

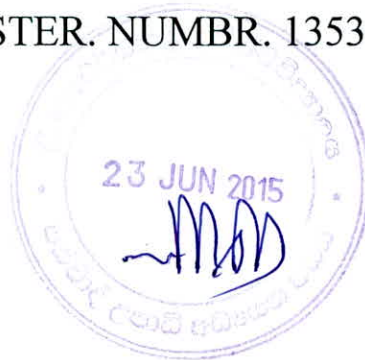
**CHANGING TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL LAND USE IN
THE MONERAGALA DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA
: IMPLICATIONS FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

BY

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Emeritus Professor M. M. Karunanayake and Associate Professor T.M.S.P.K. Thennakoon, and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any other institution for another Degree/Diploma.



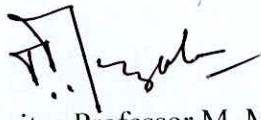
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Dedicated
to
My Wife Nilu
&
Son Kanchuka

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ABSTRACT

CHANGING TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL LAND USE IN THE MONERAGALA DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA

: IMPLICATIONS FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

BY: WIJESINGHE JAYAWEERA MUDIYANSELAGE DAYARATNE

A recent study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and World Soil Information (2012) revealed that approximately 1.5 billion people of the world depend on the land. Hence, improving agricultural land use practices is a key requirement for improving rural income and making a significant reduction in poverty levels. Over 70% of the world's poor are living in rural areas, with agricultural land use as a major source of income. Improvement of the productivity of land use systems is essential for increasing income and food security of the rural poor (Leslie and Cavatassi, 2003).

Sri Lanka is an agricultural country and likely to remain so at least for the next two to three decades. Agricultural sector is the third dominant earning sector (17%) of the economy in Sri Lanka despite recent contributions by manufactured goods and migrant labour (Central Bank, 2007). It also provides the main source of income for approximately 46% of the active labour force and utilizes nearly 45.0% of the total land area of the country.

However, nearly 85% of the poor families in the country still live in rural areas, where 80.1 % of the rural population is depending on agriculture for their livelihood (Sri

Lanka Human Development Report, 2012). Poverty is particularly a rural phenomenon and correlates directly with agricultural land uses.

The impact of land use changes on poverty could be looked from two aspects. 1) Land use changes induced poverty (both positive and negative) 2) Poverty induced land use changes (both positive and negative). However the study mainly focused land use changes induced poverty (both positive and negative).

The poor farmers can only participate in economic growth if they have access to the means and ways of raising their economic productivity of their agricultural lands. Thereby improving their income and the command they have over those things that determine their standard of consumption and conditions of living. Hence, how to improve the productivity of lands of poor households are the most urgent issues for policy planner's responsible for poverty alleviation programmes implementing agricultural areas in the country. Therefore, understanding the linkages between agricultural land use changes and poverty is essential for designing policies which ultimately help to reduce rural poverty through the adaptation of sustainable land management practices in the country.

The study mainly focused on agricultural district of Moneragala, where 85% of the population is rural and 80% of the rural population is engaged in agriculture, to assess the impact of the agricultural land use changes on poverty alleviation during last fifty-years. During this period there had been significant changes in agricultural land use as well as in poverty alleviation.

Agricultural land use changes in last 50 years were assessed using Geographical Information System (GIS), based on land use maps / satellite images from 1956 to 2012.

Household and Plot level data were collected through field investigations to track the land utilization types in the area with particular attention on the implications for poverty alleviation.

Overall results show strong linkages between poverty alleviation and agricultural land use changes in the study area. Some changes show a negative association with poverty alleviation while some changes showed positive effects for poverty alleviation. Hence, the study has identified and recommended specific indicators which could also be applied for measuring poverty in impoverished agricultural regions in the country and recommended a few Land Utilization Types (LUTs) suitable for poverty alleviation and sustainable development in the study area.

The study revealed that selected LUTs such as Rubber smallholder with intercrop, private owned family labour, Export agricultural crops (pepper, cinnamon), private owned, smallholder family labour, in the IM zone and Banana, smallholder, private owned, single crop semi mechanized with family labour and Vegetable mixed crops, private owned, smallholder, family labour in the DL zone have generated better income for farm households and these lands have been transformed from marginal LUTs to sustainable, environmental friendly and profitable land utilization types. A change into a land use type which facilitates agro-based industries would undoubtedly generate higher income and create more employment opportunities in the Moneragala district. The study also observed that some land use types such as Paddy rain-fed (only maha season), private owned, uplands, oxen+family labour, Chena mixed crops, encroached, family labour, Seasonal crops, family labour (sloping lands) and Chena mono- crops (pumpkin, maize), encroached, semi mechanized that are not physically, socially,

economically and environmentally not sustainable, should be eliminated or changed for a suitable LUT.

Based on the findings the study, recommended new outlook in local, economic and social development practices to formulate policies, strategies and mechanisms in the farmer participatory development process for poverty alleviation through relevant institutions which are directly and indirectly involve with land management practices for poverty alleviation. Through holistic approach which involves all these institutions, proper agricultural land use types for farmers for poverty alleviation in the study area could be introduced.

The study also recommends that indicators for measuring poverty especially in agricultural areas in the country should be reclassified with the area specific indicators. i.e. main LUT practiced by the settlers, agricultural potential in the area, landlessness or near landlessness, water for agriculture, and basic needs such as safe drinking water, electricity, and housing conditions, health nutrition.

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