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Beef Cattle Production In Northeast Thailand

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Philosophy
in Development Studies

Massey University
Institute of Development Studies
1998

Abstract

Northeast Thailand, a large plateau of relatively infertile soils, is an area of traditional beef cattle farming. The region has undergone a rapid process of physical, social and economic change in the past forty years. Clearing of forests during this period and the development of new infrastructure, particularly roading, has increased the level of human settlement and opened new agricultural areas for cropping. Agricultural growth has been maintained by opening up new land areas, increasing the production of rice, the predominant crop and diversifying into new commodity crops such as cassava and kenaf. While agricultural growth has been substantial during this period, industrial growth has been higher. Increasingly, many farm families from the Northeast now work for part of the year in urban employment often temporarily migrating to Bangkok, the centre of industrial activity.

The government has sought to diversify agricultural production away from rice and other commodity crops towards more intensive and high value agricultural activities. One focus of diversification activity has been in the promotion of beef cattle farming to meet increasing demand for beef from urban consumers. This thesis reviews some of the several projects which have been implemented to do so and the socioeconomic context within which they have occurred. Detailed research was carried out in six villages in Northeast Thailand during the period 1993-1995 with a follow up visit in June and July 1997. Changing patterns of land use, social and economic conditions have altered the way in which cattle are farmed. Cattle now have less access to common grazing land and are farmed as an adjunct to cropping activities. Their ability to utilise crop by-products and act as a store of future income are seen as important by farmers.

Two critical issues were identified that have relevance to this region and elsewhere. The first is the identification of the appropriate role of beef cattle within agriculture and within local and national systems of development. The second is the development of structures to assist both farmers and governments to meet their objectives. Within these two issues the ways in which resources, technology, culture, and institutions interact and are modified as a result of the process of change is extremely important to the success of development initiatives.

Acknowledgements

There are a large number of people and organisations who deserve the author's grateful thanks. Without their assistance it would not have been possible to undertake this study. First, and foremost the villagers that I worked with in Surin province and the staff of the Northeast Thailand Foundation. Without their cooperation it would not have been possible to gather the basic data for the study. Their generosity and the opportunity to share food, shelter and festivals with them was an honour, and many happy occasions and experiences will long be remembered.

Professor Chaicharn Wongsamun at Khon Kaen University provided a valuable orientation to Thailand and the Northeast and has been a constant friend and point of reference since that period. Ms Jintana Intramonkol as Director of the Department of Livestock's Surin Breeding Station also provided valuable information, contacts and support as did Ms Chaisang Paikaew as Director of the Department of Livestock's forage research section at Tha Phra in Khon Kaen, and latterly in Bangkok.

Professor John Overton, as supervisor provided valuable comments and advice during the preparation of this thesis. The support provided by my employer, Landcorp Farming is also gratefully acknowledged. Finally, the encouragement and critical analysis provided by my wife, Fiona was an essential element in the completion of this thesis.

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Abbreviations

AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
BMA	The Bangkok Metropolitan Authority
CIDA	Canadian International Development Association
CIF	Cost, Insurance, Freight
CUSO	Canadian NGO Development Organisation
DLD	The Department of Livestock Development
DOAE	The Department of Agricultural Extension
DSE	Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung (German Foundation for International Development)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FSR	Farming Systems Research
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ILCA	International Livestock Centre for Africa
IRR	Internal Rate of Return
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KKU	Khon Kaen University
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NET	North East Thailand Foundation
NEWMASIP	North-East Water Management and System Improvement Project
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RAPA	FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RDI	Research and Development Institute
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RSPR	Special Research Project
SEASAN	Southeast Asia Sustainable Agriculture Network
SUAN	Sustainable Upland Agriculture Network
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute Foundation

Glossary

Amphur	District within a Province
Baht	Unit of Currency. For the period of research the Baht was pegged to the United States Dollar (1USD:25.4).
Ban	Village
Changwat	Province
Issan	Term referring to Northeast Thailand, encompassing region, language and cultural identity. Sometimes seen as Esarn, Isan , Isarn or Issan depending on the transliteration from Thai script
Issan Khieow	Project implemented to develop the Northeast. Literally ‘Green Northeast’
Rai	Measurement of Area. One rai is the equivalent of 1600 square metres or 0.16 of a hectare. 6.25 rai is the equivalent of one hectare
Sapa Tambon	Sub-district Councils
Satang	Unit of currency. 100 Satang is the equivalent of 1 Baht
Tambon	Group of villages within a district
Wat	Temple
Paddy	Refers to rice growing land