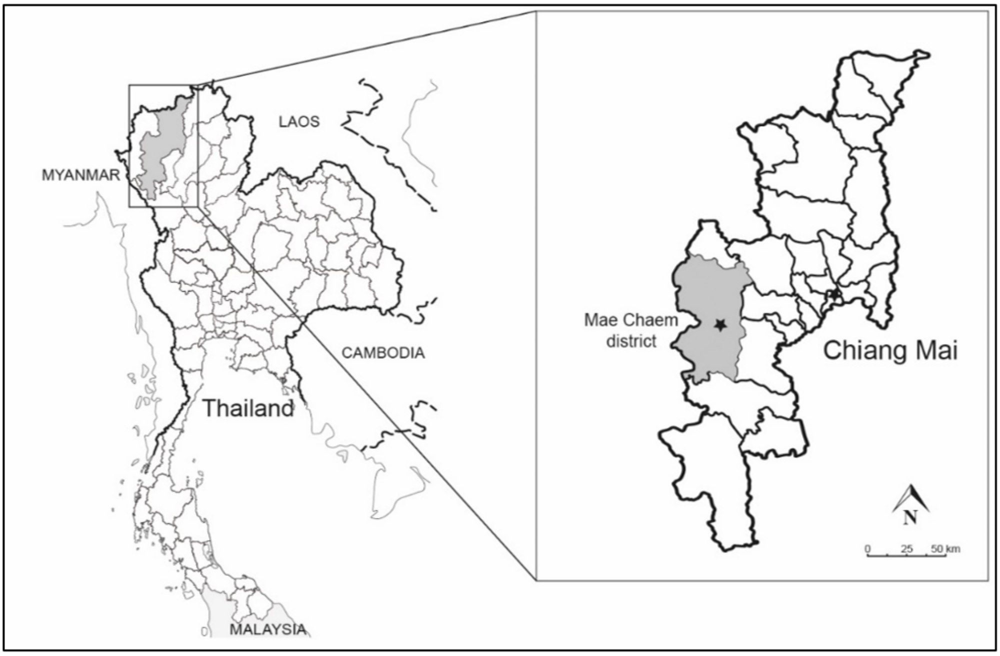

Figure 1. Location of Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
(A study site map was generated by the author using Adobe Illustrator CC2018.)

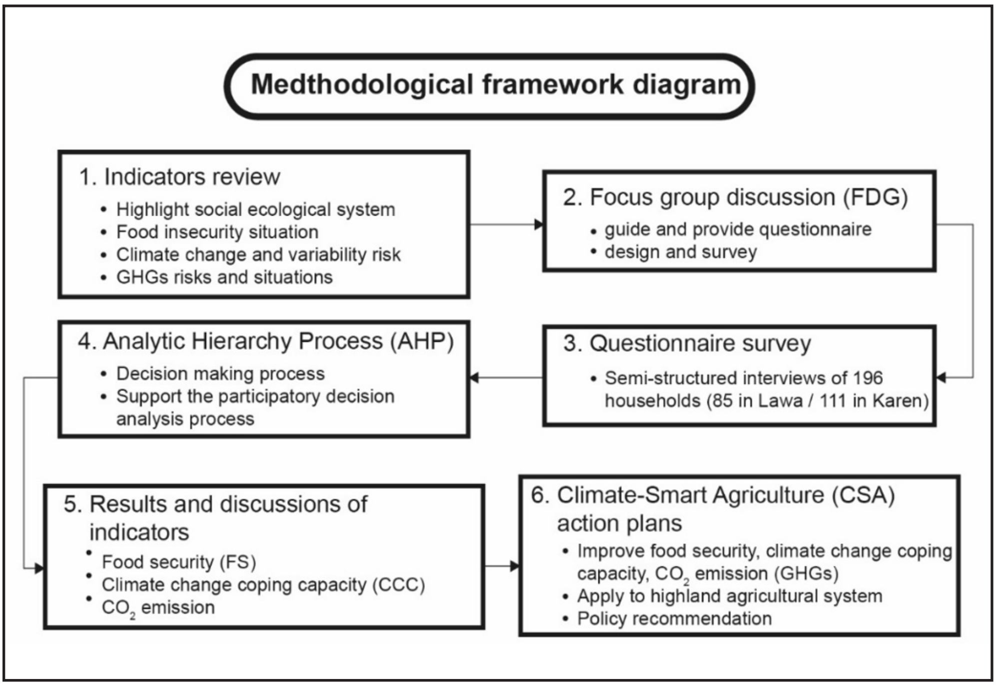

Figure 2. Methodological framework

2.2.2 Questionnaire

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in 196 households; 85 in the Lawa and 111 in the Karen to collect data on household information, farming systems, risk perception and risk, vulnerability and coping capacity. The sample population from the selected farming households was calculated based on Yamane (1973).

$n = N/(1+Ne^2)$

Where, n = Number of communities, N = The population size, e = The acceptable sampling error (95% confidence level and p = 0.05 are assumed)

2.2.3 Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

The AHP is an important and flexible component of decision making and can be used for many different objectives, including agricultural planning and adjustment related service problems in various situations to resolve disagreements with stakeholders. The main idea of AHP development is to support the participatory decision-making analysis process through workshops. For example, attribute A is a basic, but very reasonable, the assumption is that if attribute A is absolutely more important than attribute B and is rated at 9, then B must be absolutely less important than A and is valued at 1/9. These pairwise comparisons are carried out for all factors to be considered, usually not more than 7, and the matrix is completed. The matrix is of a particular form that neatly supports the calculations (Saaty, 2003) (Figure 3).

2.2.4 Normalized matrix

The normalized matrix will add up to be one. Calculating the weight of the criteria weights can be calculated. The order starts with the sum in each column and then divided the table values by the sum of each column (normalized matrix). For weight calculation, the order starts with the sum in each column and then divided the table values by the sum of each column (normalized matrix). For the calculated average of each row of normalized matrix, the high criteria are more important than the low criteria (Dodge, 2003).

Norm_x = (x – min_x) / (max_x – min_x)
AHP weight x normalization

2.2.5 Consistency Ratio (CR)

The relative weights, importance, or value, of the factors were calculated. The final stage is to calculate a CR to measure how consistent the judgements have been in relation to large samples of purely random judgements. If the CR is much in excess of 0.1, the judgements are untrustworthy because they are too close for comfort to randomness and the exercise is valueless or must be repeated. It is easy to make a minimum number of judgements, after which the rest can be calculated to enforce a perhaps unrealistically perfect consistency (Saaty, 2003; Saaty, 2008).

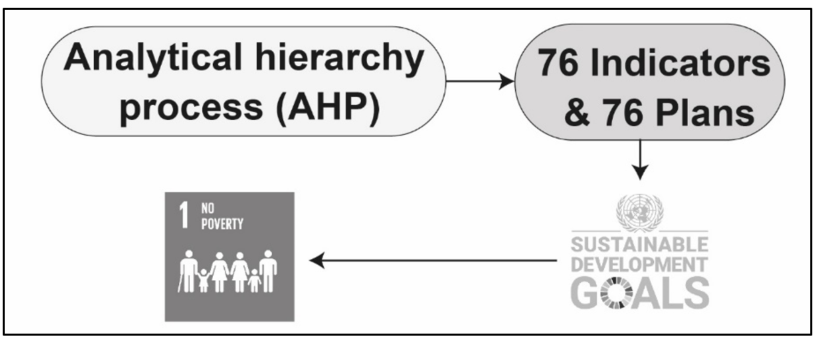

Figure 3. Analytical hierarchy process of communities and the United Nations' SDG 1

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Smallholder farming indicator

For food security, risk and vulnerability and coping capacity, and CO_2 emission, there were nine dimensions, 27 indicator components, and 76 indicators, identified relevant to agricultural-based highland community systems to provide farmers status of food security (Figure 4).

3.2 Analytic Hierarchy Process

According to the food security dimension, food availability had a weight of 0.577, which was higher than food accessibility (0.342) and food stability (0.081). The communities focused on food availability more than the others, such as availability of land for production, money for investment, and natural abundance of forest food. In addition, self-production of food (rice cultivation, home garden, and animal farm) were important for households in the communities. They produced by themselves, leading to more food and food control. There was a study about adaptation in climate change for rural area where households' rice production in all year, including vegetables or some food (Chandra *et al.,* 2018). For the result of food stability in the five criteria of stable income and stable agricultural products, there were two higher criteria in food stability. When the AHP analysis was used for food accessibility in the five criteria, it was found that the income from produce got the highest important of weight at 0.535, expenses at 0.183, good transportation at 0.159, and help/sharing at 0.071. Nowadays, communities are less dependent on forest food than in the past because people access food from markets and cities (Cheeseman, 2016). In addition, the forest abundance decreased, which led to losses of ecosystem services (Nguyen and Nghiem, 2016) (Table 1).

Risk and vulnerability and coping capacity, it was found that direct risk was 0.769 of weight, which was higher than indirect risk (0.147) and coping capacity (0.084). The direct risks were from water source (0.590), which was higher than the other risks.

The other direct risks were from diseases and insect outbreaks at 0.204, severe natural disasters at 0.139 and weather fluctuations at 0.067. The result showed that water was most important for highland agriculture. It is similar to (Rao *et al.,* 2016) who reported that ponds were made for resilience in lacking water and water resource recovery facilities in tropical areas in India. Some communities had ponds and ditches for relieving drought in dry seasons (Table 2).

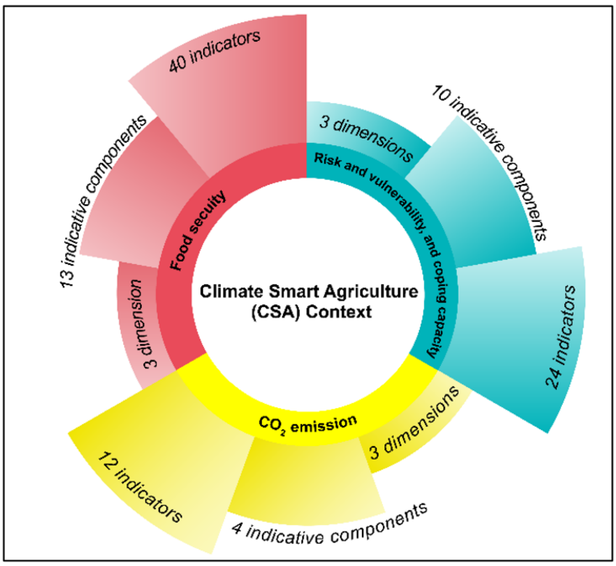

Figure 4. Results of indicator development in the four communities in Pang Hin Fon and Ban Tub Sub districts, Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai Province

Carbon dioxide emission of the three criteria, direct use of fuel and chemical use (used of fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides, and herbicides), and household activities cooking had the weights of 0.589, 0.357, and 0.054, respectively. In all the communities, there was most of burning from agricultural (shifting cultivation) plot preparation in a major harvesting period in the dry season leading to haze problem in northern Thailand.

(Oanh *et al.,* 2018; Ni *et al.,* 2017). For the chemical use, the weight was 0.357 on consumption in farms. The result was similar to Champrasert *et al.* (2020) who reported that the cultivation options in the Karen and the Lawa farming, including spraying equipment, pesticide, and gasoline of cost were increased more than in the past. These factors led to more farm investment and affected income and food accessibility of households (Table 3).

Table 1. AHP results related to food security

Main dimension, Consistency Ratio: 0.02				
CSA context	1. Food security	2. Risk, vulnerability and coping capacity	3. CO_2 emission	Weight
1. Food security	1	7	9	0.793
2. Risk, vulnerability and coping capacity	1/7	1	2	0.131
3. CO_2 emission	1/9	1/2	1	0.076
Total normalized matrix				1

1. Food security dimension, Consistency Ratio: 0.03				
Dimension	1.Food availability	2.Food accessibility	3. Food stability	Weight
1.Food availability	1	2	6	0.577
2.Food accessibility	1/2	1	5	0.342
3.Food stability	1/5	1/6	1	0.081
Total normalized matrix				1

1.1 Food availability component, Consistency Ratio: 0.03				
Indicative component	1.1.1 Self-production of food	1.1.2 Food from the forest and natural resources	1.1.3 Help/share	Weight
1.1.1 Self-production of food	1	6	5	0.726
1.1.2 Food from the forest and natural resources	1/6	1	1/2	0.102
1.1.3 Aid and exchange of food	1/5	2	1	0.172
Total normalized matrix				1

1.2 Food accessibility component, Consistency Ratio: 0.10						
Indicative component	1.2.1 Income from produce	1.2.2 Income from NTFPs	1.2.3 Good transportati on	1.2.4 Help/share	1.2.5 Income more than expenses	Weight
1.2.1 Income from produce	1	9	5	8	3	0.535
1.2.2 Income from NTFPs	1/9	1	1/3	1/3	1/2	0.051
1.2.3 Good transportation	1/5	3	1	5	1/2	0.159
1.2.4 Helping/sharing	1/8	3	1/5	1	1/3	0.072
1.2.5 Income more than expenses	1/3	2	2	3	1	0.183
Total normalized matrix						1

Table 1. AHP results related to food security (Cont.)

1.3 Food stability component, Consistency Ratio: 0.05						
Indicative component	1.3.1 Stable of agricultural products	1.3.2 Abundant natural resources	1.3.3 State and relative assistance	1.3.4 Stable income	1.3.5 Other supporting factors	Weight
1.3.1 Stable agricultural products	1	3	6	1	7	0.362
1.3.2 Abundant natural resources	1/3	1	3	1/4	5	0.148
1.3.3 State and relative assistance	1/6	1/3	1	1/6	3	0.068
1.3.4 Stable income	1	4	6	1	6	0.382
1.3.5 Other supporting factors	1/7	1/5	1/3	1/6	1	0.040
Total normalized matrix						1

Table 2. AHP results related to risk, vulnerability and coping capacity

2. Risk, vulnerability and coping capacity, Consistency Ratio:.02					
Dimension	2.1 Direct risks		2.2 Indirect risks	2.3 Coping capacity	Weight
2.1 Direct risks	1		6	8	0.769
2.2 Indirect risks	1/6		1	2	0.147
2.3 Coping capacity	1/8		1/2	1	0.084
Total normalized matrix					1
2.1 direct risk and vulnerability component, Consistency Ratio: 0.09					
Indicative component	2.1.1 Farm water sources	2.1.2 Severe natural disasters	2.1.3 Weather fluctuations	2.1.4 Disease and insect outbreaks	Weight
2.1.1 Farm water sources	1	4	5	5	0.590
2.1.2 Severe natural disasters	1/4	1	3	1/2	0.139
2.1.3 Weather fluctuations	1/5	1/3	1	1/4	0.067
2.1.4 Disease and insect outbreaks	1/5	2	4	1	0.204
Total normalized matrix					1
2.2 indirect risk and vulnerability component, Consistency Ratio: 0.00					
Indicative component	2.2.1 Market mechanisms		2.2.2 Road and traffic conditions		Weight
2.2.1 Market mechanisms	1		2		0.667
2.2.2 Road and traffic conditions	1/2		1		0.333
Total normalized matrix					1
2.3 coping capacity component, Consistency Ratio: 0.03					
Indicative component	2.3.1 Decrease of disease and insect outbreaks	2.3.2 Stability of marketing and price	2.3.3 Good health	2.3.4 Land ownerships	Weight
2.3.1 Decrease of disease and insect outbreaks	1	1/2	1/2	1/3	0.122
2.3.2 Stability of marketing and price	2	1	2	1	0.317
2.3.3 Good health	3	1	1	3	0.389
2.3.4 Land ownerships	2	1/2	1/3	1	0.172
Total normalized matrix					1

Table 3. AHP results related to CO_2 emission

3. CO_2 emission, Consistency Ratio: 0.03				
Dimension	3.1 Direct use of fuel	3.2 Household activities	3.3 Chemical use	Weight
3.1 Direct use of fuel	1	9	2	0.589
3.2 Household activities	1/8	1	1/8	0.054
3.3 Chemical use	1/2	8	1	0.357
Total normalized matrix				1
3.1 Direct use of fuel component, Consistency Ratio: 0.00				
Indicative component	3.1.1 Agricultural machinery / plot preparation	3.1.2 Transportation to the working areas		Weight
3.1.1 Agricultural machinery / plot preparation	1	7		0.875
3.1.2 Transportation to the working areas	1/7	1		0.125
Total normalized matrix				1
3.2 Household activities component, Consistency Ratio: 0.00				
Indicative component	3.2.1 Cooking			Weight
3.2.1 Cooking	1			1.000
Total normalized matrix				1
3.3 Chemical use component, Consistency Ratio: 0.00				
Indicative component	3.3.1 Use of fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides, and herbicides			Weight
3.3.1 Use of fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides, and herbicides	1			1.000
Total normalized matrix				1

3.3 Designing smallholders farming system to support food security, climate resilience and CO_2 emission reduction leading to SDGs

Income and food security currently are one of the targets of SDG 1. Indicators 1-40 deal with increasing food security (Figure 5). For example, indicator 1 is having their own land (Table 4), have own farm with a legal title deed for the freedom of agriculture and develop farms by themselves. Lipscomb and Prabakaran (2020) reported that temporary crop cultivation decreased with a greater registered area. Land tenure reform can provide incentives to delay deforestation. Farm size had a significant impact on farm management changes caused by improved property rights (Djurfeldt, 2020; Jin *et al.,* 2015). For example, indicator 1 is food security and coping capacity increased, risk and vulnerability decreased, and CO_2 emission decreased. Indicator 2 is having enough rice to eat until the next harvesting season, including planting enough rice all year round (until the next season) by growing rice in the area of their own farms to reduce trading renting space and reducing the risk of insufficient rice in the next season. (Hochman *et al.,* 2017) reported of development of breeding in accordance with the area resistant to pests and can tolerate climate risks. Indicator 4 is having investment in farming. Investment loans increased in countries with more area registered by small and medium farms (Lipscomb and Prabakaran, 2020). Moreover, the transportation condition led to productivity damage and low income (Figure 5).

Indicators 41-64 deal with contingency plans for upcoming risk, vulnerability, increasing capacity in response of coping plan. For instance, indicator 41 is raining according to the season. Seasonal rain helps with preserving and planting forests in community forest areas. (Charnsungnern and Tantanasarit, 2017) reported about watershed forests for future generations that could build and improve community water reservoirs. Indicator 47 is there is no hail storm causing little damage to the crops. (Rötter *et al.,* 2018)) reported the hail or storms degrade crop yields and crop production and threaten the service of other ecosystems. Agroforestry diversifies its yield and increases its capacity to cope with climate risks (Mbow *et al.,* 2014).

Indicators 65-76 deal with guidelines to decrease CO_2 retention or increase carbon sink. For instance, indicator 67 is there are reducing of the burning/stopping the burning or burn in proportion of area in the next growing season, and to reduce the area of monoculture to reduce the using of chemicals. There is an organization to educate about agriculture that reduces the use of chemicals and reduces incineration (Jat *et al.,* 2016). Indicator 70 is there are changing agricultural systems that reduce the use of chemicals. In addition, experiments for making quality bio-fertilizers based on wisdom and herbs can also be done (Lee *et al.,* 2013; Tripathi *et al.,* 2016).

Figure 5. Risk and vulnerability in transportation from the highland to the market

Table 4. Participatory smallholder farming design plans based on AHP indicators with CSA in communities

Smallholder farming design plan
Food security design plans 1–40
1. Having their own land (no rental)
2. Having enough rice to eat until the next harvesting season
3. Having their own fruit and vegetable farms
4. Having investment in farming
5. Having enough water for consumption
6. There is enough water for farming
7. There is meat for consumption from their own livestock
8. There are enough labor in each household
9. Making seeds and producing fertilizers and agricultural tools by themselves
10. There are knowledge and wisdom on how to grow crops and raise livestock
11. There are good productions
12. There are abundant forest food all year
13. There are community forests managed and maintained by villagers
14. Helping, sharing and exchanging food (between relatives and neighbors)
15. There are incomes and savings
16. There are good produce prices
17. There are abundant forest products and diverse natural foods
18. There are rights to access forest products and natural food
19. There is convenient transportation
20. There are state welfare cards
21. There are financial compensations for natural disasters, and health insurance cards
22. There are more incomes more than expenses
23. There are stability in rice production

Table 4. Participatory smallholder farming design plans based on AHP indicators with CSA in communities (Cont.)

Smallholder farming design plan
24. There are economic crop stability
25. There are enough fruits and vegetables to consume every year
26. Preserving the abundance of forest resources with rules and under the supervisions of committees
27. There are environmentally friendly productions
28. There are fertile soils
29. There are good government policies (emergency aid fund)
30. Receiving the natural disaster aid from Subdistrict Administration Office (SAO)
31. Receiving the emergency-requite aid from relatives
32. There are strength, unity, and consistency of the community
33. There are supporting markets, fair prices, and guarantee of product prices
34. There are additional careers and additional incomes
35. There are less diseases and pest infestations
36. There are less natural disasters (hail storms, mudslides)
37. There are well balanced ecosystems
38. There are low fluctuated weathers
39. If relying on external production, factors should be low production costs
40. Having good health and no illnesses
Risk, vulnerability and coping capacity design plan 41–64
41. Raining according to the season
42. Having adequate rain
43. Having a good water management system
44. No rerouting water route
45. Sliding of land over houses inflicting low damage
46. Sliding of land damaging agricultural plots inflicting low damage
47. No hail storm damaging or little damage to crops
48. Making firebreaks every year. There are gauds in dry season.
49. Slow fluctuating of weather
50. There are low rates of diseases and insect outbreaks
51. There are markets to buy products and nearby vendors to purchase
52. Low fluctuating product prices
53. There are good road conditions and convenient transportation
54. Using appropriate amount of organic fertilizers
55. There are knowledge and understanding in farm management
56. There are sufficient agricultural land and water
57. Bargaining with the middlemen
58. There are state supported markets
59. Guaranteeing and controlling the product prices by the state
60. There are additional careers and additional incomes
61. There are good health and no illnesses
62. There are good health services
63. There are clear and accurate ownership documents for farming
64. There are the rights to obtain forest food thoroughly
CO_2 emission reduction/removal design plan 65–76
65. Using household labor (high proportion of labor/machinery)
66. Using tools or other methods instead of lawnmowers
67. Reducing the burning/stopping the burning .
68. Using fewer vehicles or using vehicles that consume less fuel
69. Using firewood instead of cooking gas or electricity
70. Changing agricultural systems that reduce the use of chemicals
71. There are additional careers to be employees
72. Using the correct chemicals
73. Using modern knowledge mixed with wisdom
74. Using modern knowledge combining with local wisdom
75. Reducing agricultural areas
76. Increasing shifting cultivation areas to reduce the use of chemicals

3.4 The creation of contingency plans for upland-agricultural practices and coping capability for upcoming risks to increase food security

Each urban-young generation of researcher in every community actively designed for their own communities and later integrated with one another. They also shared and learned strategies of every community. The research itself and urban-young generation of researchers cooperatively isolated following the 76 indicators; and grouped them into classification responding to CSA's objectives. The future temperature and precipitation factors were used for forecasting (Table 4).

4. Conclusions

4.1 Food security, risk and vulnerability and coping capacity, and CO_2 emission

Seventy-six smallholder farming plans were identified relevant to agricultural-based highland community systems. Temperature changes, variations in precipitation and extreme events were recognized as predictors for producing less food with decreased quality, food safety risks, and biodiversity losses. In addition, water sources played a very important role in highland agricultural systems.

4.2 Highland agriculture plan and activity in farm

Seventy-six smallholder farming plans were linked to the SDG 1. In addition, other indicators i.e., partners, agencies, government public, and private sectors, can help with the goal to be achieved quickly and efficiently. The farmers can resolve the situation in a timely manner when various events occur. Farmers learn and adjust their attitudes and beliefs in traditional farming practices and formulating plans on their own. The plans also covered allocating areas to create diversity of plant species to increase incomes in the future. The communities jointly preserved part of the forest areas, which were prohibited from farming, but could be utilized in the manner of forest harvesting and used for subsistence only.

4.3 The suggestion for sustainability farming

The next feature was an aquatic animal conservation area. Conserving forests by increasing fruit-orchard areas and reducing monochromatic agriculture could also result in increasing CO_2 sequestration in agriculture. Water management had been developed, for example, digging a reservoir, putting the water system in the same direction. Indicators and plans will lead to opportunities to assess infrastructure, government services, natural and economy, technology, and funds. The coping and adaptation of environmental farm included long term productivity, food security and more income leading to SDG 1, which is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

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